

# **CELEBRATING GOD'S LOVE**

**50 Years Of God's Grace At**

**Concordia Lutheran Church**

**Steamboat Springs, Colorado**

**Norman W. Schmooch**

## FOREWARD

The celebration of any anniversary is an opportunity to remember and thank God for his grace and blessings along the way. The 50th anniversary of a Christian congregation is a milestone of such magnitude that it cannot be allowed to slip by unnoticed.

This brief history of Concordia Lutheran Church in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, is offered so that everyone who reads it may be reminded of the never-ending blessings of our gracious God. He has called us, in Jesus Christ, to be his people and to reach out to others with his love. God's people at Concordia have done that for over fifty years.

I want to thank Alma Baldwin and Florence Volberding for helping me research the history of Concordia. Their input helped to make this record more complete.

Norman W. Schmoock

November 14, 1986

**Soli Deo Gloria!**

## Chapter 1

### THE EARLY YEARS

It was two Lutheran school teachers from Wisconsin who were very much responsible for bringing Lutheranism to Northwest Colorado. They had come west and married cowboys, and now hoped to raise their families in the teachings of the Lutheran Church -- but there were no Lutheran churches. They talked with Pastor Fred Leimbrock of St. John's Lutheran Church, Denver, about this situation when he was vacationing in this part of the state. As a result, the Mission Board of the Colorado District called candidate Martin Nees in 1924 as "missionary to Denver and the Northwest Corner of the State."

District President Otto Luessenhop loaned him \$100 to buy a Ford. On the way to the Granby Mission Field the lights of his Model T roadster went out, so he crossed 11,314 foot Berthoud pass by moonlight. After establishing preaching stations at Granby and Grand Lake, Pastor Nees went to Steamboat Springs, but did not find any prospects there. He did start services in Craig, Great Divide, Yampa and elsewhere. Eventually, the Granby Mission Field included two circuits. A monthly circle included Kremmling, Oak Creek, Yampa, Craig and Steamboat Springs. A smaller circuit including Granby, Grand Lake, Sleepy Hollow, Fraser, Tabernash and West Portal was served every two weeks. By the end of the 1920's, Pastor Nees was also busy organizing Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Lakewood, Colorado, so a new candidate, George Weinrich, was called to what was now known as the Moffat Mission Field. (From Faith to Move Mountains, Lyle Schaefer, pp. 81-84)

Pastor Nees remained a dear friend of the congregation that would eventually organize in Steamboat Springs, often leading worship and providing pastoral help during pastoral vacancies in the congregation. In the early 1930's, worship services were conducted by Pastor Weinrich in the homes of Mr. and Mrs. William Stender and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kumke. When Pastor A. Heimsoth came in 1935, the congregation was worshipping in the Episcopal Church, which it would continue to do until the mid-1940's.

1936 proved to be a very eventful year for Concordia. In April of that year the Colorado District submitted an "Application For Supply" to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, asking for a candidate to serve for four or five months in the "Moffat Field, comprising 8 to 10 preaching stations." The application stipulated that the candidate must have his own car; he must be able to play the hymns for worship; and the salary would be \$45 per month plus mileage. He was to start as early as possible in June.

After some persuasion from Dean Fritz of the Seminary, Clifford Voge, a 1936 graduate, accepted the assignment. Arriving in Colorado Springs, Pastor Voge bought a Durant car for \$150, with the idea that it only had to last for four months. The Mission Board then decided to keep the Moffat Field open through the winter. The car died and Pastor Voge had to get another one, but the Mission Board was unwilling to give him a raise to help cover the cost of the new car.

Pastor Voge's weekly schedule was: Steamboat on Sunday, Granby on Monday, Yampa on Tuesday, Oak Creek on Wednesday, The Great Divide on Thursday, and back to Steamboat on Friday to prepare a sermon for the next week. In the winter of 1936 he had to take the train to Granby and the other points because of the heavy snows on Rabbit Ears Pass. One family in Granby lived twelve miles out, so they would meet Pastor Voge with a horse and ride by horseback in -30 degree weather to reach their home. In some cases he had to go to the farms of members to instruct their children for confirmation. One time he had to instruct a girl while they rode around the field on a tractor haying or discing. With such a sparse salary, he would sometimes shoot snowshoe rabbits from his car, dress them, and then hang them in a tree to freeze. It was not a boring ministry!

