

Pastors

Since its inception Grace Church has had 7 pastors, the first being The **Rev. David Geissinger** (1874-1879), the organizing pastor of the new congregation.

Grace's second pastor, The **Rev. C. Elvin Haupt** (1880-1920), was well-known throughout the city. He served both religious and civic needs in the community. His ministry was frequently one-to-one as he walked the streets of Lancaster and both church members and non-members would come to Dr. Haupt for baptisms, weddings, and burials.

Dr. Haupt was one of the organizers of Lancaster General Hospital and served on its Board of Directors until his death in 1920. Several other men from Grace also served on the Board. In fact, Grace's congregation contributed medical supplies and food on a monthly basis until the hospital became self-sufficient. Education was another of Dr. Haupt's special interests. In 1881 he established a parochial school for elementary students in the neighborhood. The school continued to function until 1926. Another accomplishment was founding Madame Cotta School for Girls which evolved into Shippen School for Girls and ultimately became the basis for what has become Lancaster Country Day School.

In 1920 when Dr. Haupt died from heart illness, more than 6000 Lancastrians filed past his casket as it lay in Grace Church. Among the many memorials to Dr. Haupt from the citizens of Lancaster was the renaming of Lemon Street Elementary School to Haupt Elementary School in 1939.

The third pastor called to Grace Church was The **Rev. Allen L. Benner** (1921-1947). One of the goals during his pastorate was to reach outward in service, particularly to neighborhood children. Grace organized a month-long Daily Vacation Bible School in 1923, which that year served 45 children and by 1926 served 293 children. To enable others to join in worship, Grace began broadcasting the worship service over radio station WKJC. Unfortunately, in 1933 during the Depression, broadcasts were discontinued because of cost. Council also considered cancelling Vacation Bible School for the same reason but decided the children needed that activity, particularly at such a difficult time. Dr. Benner retired because of ill health in 1947.

In 1948 Grace called The **Rev. Warren Heinly** (1948-1966). A great deal of new construction occurred during his pastorate. A fund begun in 1929 culminated in the construction of the Education Building in 1956. In addition, the church interior received needed renovations and redecoration.

Social awareness and concerns were evidenced by several activities during this period. In 1949 an inter-racial sponsored by the Lancaster County Council of Churches was held at Grace Church. Also in 1949 two significant social services were supported by this congregation: the Lutheran Children's Bureau and the Lutheran Service for Older People. Outreach activities to both children and senior citizens had long been an important ministry at Grace. As an aftermath of war in Europe, Grace welcomed 26 Latvian refugees

into the congregation. This form of outreach has continued as circumstances warranted it through the years.

After Pastor Heinly's retirement in 1966, The **Rev. Paul A. Trump** (1966-1986) was called to be our Pastor. These were turbulent times in Lancaster and Pr. Trump called upon the congregation not only to talk like Christians but to act like Christians. The congregation continued to expand neighborhood ministry, continuing Vacation Bible School in July and converting the parking lot into a neighborhood playground in August. Grace sponsored two seminars on race relations during particularly discordant times in the city and in 1968 sponsored an Inter-Racial Choir. Focus on youth was an essential part of Grace's ministry at this time and young people became more involved in the congregation's organization and decision-making. Because this was the time of "suburban flight," the size of the congregation diminished. The conflict between religious and secular life also took its toll. Many changes took place in the city and in Grace Church by the time Pr. Trump retired in 1986.

When The **Rev. Walter Carlson** (1985-1996) was called, he reorganized the staff ministry to include an Associate Pastor Evangelist, who would deal with evangelism, social ministry and outreach into the neighborhood. The Rev. Jonathan Jenkins was called to fill this position. As one of his first activities, Pr. Jenkins oversaw distribution of various flyers throughout a sixteen-block area around the church, inviting everyone to worship with us, to discuss their thoughts about religion with him and to bring or send their children to specific programs. He established an After-School Club for elementary students. Vacation Bible School continued. Families were not required to join the church in order to let their children attend these activities. Pastor Carlson resigned because of illness.

In 1996 and our present minister, The **Rev. Stephen Verkouw**, was called. A clear focus on neighborhood and other outreach continues along with the children's activities mentioned above. A weekly event attended by both members of Grace and neighbors of the church is our Wednesday night suppers. Meals are prepared by church members and everyone is welcome. In addition, after years of study and planning, the congregation renovated the Education Building to satisfy federal regulations for a child care facility and Grace Place Children's Center opened in August of 2000. Another neighborhood centered activity undertaken in the past few years is Lancaster Housing and Neighborhood Services (LHANDS), begun with "seed money" from Grace Church and originally organized by members of the congregation. Several properties have been purchased. The intention is to have LHANDS function as an autonomous organization which will include others interested in restoring the area to a vibrant neighborhood.

Throughout the 137-year history of Grace Church, our abiding faith in Christ and our desire to continually grow in faith has sustained this congregation and guided us in outreach to others. We worship together. We socialize. We study, pray and play together. We believe Christ will continue to sustain us and we welcome others to join our church family.