

Bema comes from both the Greek and Hebrew language meaning "step" or "raised platform" from which speakers spoke or read. The use of the Bema in the synagogue carried over into early Christian church architecture. In Eastern Christianity the Bema continues to denote the sanctuary platform. Our Bema includes a ramp on its far (south) side allowing handicap access. A sealed "Prayer Chest" containing prayers from members and friends of Grace has been placed beneath the Bema echoing Isaiah's words "for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people" (56:7).

We hear the Word proclaimed from the Ambo. Ambo is also a Greek word. In early Christian churches it was a portable elevated desk where the Scriptures were chanted or read aloud and from which other parts of the liturgy were conducted. Not until the 14<sup>th</sup> century did the pulpit replace the Ambo. Handcrafted from maple and cherry, a unique feature of the Ambo is the ability to lower the reading desk for a person in a wheelchair or for our youngest members who serve as readers in worship.

Next to the Ambo is the Altar. The top of the altar includes five Maltese crosses, one in each corner and one in the center. They recall the five wounds of Christ on the Cross. Gathered around our Lord's Table we celebrate the Eucharist, the Holy Communion, our Lord's Holy Supper. From this table of forgiveness we are fed with the bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus.

And what is the direction of our journey of discipleship? Looking up from the Bema we see the Cross. This is the direction of our journey of discipleship. The restored "cosmic burst" of multi-colored faceted glass behind the handcrafted cherry and maple Cross celebrates the light of our Resurrection Hope that bursts from Easter's empty tomb. The hole at the center of the Cross reminds us that we do not stop at the Cross. In Christ we receive the gift of eternal life.

Standing at the entrance to our worship space from our gathering space we see the focal points of our Christian journey of faithful discipleship: Font, Table, Ambo, Cross and Resurrection. *Soli Deo Gratia. To God Alone be the Glory.*



### **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to reach out with the love of Jesus to grow disciples and serve our community.

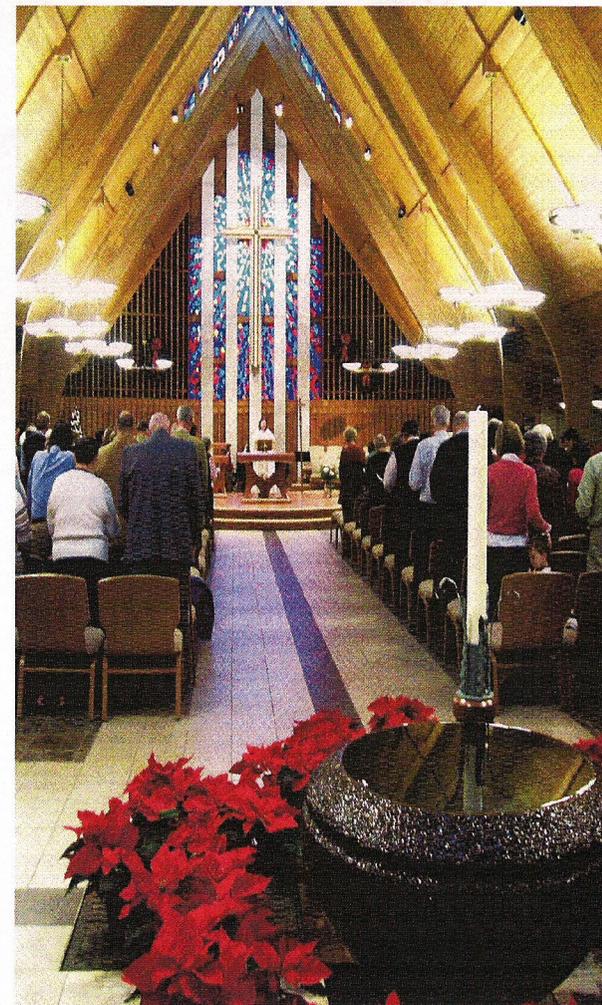
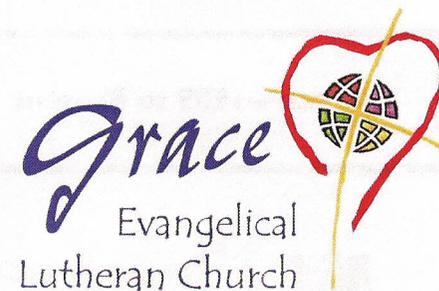
### **Vision Statement**

We envision Grace to be a welcoming Christ-centered community of faith, inviting all, growing in discipleship, sharing in ministries.