The worship services in Steamboat were held in the Episcopal Church all during this time. Pastor Voge related that he made the church sign advertising the Lutheran services. During the worship he played the organ, then read the Scripture lessons, then back to the organ, then the sermon, etc. "Really a one-man operation," he said.

It was in the Episcopal Church, on Christmas Eve of 1936, that Concordia Lutheran Church was officially organized as a congregation with a communicant membership of 29. "Holding hands around the pot-belly wood stove, we officially organized singing the Doxology," wrote Pastor Voge. The congregation was named Concordia after the name of his seminary. It was -45 degrees, so the service had to be stopped every fifteen minutes in order to keep the car engines warm. (Letter from Clifford Voge, September 25, 1986)

Pastor Voge's last Sunday in Steamboat was October 7, 1937. He accepted another temporary assignment in New York City, serving at Grace Lutheran Church and the True Light Chinese Mission. He then received his first permanent call to Eagle Rock, Los Angeles in March of 1938. He remembers Steamboat fondly: "The people at Steamboat were very cooperative and made my stay with them a memorable one. I would not exchange those experiences for all the tea in China! It was where I really got experience and knew what the ministry was all about."

It is part of the history of the Lutherans in Steamboat and surrounding communities that often there were no regular worship services when there was no resident pastor in Steamboat. This was the case after Pastor Voge left Concordia. Steamboat and the Moffat Field were served occasionally by Pastor Nees from Denver. For instance, the January 20, 1938, issue of the Steamboat Pilot announced: "Word has been received that the Rev. Martin E. Nees, pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Edgewater, Colorado, will conduct services at the Episcopal Church Wednesday evening, January 26, 8 p.m. The topic of the sermon will be 'The Well of Living Water.' The public is invited to attend."

The next resident pastor of Concordia was candidate Oscar R. Graumann. Pastor Graumann came in July of 1938, having just graduated that spring from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He made local news when a front page article in the June 15, 1939, Steamboat Pilot announced his upcoming marriage to Gertrude Hieber in Lone Wolf, Oklahoma. The wedding was to be on June 25 and the newlyweds would be back in Steamboat after July 1.

Pastor Graumann continued to serve Concordia and the surrounding communities during the following years. Those who can remember the practice of seeing the pastor personally to announce for Holy Communion will appreciate the note in the Steamboat Pilot (June 6, 1940): "Holy Communion will be celebrated in the service Sunday morning. Registration at the pastor's residence Thursday afternoon and evening."

The front page of the October 22, 1942, Steamboat Pilot announced that Pastor Graumann would preach his farewell sermon at Concordia on Sunday, October 25. The article mentioned that he "accepted a call to a larger parish" in Genoa, Colorado. "The family will make their home in Genoa where there is a nice church building and a parish house for them to occupy, and will also serve the Hugo church."

The pastoral vacancy continued for the next ten months. The Mission Board report to the 1943 Colorado District convention noted that "this field has been served periodically by our Field Secretary, Pastor Luessenhop, and by means of mimeographed sermons mailed to the members through an arrangement with the Emmaus, Denver, Men's Club. A candidate is being called for this field."

The Rev. Alfred L. Schuetz received the call to Concordia, and was installed on August 8, 1943. He and his wife were moved to Steamboat from Raton, New Mexico. The August 5, 1943, Steamboat Pilot mentioned that Pastor Schuetz "comes to this pastorate highly recommended by the Mission board, having served missions in Nebraska and New Mexico." The article also noted

that the Rev. O. Luessenhop of Denver, field secretary of missions, had served the vacancy and would preach at the installation service.

