Berea’s Beginnings

“God sets the solitary in families.”
(Psalm 68:6)

- Berea formally organized January 3, 1960 (became member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession)
- Berea became one of the mission congregations of the CLC in 1961 (subsidy: $60/month)

16 attended
Pastor Gordon Radtke of Immanuel, Mankato conducted the service.

Purchased church and parsonage combination on Marshall Avenue in St. Paul for $21,000
First Service – March 3, 1960
Dedicated – July 10, 1960

First Berea Pastor Marvin Eibs
Installed: March 6, 1960

1960 - 1969
“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”
(Matthew 18:20)

- On October 17, 1973 a milestone was reached as Berea declared itself a self-supporting congregation.
- As the Lord blessed Berea, discussion and planning began for construction of a new church and fellowship hall on the Inver Grove Heights property.

Worship Services were held in a makeshift basement chapel seating 50 (with additional seating in the kitchen and living room). The Pastor and his family lived upstairs.
“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.”
(Psalm 127:1)

- With the help of a loan from the CLC Church Extension Fund, financing was secured.
- Extensive volunteer labor kept the cost affordable.
- The upstairs was used for worship and the lower used for education and fellowship.

Our new church was dedicated on February 15, 1976

1975 - 1976
“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
(Proverbs 9:10)

The Christian education of their young people has always been important to Bereans. Throughout our history in our homes and families, in our Sunday School, confirmation and youth classes the faith of our children has been nourished and nurtured.

From early on, there was also a strong interest in having a Christian Day School and in using Immanuel Lutheran High School and College for our youth.

In 1980, Beth Nolting was called as a part-time teacher. Eventually, she served as a full-time upper grade teacher.
“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly.”
(1 Peter 5:2)

- In 1983, Pastor Paul Larsen accepted the call to Corpus Christi, Texas. Pastor David Schierenbeck accepted the call to Berea.

- In 1984, Marlys Gerth accepted a call to Watertown, SD. Beth Nolting served as full-time teacher.

- In 1986, Berea built a two-apartment/one home teacherage on the property to save escalating rental costs. The total cost was $42,000 with most work done by volunteer labor and paid off within five years!

- In 1988, Beth Nolting married and moved and David Bernthal accepted the call to Lynnwood, WA. Teacher Susan Carstensen (now Rehm) and Robert Snell from Onalaska, WI accepted the call.

1983 - 1989
As the Lord blessed Berea with numerical growth, the 130 seat “upstairs” church was being strained. Planning began for building a larger sanctuary with additional classroom and fellowship space.

Construction began in the Spring 1992 and continued for one year. The $345,000 cost was covered by $50,000 in gifts and the balance from a CEF loan.

The sanctuary (and balcony) seating is 225 with an enlarged narthex, nursery, office, and classroom also part of the project. Thousands of volunteer hours and labor made this project affordable.
School Changes

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11)

- New Day School teachers serving terms this time were Cathy Augustin, Judith Snell, and Matthew Thurow.

- In 2005, Kindergarten was added to our Day School program. Teachers have been Susan Hulke (2005-2006), Mary Ann Klingenschmitt (2006-2010) and Anne Gullerud (2010 – present).

- An extensive school remodeling project in 2005 resulted in two large (upper and lower level classrooms), a workroom, and principal’s office.

- Berea Lutheran Preschool was added in 2013.

1996 - 2006
“Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
(1 Corinthians 10:31)

- During these years, both our Congregation (350) and Day School (25) continued to grow.
- With a pressing need for more fellowship, classroom, kitchen, and activity space, Berea embarked on a $400,000 project to construct an Activity Center, expand and pave parking at least. This addition is used for many activities and has truly been a blessing to the congregation.

Activity Center Dedication February 17, 2002
New fellowship space

2000 - 2001
“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”
(Hebrews 13:8)

- In 2007, Berea began holding two Sunday morning services. In 2010, we returned to our one service schedule.

- Throughout its 50 years, Sunday School, and Bible Class has offered special opportunity for informal instruction and spiritual growth.

- Only 1 charter member remains for this 50th Anniversary – Donn Kirchgatter.

- In addition to the countless souls regularly served with the Gospel in Word and Sacrament in our worship service. Many Baptisms, weddings, and Christian funerals have revived and uplifted the hearts of many.

- Berea has been blessed with many children – the future of our church. It is our prayer that the Lord will use us to help them grow into faithful committed followers of Christ.

- Amidst the many changes we have seen at Berea in the past 50 years, we give thanks for our unchanging Savior and His unchanging, saving Word in our midst. May He graciously preserve these blessings among us for our children and our children’s children.