A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Under the guidance of the Reverend John S. Bradac, of Whiting, Indiana, Holy Cross began as a mission in Blue Island, March 14, 1938. Dr. Bradac conducted Sunday afternoon worship services at Salem Lutheran Church in Blue Island.

The congregation was officially organized and named Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church on November 12, 1939, and later became a member of the SELC.

Numerous students and pastors have served Holy Cross throughout its history. On November 10, 1939, the Sainted Reverend John Dvorovy, of Joliet, Illinois, became administrator of Holy Cross and was called to be the first pastor, February 1, 1941. Morning services were instituted February 16, 1941, at the Methodist Church in Blue Island. Dr. Dvorovy became Chaplain, U.S. Army, November 26, 1942, and served until April 27, 1946. On September 22, 1948, Dr. Dvorovy returned to the Chaplaincy as Major, and in July of 1950, while still in service, was called to his eternal rest in Germany.

Holy Cross having returned to afternoon worship services, the Reverend Emil Lavcek of Joliet became administrator. Later, under the guidance of the Reverend John Mihok of Chicago, Holy Cross purchased its first church building, located at 2506 Collins Street, Blue Island, On October 4, 1954. In July, 1954, the Reverend Albert Marcis became the second pastor, and was installed September 19, 1954. In February of 1957, Pastor Marcis accepted the call to Parma, Ohio, and in June of 1957, the Reverend Jerome Figuly became the third pastor. Pastor Figuly served Holy Cross until June, 1961. In August, 1961, the Reverend Louis Kerestes became the fourth pastor of Holy Cross. Pastor Kerestes served until 1965.

During the vacancy of more than two years, Holy Cross was served faithfully on Sunday mornings by the Reverend Oscar Fedder and the Reverend William Greve. The Reverend Stephen Kostelny of Gary, Indiana, served as the administrator, In June, 1967, the Reverend Anthony J. Douches, of Raritan, New Jersey, accepted the call to Holy Cross. He began serving the congregation on July 1, 1967 and was officially installed on August 27, 1967.

Due to various factors, including its strong ethnic background and the lack of proper facilities, Holy Cross Lutheran Church had not grown very much during the thirty years in Blue Island. Congregational leaders realized that the congregation's role in Blue Island should be examined. Realizing that Holy Cross was the smallest of five Lutheran churches in a community whose future population gain would probably not be significant, the congregation began investigating the possibility of relocating to some nearby community. This move was also prompted by the fact that the facilities of the congregation were fast deteriorating.

Various factors, chief of which was a long vacancy, prohibited the congregation from doing

very much about relocation. However, with the arrival of Pastor Douches and with strong urging from the Mission Board of the Synod, in 1967, Holy Cross began seriously investigating the Lord's will for its future. Things looked gloomy for a while. Suitable land was not to be found. Adding to the problem was the location of other Lutheran churches in most of the nearby communities. The Mission Board of the Synod had even gone so far as to recommend that Holy Cross Lutheran Church disband.

In the spring of 1968, the situation changed. A land owner in the Village of Alsip, Mr. Benjamin VanBeveren, decided that he would sell two and two-thirds acres of good land to Holy Cross at a reasonable price. This encouraged the Mission Board to Change its mind. They recommended that Holy Cross purchase land in Alsip for the purpose of relocation. A special Voters' Assembly was held on June 9, 1968, at which time Holy Cross Lutheran Church officially decided to purchase the land at 4041 West 120th Street, Alsip, Illinois, for the purpose of relocating the congregation there. The cost of land was about $43,000.00. Later that same year, the congregation purchased the new parsonage at 11812 South Kolin, Alsip, Illinois, for $35,000.00.

The next step was to hire an architect to design the new facilities. After touring the Chicago area to examine the work of local architects and talking with many pastors, the congregation hired the firm of Holland, Steed, and Schapanski, Deerfield, Illinois, in the early spring of 1969.