Pastor Schuetz held services each Sunday in Steamboat at 10 a.m. (still in the Episcopal Church); in Oak Creek at 2 p.m.; in Kremmling at 5 p.m.; and in Parshall at 7:30 p.m. He also conducted worship in Craig on Thursday evenings. Some names that he remembers from his ministry in Steamboat were the Nelsons who operated the Ben Franklin store; the Gneisers who farmed west of Steamboat; a teacher in Hayden by the name of Kroehnke; and the Eppich brothers who had a bakery in Oak Creek. In March of 1944, Pastor Schuetz accepted a call to Trinity Lutheran Church in Fort Morgan, Colorado. His last service was on March 12, 1944. Of his ministry at Concordia he says, "Nothing really outstanding occurred during our brief stay in Steamboat, but we did enjoy it very much." (Letter from Alfred Schuetz, October 9, 1986)

Once again Concordia was without a pastor and was served by the District mission secretary, the Rev. O. Luessenhop. He came when he could, and also sent mimeographed sermons as he had before. Pastor Nees and Pastor E. C. Kuehnert also came on occasion. A seminary student, Ralph Moellering, served Concordia during the summer of 1945, but it would be another two years before a resident pastor was again serving the Lutherans in Steamboat Springs.

## Chapter 2

## OUR OWN CHURCH

By the time the Rev. H. F. Ramelow arrived in the Fall of 1947 to serve Concordia, the congregation was no longer worshipping in the Episcopal Church. After moving from there it held services at the mortuary, and was now worshipping in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Weeks.

A year later the Steamboat Pilot (September 2, 1948) was able to report in a front page article: "Lutheran Church Will Be Built At Sixth And Pine." The article related that the lot at Sixth and Pine Streets (now Grand and Logan Streets) had been bought and that construction of a chapel would begin in the near future. It continued: "The Lutheran denomination in Steamboat Springs now has around 50 in its congregation and has been served for the past several months by Rev. H. F. Ramelow, who was appointed on a temporary assignment. A new pastor, Rev. James Ehlers, will arrive about September 15 to accept permanent assignment. Chairman of the church building committee is P. F. Pattee."

Pastor Ramelow ordained and installed candidate James M. Ehlers when he arrived in Steamboat. The service was held in the cabin in the city park. Pastor Ehlers remembers that several church mice were present for the service, causing the women to miss a few words of the service as they saw these creatures scurrying around in the building. When it became too cold to hold services in the city park, the congregation moved back to the Weeks residence for its worship. (Letter from James Ehlers, October 8, 1986) Pastor Ehlers lived on Oak Street and his phone number was 64J.

The plans progressed for the new church. The minutes from a special congregational meeting held March 24, 1949, note: "Discussion was entered into on the acception (sic) of the floor plans of the new church building. Motion was made to accept." Also, "Discussion was entered into on donated labor for the new building. Motion was made that each member donate at least 40 hours or more."

The new church was designed as a combination chapel and parsonage. It still serves as the parsonage today. The congregation received a loan from the Colorado District Church Extension Fund in the amount of \$4,520 at 2% interest to build the church. Pastor Ehlers relates, "The building chairman and guiding light was Gilbert Hoff who lived several miles west of Steamboat with his parents. We all were part of the building crew. Gilbert's comments to the reverend were, 'Pastor Ehlers, you have some good ideas but they need a little fixing.' We had excellent fellowship as we all dug in on this project." (Ehlers letter)

As the building continued, another exciting event took place during the summer of 1949. Concordia Lutheran Church became an official member congregation of the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod at the Colorado District Convention in Estes Park. Charles Weeks and Pastor Ehlers attended the convention as Concordia's delegates. During the years prior to this, Concordia had been a "preaching station" of the District. Now it was a full-fledged member congregation.

The July 21, 1949 Steamboat Pilot Church Directory noted that J. Ehlers was pastor and that Sunday School was at 9:45 a.m. with Worship at 10:30 a.m. Then it added, "These services will be held in the new chapel on the corner of Grand and Logan streets. These services mark the beginning of using our new chapel; this is not the dedication service. This service will be held at a later date." So the first service in the new church was held on July 24, 1949.

The weather in Steamboat was beautiful on November 27, 1949. Two worship services were held that day to mark the dedication of the new church building

to the glory of the Triune God. The speaker at the 10:30 a.m. service was the Rev. H. F. Ramelow from La Junta, Colorado. The Rev. George Weinrich from Glenwood Springs spoke at the 3:00 p.m. service. Both men had been pastors at Concordia in earlier years. The congregation was able to use the high school kitchen and dining facilities for the noon meal and served about 150 people.

