

Grace

Bessemer City

Organized: 1903

County: Gaston

Affiliations: Tennessee Synod, NC Synod

Status: Active

Grace Lutheran Church was organized in 1903 by nineteen charter members with the help of its first pastor, the Rev. C. I. Morgan of Holy Trinity in Gastonia. In that year a lot was purchased at a corner of Washington Avenue and Eleventh Street. In 1904 a frame church 56' x 30' was built at a cost of about \$1,000. Most of the work was done by members during the spring and summer of 1904. The first service probably was held in the fall of 1904 but formal organization and building activities were postponed by an outbreak of smallpox.

During its first thirty-five years Grace received financial help from the Mission Board. In most of this period it shared ministers with neighboring towns or churches. The shared ministries were with Holy Trinity, Gastonia, 1903-10 and 1915-24; Holy Trinity and Lutheran Chapel, 1910-12; Lutheran Chapel, 1914-15; and Ascension of Shelby, 1925-32. Since 1932 Grace has had a fulltime pastor and since 1938 it has had full financial responsibility for its existence.

On January 20, 1946 Grace voted to build a new brick church. The postwar scarcity and high costs of materials forced a delay of over three years. Construction finally began in September 1949 on the present site at Maryland Avenue and North Fourteenth Street on a lot given by Mr. and Mrs. Carl G. Carpenter. The cornerstone was laid November 26, 1950 and the church was formally opened for divine services November 5, 1951.

In 1956 a house and lot adjoining the church property was purchased for \$10,000. The house was used for Sunday School for three years. On April 26, 1959, the congregation voted to replace the old dwelling with a new brick Educational Building. The work was completed in August of 1959.

The first parsonage for Grace Lutheran Church was a six-room frame bungalow built about 1926 at 208 West Washington Avenue. This building was sold forty years later. On January 1, 1967, Grace Congregation voted to buy a lot on the Best Town road for the erection of a new ranch-style brick parsonage. Pastor George Shuford and his family moved into the new parsonage June 30, 1967.

Like some other Lutheran churches in Gaston County, Grace was one of the first to lend its facilities free of charge to the Meals on Wheels and Congregate Meals programs. It has also opened its doors to other community activities such as the scouts. Coming to Grace October 1, 1986, Pastor Robert F. Mitschke has set another example of community service by joining the Tryonata Volunteer Fire Department. Grace Lutheran Church celebrated their Centennial Anniversary in September of 2003. A book was written about the church's 100 years.

Interim Pastor Cyrus Frazier was presented the Honor of Pastor Emeritus in 2004.

Pastors

1903-1905	C. I. Morgan
1905-1912	John Hall
1912	M. A. Ashby
1914-1915	L. L. Huffman
1915-1923	J. C. Dietz
1923-1924	J. L. Yest
1925-1937	N. D. Yount
1938-1948	G. W. McClanahan
1948-1952	J. P. Rimmer
1952-1956	H. P. Barringer, Th.D
1956-1961	G. G. Robertson
1962-1965	E. L. Ricks
1966-1969	G. W. Shuford
1969-1981	G. D. Swygert
1982-1986	D. L. Setzer, Jr.
1986-1999	R. F. Mitschke, Jr.
1999-2001	Cyrus F. Frazier, Jr.
2001-2001	Leslie Barnette
2001-2004	Cyrus F. Frazier, Jr.
2004-2006	Stephen Shackelford