

SHEPHERD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH THROUGH THE YEARS



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THE 1970s



Pastor Ron Meyer

1975 The North Texas-North Louisiana (NTNL) Synod of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) issues a request for a Pastor to develop a mission church in north Arlington. Arlington has a population of about 100,000.

Oct. 1977 Pastor Ron Meyer, Pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in New Hartford, NY, receives a call from the NTNL Synod of the LCA to be the Pastor of its new mission church.

Nov. 1977 - Feb. 1978 Pastor Meyer knocks on more than 7,000 doors to meet people interested in the formation of a new mission church. Land is purchased at 715 E. Lamar Boulevard for the future development of a church building. Pastor Meyer names the church Shepherd of Life (SOL).

Mar. 19, 1978 Palm Sunday – SOL holds its first worship service at Roquemore Elementary School located on Van Buren Drive. 160 people attend the service. SOL holds its first baptism for Bryce Christopher Jones. Pastor Meyer announces that one service will be held each Sunday at 10:00 AM at Roquemore. SOL hires Susan Lichtenwalter as its first Music and Worship Coordinator.



Worship Service at Roquemore

May 1978 156 charter members sign SOL's original Charter.

Sep. 1978 SOL submits a formal application to the Synod for membership and files its Articles of Incorporation with the Texas Secretary of State.

Oct. 1978 The Synod officially recognizes SOL as a member and issues a certificate of acceptance. SOL has 106 confirmed members and 45 children. Rev. Philip Walberg, President of the Synod, gives the message at a service.



Susan Lichtenwalter

Nov. 12, 1978 SOL's first baptism, after the church is officially recognized by the Synod, takes place for Allison Lynn Bullock.

Nov. 1978 SOL holds its first Church Council meeting. The Council agrees to meet on the second Tuesday of each month.

Dec. 1978 Average weekly worship attendance is 81.

Oct. 1979 SOL's first confirmation class is held with eight members.

Dec. 1979 Average weekly worship attendance is 102.

THE 1980s



First Church Council

- Feb. 1980** SOL organizes its first building committee, and member Jerry Cook is named as its first chairman.
- Sep. 1980** SOL completes plans for its initial building.
- Nov. 1980** SOL approves the funding for the initial building.
- Dec. 1980** Average weekly worship attendance is 118.
- Feb. 22, 1981** SOL holds a ground-breaking ceremony.

- Sep. 7, 1981** The final church service is held at Roquemore Elementary School.
- Sep. 13, 1981** SOL dedicates the new church building. Rev. Frederick Shilling, Assistant to the Bishop of the Synod, presides over the dedication service.
- Dec. 1981** Average weekly worship attendance is 131.
- Mar. 1982** SOL creates its first weekly adult bible study program.
- Dec. 1982** Average weekly worship attendance is 150.
- Mar. 1983** SOL expands its Sunday services to two (8:30 AM and 11:00 AM).
- Dec. 1983** Average weekly worship attendance is 169.
- Dec. 1984** Average weekly worship attendance is 180.
- Mar. 1985** The Church Council creates a mortgage reduction fund to reduce the mortgage balance due on the original building, so SOL can expand its facilities into an additional building.
- Dec. 1985** Average weekly worship attendance is 207.
- Dec. 1986** Average weekly worship attendance is 179.
- Feb. 1987** SOL institutes a weekly Mother's Day Out program giving mothers of pre-school children a day off. Its first director is church member Marilyn Varner.
- Sep. 1987** Pastor Meyer introduces the weekly adult Bethel Bible Series, a two-year program. Church member Kim Doege is named its first teacher.
- Dec. 1987** Average weekly worship attendance is 174.
- Jun. 1988** SOL hires Eddie Creel as its second Music and Worship Coordinator.
- Oct. 1988** SOL observes its 10th anniversary.
- Dec. 1988** Average weekly worship attendance is 150.
- 1988 - 1989** Pastor Meyer conducts the second Bethel Bible Series, and member Kim Doege assists.
- Dec. 1989** Average weekly worship attendance is less than 130.