Pastor Ehlers and his wife, Peggy, left Steamboat in January of 1950 to pursue clinical pastoral education in hospital chaplaincy. His last Sunday at Concordia was January 8, 1950. He relates that "the farewell at Steamboat was difficult. People understood better regarding my future as several days before this farewell service a prominent businessman committed suicide. In my farewell remarks I indicated my future would be focused on helping hurting, depressed, and down and out people." Pastor Ehlers has been involved in the chaplain ministry since he left Steamboat Springs. (Ehlers letter)

The front page of the January 12, 1950, Steamboat Pilot carried an article entitled: "New Pastor Is Here For Lutherans." It announced the arrival of Roy Beckman, a student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, to assume the pastorate of Concordia. His first service at Concordia was on January 15, 1950, the very next Sunday after Pastor Ehlers' farewell. That was a record short vacancy for Concordia! Roy Beckman left at the end of August 1950, presumably to go back to the seminary.

The vacancy that followed was again covered from Denver. The January 4, 1951, Steamboat Pilot and subsequent issues lists the Rev. E. C. Kuehnert of Denver as the "Acting Minister." He was not listed after the March 22, 1951, edition. The June 14, 1951 edition mentioned that the Rev. H. H. Hellbusch of Denver would conduct the service at Concordia the following Sunday.

The summer of 1951 saw the beginning of a series of vicars to serve Concordia. A vicar is a seminary student who, having completed two years of classes, spends one full year in a congregation to gain practical experience. James Goehner arrived in July of 1951 and left in early July of 1952. Robert Wyssmann arrived later that month and served until the end of June, 1953. Two interesting notes come from the minutes of Voters Meetings during his year. The August 17, 1952, minutes record that a building was procured by the congregation to serve as a garage at the church/parsonage. Herman Meyers gave \$100 to fix it up. It was moved to the church/parsonage and placed onto a cinder block foundation. That garage is still being used today! The minutes from the February 2, 1953, meeting note that Paul Nelson moved to raise the minister's salary from \$2500.20 to \$2760.00. The motion was seconded by Bill Klumker. The motion carried.

The next vicar was John P. Schmidt who served from July of 1953 until July of 1954. Some things that Pastor Schmidt remembers from his year in Steamboat include: the house with a church attached; the house with no closets or heat ducts between the walls; a mimeo that inked the bulletins so much that they had to be done one at a time and placed on the stairs to dry; slate roads that tore up an entire set of tires; conducting a funeral in Wyoming and the undertaker fined for speeding in the hearse; the excitement of a visitor in church; newlyweds given a year-long honeymoon by a group of "special" people. (Letter from John P. Schmidt, October 7, 1986)

The pastor who closed out this era was the Rev. Henoeh Bruss who served Concordia from August of 1954 until January of 1956.

## Chapter 3

## GROWING PAINS

A former missionary to China was the next pastor to serve the mission field of Steamboat Springs and its surrounding area. The congregation voted on February 2, 1956, to call the Rev. Herman Klein as pastor. Pastor Klein and his family were at that time living in Pueblo, Colorado, where he was prospecting for uranium. The Kleins moved to Steamboat in March of 1956 and he began his ministry as pastor of Concordia and as "minister at large" in the area. The population of Steamboat must have grown -- his telephone number was 783-W (Pastor Ehlers' was 64J).

It was not long before the congregation was seriously considering the possibility of building a new church. The present church/parsonage was no longer adequate for the congregation's needs. At the June 10, 1956, Voters Meeting "a motion was made to appoint a committee of three to check into building a chapel. Motion was carried." The committee consisted of Harold J. Denker (chairman), George Cary and Fernon Kumke. The September 19, 1956, Voters' minutes record: "Mr. Nelson moved that we buy the property owned by Mr. Klumker for \$2,300. The motion was seconded by Mr. Denker and was carried." This property was located at 110 Missouri Avenue (the corner of Missouri Avenue and Larimer Street).