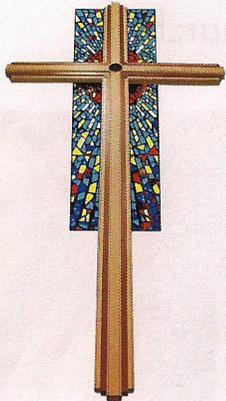
## **Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church**

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## Grace—1909 to Present



The journey leading to Grace's 2008 renovation and expansion of our worship and gathering space began years ago. Indeed, one can say the roots of this journey extend back to when Grace Lutheran Church began as an "in town" mission of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Westerville, under the leadership of Pastor C. W. Pflueger. Meeting on the third Sunday of each month in the Westerville Town hall, Pastor Pflueger preached the first sermon on January 17, 1904. Growing attendance quickly led to conducting worship services on two of every three Sundays. A Sunday School was organized in May 1906. During the spring of 1909, permission was requested of St. Paul's congregation that it form a separate "sister" congregation to serve the growing number of Lutheran Christians in the town of Westerville. The new congregation was formally organized as the Evangelical Lutheran Grace Congregation of Westerville on May 2, 1909. The congregation prospered. On April 17, 1910 the people of Grace voted to build a chapel on East Home Street. The cornerstone was placed on July 17, 1910. Early in 1936 continuing growth led the members of Grace to support a remodeling and expansion program using the foundation of a building fund that had been established in 1921 in anticipation of this

need. A cornerstone for the renovated and expanded building was placed on July 19, 1936. Continued growth of Grace and the community of Westerville inspired the leaders of the congregation to acquire property at the corner of Otterbein and the not-yet-completed Schrock Road, then the southernmost edge of Westerville. Ground was broken on May 15, 1964 for the new building which was dedicated in October 1965. Grace continued to grow both in number and in mission and ministry. New and expanded facilities were again added in the 1990's with new Sunday school classrooms, office space, enhanced and enlarged entrance, expanded parking and a modernized fellowship hall. In 1999 Grace purchased the house immediately to the east of the church property in keeping with Grace's tradition of looking to the future. This tradition of growth and change for the sake of mission and ministry to the glory of God has again been realized in the latest expansion and renovation. Ground was broken on Easter Sunday, March 23, 2008. After an eight-month sojourn of conducting worship services in the auditorium at Westerville South High School, the people and pastors of Grace returned home on the First Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2008. The Service of Dedication took place Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Bishop Callon W. Holloway, Jr., served as preacher and presider. It is fitting that during our centennial year of Christian mission and ministry in the Westerville community we celebrate and give thanks to God for the completion of Phase One of a Master Plan that will eventually add a Family Life Center, expanded space for youth and adult learning and new administrative space.

*For surely I know the plans I have for you,  
says the LORD, plans for your welfare and  
not for harm, to give you a future with hope.  
(Jeremiah 29:11)*

## A Brief Description of our Worship Space



A significant result of our renovation/expansion is Grace no longer has a "back of the church". The new central entrance to our worship space (Nave) from our new gathering space is wonderfully wide and welcoming. The location of the 3 feet in diameter bronze font with water flowing at the entrance into the Nave lifts up the sacrament of Holy Baptism as our entrance into the Church, the Body of Christ. This is what the great German reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) teaches us from the Scriptures and in his Small and Large Catechisms. Baptism is for us a daily dying and rising with Christ. The font's design also allows the baptizing of older children and adults by immersion. The cruciform grating is taken up to reveal steps down and up from an immersion pool, a vivid action recalling our dying and rising with Christ in Holy Baptism (Romans 6). Above the font on the north wall is the new baptismal window. The inverted seashell has long been associated with Christian Baptism. The flowing stained glass' colors recall the waters of Baptism. Each time we enter for worship we are reminded of this great gift of God's grace. Thus, the font is at the entrance and not in the back of our worship space.

Our font stands in relation to other major focal points in our worship space. Martin Luther was fond of calling the baptismal font the "womb" of the church where, by ordinary water joined with the Word and promises of God, we are born again from above as children of God. Born from above in Holy Baptism, we need nourishment for the journey of discipleship. Looking up from the font the center aisle leads us to the Bema on which sit the Ambo and Altar. This is the location of our nourishment for the journey of discipleship.