Original Sanctuary



Singing Talents and Fun at SOL

THE 1990s

- Nov. 1990** Pastor Meyer announces his resignation from SOL.
- Dec. 1990** The Synod appoints Pastor Vince Nelson as SOL's interim pastor while the search begins for a new pastor. Average weekly worship attendance is less than 120.
- Jan. 1991** The Church Council appoints six members to a call committee to seek a new pastor.
- Feb. 1991** With declining membership and in need of financial help, SOL creates the Adopt-a-Bill Program. Each Sunday Church Treasurer Dave Thomas posts unpaid bills on a bulletin board, and members select and pay that bill.
- Apr. 1991** SOL institutes the Mop Bucket Program. At the end of each Sunday service, the ushers pass a mop bucket around so members can give additional cash to SOL.
- July 1991** Pastor John Foster, from Our Savior Lutheran Church in Simi Valley, California, preaches at SOL. The call committee forwards his name to the congregation as its choice for the new pastor. The congregation votes unanimously to hire Pastor Foster as its new pastor.
- Dec. 1991** The Church Council proposes that SOL adopt a new Constitution and By-laws, which the congregation unanimously approves.
- May 1994** Member Cathy Racette becomes SOL's first ministry coordinator.
- Feb. 1995** SOL introduces its Vision for the Future Program, a response to long-range visions for the future. One of the visions is the creation of a new sanctuary, which would seat 300 people.
- June 1995** To help regain financial health, SOL introduces Share the Promise, a program that lays out a master building fund plan to pay off the mortgage on the existing building and allow for future development of the remaining property.
- Dec. 1995** Average weekly worship attendance is 188.
- Dec. 1996** Average weekly worship attendance is 200.
- Dec. 1997** Average weekly worship attendance is 227.
- Mar. 1998** SOL pays off the mortgage balance on the original building. SOL votes to begin a self-supporting, full-time Monday through Friday childcare center and to employ an architectural firm to redesign the church space to include a 300-seat sanctuary.
- May 1998** SOL hires the architectural firm ArchiTexas to redesign the facility. The Church Council appoints member David Hillebrand as chairman of the building committee.



Pastor John Foster

- Jun. 1998** SOL accepts Debbie Schulze as its first pastoral intern through the ELCA Pastoral Internship Program.
- Oct. 1998** SOL observes its 20th anniversary. The church hires Kairos and Associates to direct the Capital Funding Building Campaign for a redesign of the facility.
- Dec. 1998** For the first time, SOL commits to a benevolence gift of 10% of the Church's annual budget. Average weekly worship attendance is 237.
- Feb. 1999** Kairos and Associates announces the theme for the building fund campaign: A Home for God's Light to Always Shine Bright. The appeal highlights SOL's five physical space needs: worship, fellowship, education, administration, and outreach.
- Apr. 1999** SOL launches its first bell choir, and member Cathy Dismore is named bell choir director.
- Oct. 1999** The building committee introduces a master plan for a new and renovated facility, which the congregation unanimously approves.
- Dec. 1999** Average weekly worship attendance is 240.

THE 2000s

- May 2000** SOL holds a ground-breaking service for the redesigned Church facility.
- July 2000** SOL signs a contract with Hagler Construction for the redesigned facility. Demolition of the old parking lot and construction of the new facility begin.



Ground-breaking service

- Dec. 2000** The building contractor pours the foundation for the new building. Average weekly worship attendance is 249.
- Aug. 2001** Construction of the new facility concludes and comes in slightly under budget (99.8%). The church realizes its goals: designing and building a beautiful new sanctuary; doubling the parking lot capacity with a new entrance; adding an administration wing; completely remodeling the original building; adding a new commercial-style kitchen; creating facilities for a full-time childcare center; and tripling the overall square footage of the facilities.



New, expanded facility in 2001



Cathy Racette with her Little Shepherds

- Sep. 16, 2001** The dedication service for the new facility is held to an overflow crowd of worshipers and guests.
- Dec. 2001** SOL holds its first annual meeting in the new facility. Average weekly worship attendance is 264.
- Mar. 4, 2002** The Little Shepherd Children's Center opens with three children. SOL hires member Cathy Racette as its first director.

- Apr. 2002** SOL creates a Property Committee to oversee the property's maintenance, improvements, and usage. It names member Scott Bernhart as its chairman.
- May 2002** SOL launches a three-year capital appeal with the theme "Catch the Spirit" and targets raising \$500,000. The plan is to set aside enough money to make the Church's base mortgage payments over the next 36 months. Then, SOL will split the balance of the monies raised 50:50 between capital improvements and debt reduction. The appeal generates pledges of \$562,000. SOL also hires Pastor Russell Vardell as its first assistant pastor.

Dec. 2002 Average weekly worship attendance is 271.

Sep. 2003 SOL creates the position of Director for Youth and Family Ministries, and hires Art Mory as its first director.

Nov. 2003 SOL observes its 25th anniversary.

Dec. 2003 The Little Shepherd Children's Center reaches its goal of becoming financially self-sufficient. Previously, it had been financially supported by SOL. The center has five classrooms with children ranging in age from 18 months to five years and a staff of six teachers. Average weekly worship attendance is 278.



Front courtyard dedication to new sanctuary

June 2004 The Mission Support Board conducts a mission outreach program at Indian Oaks, Oklahoma.

Dec. 2004 Due to the financial growth and health of the Church, SOL makes a \$40,000 contribution to the debt reduction of the mortgage.

July 2006 The Senior High Youth attend the ELCA National Youth Gathering in San Antonio.

Jan. 2007 SOL initiates the Big Wednesday program to enable families and members of every age to gather at the church in the middle of the week for dinner, choir, activities, and hold classes for every age.

May 2007 SOL dedicates its new Prayer Garden and names member Candy Collins director.

June 2007 SOL accepts Tim Holt as its second pastoral intern through the ELCA Pastoral Internship Program.

- Mar. 2008** SOL purchases property to the east adjoining the existing property for expansion.
- June 2008** SOL accepts Jake Lehman as its third pastoral intern through the ELCA Pastoral Internship Program.
- Oct. 2008** SOL holds a 30th anniversary service. Charter members and members with more than 25 years of membership are recognized.