On December 3, 1956, the congregation met with the Rev. Arnold Meyer who was representing the District Mission Board. Three reasons were given during that meeting for why a new building was needed: 1) the present facilities were inadequate for the present group (a membership of 66 souls and 39 communicants); 2) an attractive building would help to attract a new following; and 3) there was no room or equipment for the Sunday School (12/3/56 Minutes).

A building committee was formed at the March 7, 1957, Voters Meeting consisting of Marshall Sanborn (construction advisor), Paul Nelson (financial advisor) and Pastor Klein. The congregation received a \$20,000 loan from the District and broke ground for the new church after the morning worship service on June 23, 1957. The cornerstone was laid in July, and the construction, under the direction of George Fick, continued through the fall and into the winter.

The dedication of the new church took place on February 2, 1958. Pastor Klein was the preacher for the 10:30 a.m. service. The Ladies Aid Society served a buffet dinner. The Rev. Oscar Graumann, former pastor of Concordia and at this time an Institutional Pastor in Denver, was the preacher for the 2:30 p.m. service. Chester Cooper was the president of the congregation; Lloyd McClelland was vice president; Paul Nelson was treasurer; and Oscar Schmunk was secretary. The dedication bulletin listed the building committee as Paul Nelson, Fernon Kumke and Harold Denker.

Pastor Klein continued to serve Concordia until October 1, 1961, when he left to serve two congregations in Needles, California and Kingman, Arizona. During the last part of his time in Steamboat he also served the congregation in Craig on a regular basis and held services in other surrounding communities. On July 16, 1961, candidate Marion C. Hofman was installed in Craig as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church there and as "missionary at large." Pastor Hofman served Concordia after the Kleins moved away from Steamboat.

Pastor Hofman recalls some highlights of his ministry in Steamboat: \$225, a big Sunday offering; Volberdings making and hanging the first Advent wreath; Sunday School in such cramped quarters; organists Gus Baird, Alma Baldwin and Rene Beck Selbe; Chester Cooper the only one to show up for worship on a -35 degree morning; the 10th anniversary of the dedication service and the



mortgage burning on February 4, 1968; driving slick roads for night emergencies; the peoples' loving acceptance and partnership in God's Word. (Letter from Marion Hofman, October 26, 1986). In the Spring of 1969 Pastor Hofman accepted a call to Marysville, Missouri. His last service at Concordia was on June 8, 1969.

During the vacancy which followed, Concordia was served by two pastors from Laramie, Wyoming, both named Schmidt. The Rev. Ed Schmidt was the campus pastor at the University of Wyoming, and the Rev. G. Daniel Schmidt was pastor of a church there. They served faithfully until candidate Kenneth Bernthal was installed as the pastor of Concordia on June 14, 1970. He and his wife, Jan, moved into the parsonage in Steamboat. Pastor Bernthal also served Faith Lutheran Church in Craig.

The congregation was continuing to feel growing pains during these years. As more people were joining the fellowship of God's people at Concordia, the building was becoming more and more inadequate. Mike Eidem gave a report at the January 20, 1974, Voters Meeting concerning digging out the church basement to provide education and fellowship space. President Cooper asked him to draw up a plan and make a rough estimate of the cost of such a project (1/20/74 Minutes). A report was made at the next meeting which included a preliminary design for the excavation of the unfinished part of the basement and for other work involved. The cost was \$15,560. After discussion, it was decided that President Cooper would appoint a building committee (2/10/74 Minutes). A building fund was eventually established, but the project was later placed onto the back burner.

As the Lord blessed both Concordia in Steamboat and Faith in Craig, each congregation grew to the point of needing its own pastor. This was a difficult situation for Pastor Bernthal since he served both churches. Both congregations extended him a call, and in January of 1977 he announced that he would move to Craig and serve as the pastor of Faith. He did continue to serve Concordia, however, until the next pastor came.

