

Blessings Remembered

God's Word, along with various images and occasional history, are presented on this devotional website page. "Blessings Remembered" will hopefully prompt memories of many personal blessings from God in your lives. May you always trust in God's promised blessings, past, present, future and for all eternity.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8

+++

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."

Psalm 127:1a

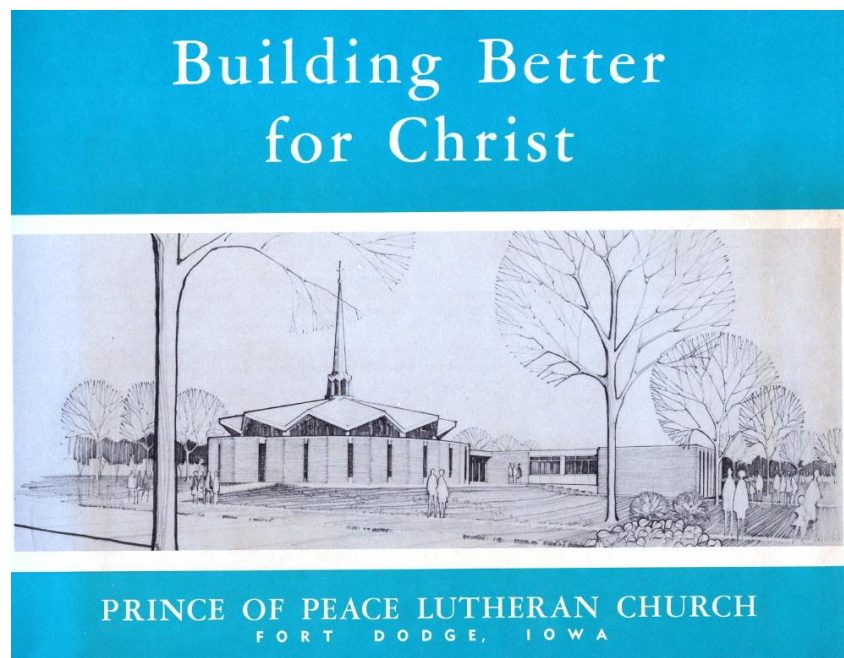


Photo of the Prince of Peace sanctuary from the May 16, 1965 Dedication Program

"When it comes to church buildings, never trust an architect." Those were the words of one of my Seminary professors. He held the opinion that most architects

don't really know about the function of church buildings and seem only concerned with elaborate, even bizarre, and impractical designs. What about Prince of Peace? Were its members wise to have trusted the architects responsible for its design?

In February 1963, the renamed congregation of Prince of Peace, having literally "outgrown" its first church building, needed to build a new house of worship. Therefore, a Building Program was established to raise \$100,000 over three years to build such a structure. The bid for construction was awarded to the Fort Dodge firm of **Maiwurm-Wiegman, Architects**. The firm had drawn preliminary designs and renditions for the new church building and these were printed in a brochure for the congregation to be used for the Building Program.



Cover of the Building Program Brochure

The building cornerstone was set in 1964 and dedicated to the Glory of God on May 16, 1965. Standing now for almost 60 years, the building is rather unique in design. In Architectural circles, its design is an example of **Mid-Century Modern**.

Did the architects get it right? After all, they designed a sanctuary that certainly departed from the "usual" that's so familiar in most churches. The Prince of Peace sanctuary takes getting used to, and may even be puzzling to people who have never "encountered" such a sanctuary before.

During the time I served as Pastor to Prince of Peace, I read some of the information concerning the architects reasoning behind their design of the sanctuary. After reading their ideas, and after “getting used” to the configuration of the sanctuary, I developed a great appreciation for its design.

There are only 8 rows of pews arranged in a circular fashion. The architects thought this would give more of a sense of community when people gathered to worship. Worshippers are able to look around and see the community of believers that surrounds them. The distance between the people is not typical of churches where front rows are often sparsely occupied while a significant gap of empty pews exists between the front and where many people tend to gravitate in the back rows. Also, whether the architects saw a theological aspect or not, there’s a wonderful significance in having the altar and large cross placed in the center of the sanctuary. It certainly, and rightfully, becomes the immediate focal point of the sanctuary, as is seen by the first photo above. It stands as a clear reminder to worshippers of what St. Paul declared in **Galatians 6:14**: *“far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

The Communion Rail encircling the altar gives further emphasis to a sense of community of believers as we gather for the Sacrament of Holy Communion. *“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”* **1 Corinthians 12:12 – 13**

I truly appreciated that, whenever I stood in the pulpit, the large cross was clearly visible between me and the people. Every direction I turned the cross was seen as I was reminded of St. Paul’s words: In **1 Corinthians 1:23 and 9:16** *“...we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, “For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”* As I preached to fellow believers, whom God dearly loves for Jesus’ sake, I knew that it’s faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ crucified that makes us His people and it has nothing to do with the Pastor. I was simply the person through whom God declared His Gospel words of promise.



Consider this recent photo of the sanctuary. The cross also serves as a reminder to all the worshippers of the sole focus of our life together in Jesus. **Colossians 1:19 – 20** reminds us of this focus; *“For in [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”* Also, notice that regardless of where you sit, the cross is always seen as you gaze around the sanctuary. It often stands between you and other brothers and sisters in Jesus who are present. I see this as a constant reminder that the cross always needs to be before us, to the point of being our primary focus as we interact with all of our fellow believers and with all whom we come into contact outside the walls of our church. **Hebrews 12:2 – 1** tells us; *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

By faith, we keep looking to Jesus, as we remember the blessings we continually receive in the Lord. I pray that, by His Spirit’s work in us we would also remember to share His blessings with fellow believers and with all those around us who need

the blessings of His love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, peace and life. In His Word God reminds us; *“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ...For the body does not consist of one member but of many...If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”* **1 Corinthians 12:12, 14 and 26.** Also, we are told; *“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”* **Romans 12:9 -13**

PREPARE
RESOLVE
INSPIRE
NOURISH
COOPERATE
ENTHUSE

OFFER
FELLOWSHIP

PRAY
ESTABLISH
ADVANCE
CHALLENGE
ERECT

The above was published on the back of the Prince of Peace Building Program of 1963. Its words of encouragement still apply today and are helpful to remember. I pray you would consider these words as you remember all the gracious and wonderful blessings you have received over the years as the people of Prince of Peace have gathered, and continue to gather, in worship. I especially bring your attention to the last word, ERECT, which means “build”. Ultimately, there’s only One Architect that we must trust, God Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. For He

alone “erects”, that is, He builds His eternal Kingdom, a lively community, in and through us, for the sake of Jesus Christ. For “...in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ...So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” **Ephesians 2:13, 19–22**

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.” Psalm 95:6–7

+ + +

Author’s comment:

Although the building of Prince of Peace Church is quite unique in its design, below are photos of at least three other **Mid-Century Modern** church buildings. Notice anything that looks familiar?



Left to right: Christ the King Catholic Church of Columbus, Ohio; Meadowbrook Baptist Church of Houston, Texas; St. Pius Catholic Church of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Rev. Bill VanNostrand

All Scripture quoted from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016) Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles. All underlining of Scripture for emphasis was done by Rev. VanNostrand