For many months the building committee worked hard and long with architect Harold Steed to plan the new Holy Cross Lutheran Church. Finally, on July 15, 1969, bids were opened, and contracts were soon signed. Ground was broken on August 24, 1969, and construction began on August 28, 1969.

During all of this preparation for the new building, the congregation decided not to wait for completion of the new church in order to start work in Alsip. And so, on the last Sunday in April, 1969, the congregation worshipped in Blue Island-for the last time. The next thirteen months found Sunday School and Church for Holy Cross at Stony Creek School Gymnasium, Alsip, Illinois. In selling the old church to Central Baptist Church for $10,000.00, another step was taken to change Holy Cross from a Blue Island congregation to an Alsip congregation. During this time, financing was arranged with the Alsip Bank and the church extension fund of the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches for the new building, which would cost about $90,000.00.

The months passed very slowly, all the time the building rising under the watchful eyes of many members who came daily to see the progress. Many delays, including weather and a trucking strike held up completion. Finally, after eight months of construction, and after thirteen months in Stony Creek School, the congregation gathered on June 7, 1970, to lay the cornerstone, and to worship in the new church for the first time. Everything was not yet completed, but all praised the Lord for the blessings He had bestowed.

After one year from the start of construction, and after many long hours put in by members

of the building committee, and others on all the painting of the new building and the landscaping, the church was now ready to be dedicated to the Glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This glorious day occurred on the 13th day of September, in the year of our Lord, 1970.

On September 10, 1972, Pastor Daniel H. Steinbauer was installed as the next Pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church. Pastor Dan, as he was called, served Holy Cross until June 11, 1978. During the vacancy, which lasted approximately six months, Holy Cross was served by many pastors, and the Elders of the Church. Our administrator during this vacancy was the Reverend Luther J. Bajus, from the Zion Lutheran Church in Norridge, Illinois.

In November, 1978, Pastor Andrew J. Dzurovcik accepted the call to Holy Cross, and was officially installed in February, 1979. Pastor Andy came to Holy Cross, along with his wife Susan, and daughter Faith, from Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Pleasant City, Ohio, where he had served for 5 ½ years.

On October 21, 1979 Holy Cross Lutheran Church celebrated its 40th Anniversary, followed by a banquet at the First Lutheran Church in Blue Island. Those helping to celebrate were the Reverend Albert M. Marcis, Pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church, Parma, Ohio. Pastor Marcis was also our guest preacher for the day. The Liturgists were the Reverend Daniel H. Steinbauer, Chaplain at Lutheran General Hospital, Park Ridge, Illinois, and the Reverend Andrew J. Dzurovcik, Pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church.

In June, 1989 Reverend Andrew Dzurovcik, who had received and accepted a call to serve Zion Lutheran, Clark, NJ, moved with his family to NJ. Reverend Luther Bajus accepted the appointment to serve as vacancy pastor for Holy Cross during the vacancy.

In August, 1989, Reverend Chris D. Ongstad received and accepted the call from Holy Cross to serve as pastor. Pastor Chris, wife Joyce and three children moved from Ohio. Installation of Reverend Chris Ongstad at Holy Cross was in October, 1989.

In October, 1989 Holy Cross celebrated its 50th anniversary with a banquet at Judd's Red Derby restaurant. Rev. Daniel Steinbauer was the guest speaker.

In the early 90's Holy Cross had grown to the point where an addition to the present building was needed. An architectural firm was hired to draw plans for the new addition. It was determined that both an addition to the fellowship hall and an addition of offices and meeting areas were needed. A capital fund drive was used to secure pledges from members of the congregation. The theme of the fund drive was "Boldly Building." The fund drive was very successful and soon construction was underway. While outside contractors built the skeleton of the building, the electric, heating/air conditioning and cement work the finishing was done by members. Members spent hours putting up drywall, painting, installing ceilings, finishing doors and jams, putting up windows and blinds. Finally, in April of 1994 the new additions were dedicated to the glory of the Lord Jesus.