Pastor Bernthal and his wife, Jan, remember those years of 1970 to 1977 as being very eventful, both for the town and the congregation. Steamboat about doubled in population. The congregation also grew to the point where it could support its own pastor. They remember the conversion from coal to gas heat both at the church and the parsonage. They remember, as well, "the active and interested members who held things together and pressed for some very positive changes." "We feel that the years were both eventful and good for us. God blessed us richly through the people at Concordia." (Letter from Ken Bernthal, October 14, 1986)

The next shepherd for the Lord's flock at Concordia was the Rev. James P. Gerken. Pastor Gerken was serving in Niagara, North Dakota, when Concordia extended a call to him on May 19, 1977. After accepting the call, he and his wife, Linda, and family moved to Steamboat. He was installed as pastor of Concordia on July 24, 1977. The Gerkens were instrumental in starting an ADVENTure School program at Concordia which has continued through the years. This program is run during the first week of Advent and helps pre-schoolers learn about the meaning of Christmas and prepare for the celebration of the Savior's birth. Pastor Gerken served Concordia until he accepted a call to Bancroft, Nebraska. His final service at Concordia was on April 13, 1980.

## Chapter 4

## LABORING FOR CHRIST

Concordia was in for another long vacancy after Pastor Gerken moved to Nebraska, but the congregation survived in good shape due to the faithfulness of the Rev. Fred Hahn. Pastor Hahn was retired and lived in the Denver area. He agreed to serve the congregation until it again had its own pastor. For about a year Pastor Hahn and his wife, Esther, drove to Steamboat each Saturday and returned home on Sunday. Pastor Hahn would conduct the worship service on Sunday morning, teach confirmation class, make any necessary calls, and provide pastoral leadership during the time he was able to spend in town on the weekends. The congregation came through the vacancy well because of the love and care that the Hahns shared with Concordia's members.

It was on July 26, 1981, that the Rev. Norman W. Schmoock was installed as the next pastor of Concordia. Pastor Schmoock and his wife, Rosemary, moved to Steamboat from Jamestown, New York, where he had been serving another church with the name of Concordia. Pastor Hahn was present at the service to install Pastor Schmoock. The Rev. James Brockmann of Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Aurora, Colorado, was the preacher at the installation service.

The Schmoocks were able to settle into a newly rebuilt parsonage when they moved to Steamboat. The congregation had realized during the vacancy that the parsonage needed attention. Several options were explored, and finally it was decided to gut and rebuild the existing house. The cost of the project was around \$25,000, with the members of the congregation doing most of the work.

As the congregation continued to grow, it again faced the need for more space. It became evident to all that the building on Missouri Avenue was no longer adequate and that the lack of space would hinder future growth and ministry. The reasons given in 1956 to show the need for a new church building were again valid in the 1980's.

Consequently, a building committee was formed in the fall of 1982 with Dr. William K. Baldwin as its chairman. The committee met for the first time on December 1, 1982, and began to look at possible solutions to the problem of a lack of space. Four possibilities existed: 1) to dig out the basement; 2) to build an addition onto the present church building; 3) to buy another existing church building; or 4) to relocate and build a new church.

After much study, options one, two and three fell by the wayside for various reasons. It was becoming clearer and clearer that the best way to go was to buy property and build a new church building. The search for a suitable and affordable piece of property went on for over a year. At the Voters Meeting of March 13, 1984, the congregation voted to purchase a four acre piece of land in the Willett Heights area of Steamboat on Amethyst Drive, across from the high school football field. The cost was \$115,000. \$110,000 was borrowed from the Lutheran Church Extension Fund at a rate of 9.75 %. The plan was to create a subdivision, using two acres of the property for the church and parking lot, and selling the other two acres in three duplex-sized building lots.

The decision was made at the November 13, 1984, Voters Meeting to go ahead with plans for constructing a new church. Authorization was given to apply to the Lutheran Church Extension Fund for a construction loan, to contact Clayton Melby of Cortez, Colorado, to serve as the architect, and to place the present church building and the duplex lots onto the market (11/13/84 Minutes). The total indebtedness of the congregation before receiving any monies from the sale of the old church building or the sale of the duplex lots was almost \$326,000, borrowed from the Lutheran Church Extension Fund at 9.75%. The old

church building was sold for \$67,000 in 1986 and was turned into a duplex by its new owners.

The congregation had applied to the Rocky Mountain District to use the newly-formed program, "Laborers For Christ," for the construction of the new church. The Laborers For Christ program consists of retirees who volunteer their time to build churches, usually for mission congregations. They work for the minimum wage and most of them live in their campers during the project. The District agreed to let Concordia use this program even though it was not a mission congregation, primarily because of the high cost of construction in Steamboat Springs. This was the only way the congregation could afford to build the new church which it so sorely needed.