2009 National Youth Gathering Attendees

- June 2009** SOL accepts Chris Thorson as its fourth pastoral intern through the ELCA Pastoral Internship Program.
- July 2009** Fourteen Senior High Youth and four adults attend the ELCA National Youth Gathering held in New Orleans.
- Aug. 2009** The ELCA votes to open the ministry of its member churches to gay and lesbian pastors. The decision to call a gay or lesbian pastor is left with each individual church.

- Dec. 2009** For the first time in the church's history, SOL donates more than its 10% benevolence gift to the ELCA Synod and to local outreach programs. In addition, SOL hires Jonathan Lys as the Director of Youth and Family Ministries.

THE 2010s

- Feb. 2010** Member Don Martzall purchases a pipe organ for SOL, and installation begins.
- Dec. 2010** The congregation votes to hire member Mark Hadley as its first Director of Adult Ministries.
- Aug. 2011** SOL observes the 20th anniversary of Pastor John's ministry with Shepherd of Life.
- Jan. 2012** SOL purchases the building at 725 Lamar Blvd to be used as Education and Ministry Offices. In addition to the offices for the staff, the Junior and Senior High Youth Groups and Adult Sunday School begins meeting in this new space.
- Mar. 2012** The Little Shepherd Children's Center observes its 10th anniversary.
- Aug. 2012** Nine Senior High Youth Group members and three adults attend the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans.
- Oct. 2013** SOL observes its 35th anniversary.



Music Director Eddie Creel at Organ

- Aug. 2014** SOL hires Kim Doege as its second director of the Little Shepherd Children's Center.
- Aug. 2015** Eight Senior High Youth Group members and three adults attend the ELCA National Youth Gathering in Detroit.
- Oct. 2015** SOL launches a Food Pantry program, and members Lissy Bethmann, Sarah Skinner and Crista Wilson are its founders. The pantry is open every Thursday night and serves more than 150 patrons each week.
- Nov. 2016** Faith Partnerships are introduced to explore the many ways we are similar and to learn the unique qualities of different faiths. Members visit with a Jewish congregation, a Muslim worshipping community, and two historically African-American churches.
- Oct. 2017** Mark Hadley is ordained and called as associate pastor at Shepherd of Life.
- Nov. 2017** The church observes the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.
- Aug. 2018** Nine Senior High Youth Group members and two adults attend the ELCA National Youth Gathering in Houston.
- Oct. 2018** SOL observes its 40th anniversary. Recognized are the three remaining charter members of the original 156 charter members (Valerie Burton, Richard Gumtau, and Cheri Johnson) and nine members/families with more than 40 years of membership (Donna McDade, Arthur and Joyce Anderson, Bill and Kim Doege, Dave and Kay Fox, Jeff and Brenda Maxwell, Lisa Mohon, Shirley Porter, Dave Thomas, and Donna Weiselogel).
- Dec. 2018** On average, the SOL Food Pantry serves 250 patrons per week. In addition, SOL prepares and serves meals at the Arlington Life Shelter two times per month. Also, SOL members participate in the monthly Braille Bible program, which began in 2004.



Pastor Mark Hadley

THE 2020s



Drive-up services during COVID-19

- Mar. 2020** Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the ELCA asks member churches to halt in-person worship. SOL begins online and drive up services every Sunday. Church business, including staff and committee meetings, are now conducted via Zoom. The Food Pantry moves to drive-thru only.
- Dec. 2020** The Food Pantry reaches an annual all-time high of delivering more than 10,000 boxes of food and diapers, servicing more than 40,000 patrons.
- Apr. 2021** In-person church services resume following COVID-19.

- May 2021** SOL hires Rachel Adams as its third director of Little Shepherd Children’s Center.
- July 2021** SOL moves to two Sunday services (8:30AM and 11:00 AM).
- Sep. 19, 2021** SOL holds services for its 20th anniversary of the dedication of the sanctuary. In addition, the Prayer Garden receives special recognition. At the services, the Church acknowledges the Charter Members and Legacy Members (more than 30 years of membership).
- Dec. 2021** The impact of COVID-19 results in lower attendance at church services and a decline in membership. SOL cancels or suspends many activities during the year.
- Feb. 2022** Pastor John announces his retirement from ministry at the end of 2022.
- Mar. 2022** The Little Shepherd Children’s Center observes its 20th anniversary.
- May 22, 2022** The congregation votes to hire Pastor Mark as senior pastor effective on January 1, 2023. The congregation changes the times for its two Sunday services to 8:30 AM and 10:00 AM, effective June 12, 2022.
- Aug. 2022** The Church Council begins its Visioning Project to receive input from the congregation for the future of SOL
- Dec. 24, 2022** Pastor John delivers his final message
- Jan. 2023** Pastor Mark is installed as Senior Pastor by Bishop Eric Gronberg



Pastor John gives his final message on Christmas Eve



Pastor Mark is installed as Senior Pastor