



## **History of Saint Peter Lutheran Church** **Southport NC**

Saint Peter Lutheran Church is located in Southport, N.C. a historic fishing town chartered in 1792. Southport is conveniently located on the Cape Fear River with access to the Atlantic Ocean and coastal beaches. It is located in Brunswick County which is a large county covering over 700 square miles. In the 1960s the County was sparsely populated and did not have a Lutheran Church within its boundaries. An intense desire to start a Lutheran Church in Brunswick County was shared by the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church in America, who were meeting separately in the area. An agreement between the two parties was reached that the LCA would take action to start a mission church.

The first meeting of LCA officials and seven potential members of the new mission church was held in 1967. While the groundwork to start the mission was proceeding, the potential members continued to meet in a residence on Howe Street in Southport. In April 1972 St Peter's Lutheran Mission held its first service in St Philip's Episcopal Church. Saint Peter reached mission status and held a Charter Service in 1973 recognizing 114 Charter Members. Mission status allowed the Church to arrange financing to buy land at the current location fronting on Hwy. 211 and to start construction of a sanctuary. Groundbreaking for the new church was celebrated in December 1975 with the first worship in the new building occurring in 1976.

Except for membership expansion as growth in the Nuclear Plant occurred in 1977-1978, membership remained relatively constant in the period from 1976 to the mid 1990s. In the 1980s the Church had financial difficulties with making mortgage payments and at times paying the salary of the minister. New membership was only sufficient to replace members who had passed away or left the church. However, starting in the mid 1990s Brunswick County and specifically the Southport area began experiencing significant economic growth and accompanying population expansion. This was the result of increased tourism and the popularity of the County as a desirable retirement area. Brunswick County became one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. Several large housing developments were approved by the County to meet the demands of the new residents.

The leadership in Saint Peter saw the forecasted growth in the County as an opportunity to carry out the Lord's work. A building committee was formed to activate the process of increasing facilities for worship, fellowship and Christian education. Their plan included purchasing three additional acres of land, construction of a new sanctuary which more than doubled the capacity of the existing facility, converting the current building to a fellowship hall and providing the necessary parking. Concurrent with the actions by the building committee an Anchored in Faith Fund Raising Committee was established. The committee challenge was to raise sufficient funds from the current membership to provide facilities to meet the demands of future growth. The generosity of the membership exceeded all expectations. A total of \$388,000 was raised from 51 family units. With the success of the funding campaign and the work of the building committee, in March of 2001 a contract was signed to design and build the new church. Ground was broken in August 2001. The first worship in the new building was held in June 2002 with a dedication in November 2002. Between the first worship and the dedication the old church was converted to a fellowship hall with a commercial kitchen, offices, Sunday school rooms and a library. Almost all the work was performed by Church volunteers, and came in underestimated cost and was finished in time for the Dedication Sunday. By 2019 church attendance for two services had grown to around 285 on a typical Sunday and a total membership of over 500. The restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 Pandemic has reduced attendance by almost 100 per Sunday. In 2022 and beyond the challenge will be to attract new members and get all current members back in regular attendance.

How would you characterize Saint Peter? Saint Peter provides a vibrant, caring, evangelical, spiritual environment in the Lutheran tradition that is poised to meet the challenges of a fast growing, changing community in Brunswick County in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is a giving congregation willing to provide time, talent, and resources in response to tragic circumstances such as hurricanes, tornadoes or fire. The members support the local food bank and have provided the pantry leadership for the past 15 years. The mission statement of Saint Peter is to discern God's mission through worship, learning, witness, and service and to equip and inspire people to serve that mission.

Thank you to the following people who worked to create this wonderful history: Gary and Tootie Tagtmeyer, Natalie Sinclair, and Carol and Glen Rubow. February 1, 2022

#### PASTORS

Rev. John D. Barringer, 1972  
Dean Lingle. 1972  
Rev. Hollis Miller, 1973-1976  
Rev. Herman Fisher, 1977-1979  
Rev. James H. Cone, 1979-1982  
Rev. Paul Townsend, 1982-1988  
Rev. Charles R. McManus 1989-1993  
Rev. Kenneth A. Langsdorf, 1994-1999  
Rev. Joseph Tursi, 2000-2011  
Rev. David Nelson, 2011-2019  
Rev. Nick Ginnatasio, 2018-2021  
Rev. Jason Huebner, 2020-present