The building committee continued to meet on a weekly basis all through the winter and spring to do the necessary planning for the construction of the new church. Because of the nature of the Laborers For Christ program, the congregation acted as the general contractor. Mike Eidem and Jake Weber spent many hours revising the plans that had been presented for the new church. Necessary approvals from the city were obtained. Everything progressed toward the actual construction of the new church. Ground was broken for the new building on Pentecost Sunday, May 26, 1985. The excavation of the site was then begun by Duckels Construction Company of Steamboat.

When the site excavation was completed, work was begun on the cement basement walls by the Gehrman Construction Company, with the help of congregational members. By this time as well, the Laborers For Christ crew had arrived. The foreman, Cliff Forner, had come in June to help prepare for the project. Most of the other workers came by early July and were willing to help with the basement walls before they were able to begin framing the building.

It was a real blessing for the members of the congregation to have the Laborers For Christ team with them from July through early September. The team included: Cliff and Ione Forner (foreman), Steve and Lee Bus, Frank and Gladys Colba, Carl and Margaret Downen, Norman and Dorothy Iverson, Irv and Darlene Nauman, Vince and Darlene Oberling, Floyd (Pete) and Ida White. The Laborers and their wives lived in campers in Ski Town Campground west of town during their stay in Steamboat. As they worked on the construction through the week, they prepared for Saturdays when the members of the congregation would join them to help build the new church.

The building was closed in by the time the Laborers left in early September. The members of the congregation spent the rest of that fall and winter completing the construction. Lou Volberding moved his carpentry shop into the basement of the new building for five months while he built the cabinetry and did the interior woodwork. The baptismal font, pulpit and wooden cross in the chancel were brought from the old building. The other wooden furnishings were built new. Earl Maze did all of the plumbing and heating work. Ed Warner and Larry Worrell helped with the electrical wiring. Jeff Voyek and Bob Alber did the exterior stonework on the walls. The list of people who gave of their time, talent, and treasure for the construction of the new church could go on and on. They are known to the Lord, and it is he who will say to them, "Well done, good and faithful servants!"

As the building became more and more complete, the anticipation of moving into the new church home began to grow. Finally the time had come. The old church building was deconsecrated during the morning worship on March 16, 1986. The next Sunday, Palm Sunday, was the first day that Concordia worshiped in its new church. What an exciting celebration that was! The cornerstone was set in place after a special service on April 27, 1986, and a time capsule was placed behind it containing information about the congregation.

The new church was dedicated to the glory of God on Sunday, May 4, 1986. District President John Petersen was the preacher for the 4 p.m. service. The church was filled to capacity with a good representation of pastors and members

from neighboring churches in Steamboat, as well as from sister congregations in the Western Circuit. A supper was enjoyed by everyone after the dedication service in the partially completed basement.

The officers of the congregation when the new church was dedicated were Jeff Rimel, president; Dennis Scheiwe, vice president; Susan Warner, secretary; James Whiteman, treasurer; and Dianne Weber, financial secretary. The dedication bulletin listed the following as members of the building committee: William K. Baldwin (chairman), Marty Boomgarden, Gene Carrell, Michael Eidem, Arthur Gehrman, Karl Matlage, Earl Maze, Jeff Rimel, Dean Sandvik, Norman Schmooch, Rosemary Schmooch, Elaine Stroncek, Walter Taylor and Jake Weber.

If anything at all stands out from glancing at the history of Concordia Lutheran Church in Steamboat Springs, it is that the Church of Jesus Christ is more than a building or a location. For fifty years of organized congregational life, and for twelve years before that, God's people at Concordia have worshiped at many different times, in many different places, with many different pastors and fellow members. The Church is people -- God's redeemed people in Jesus Christ! Local congregations may outgrow buildings and change locations, but those things are only tools which help us to carry out the ministry of sharing the Good News of Jesus with others.

Concordia Lutheran Church marks the 50th Anniversary of its organized existence with great joy and thanksgiving! And it looks forward with much anticipation to the wonderful things God has in store for it in the next fifty years.