

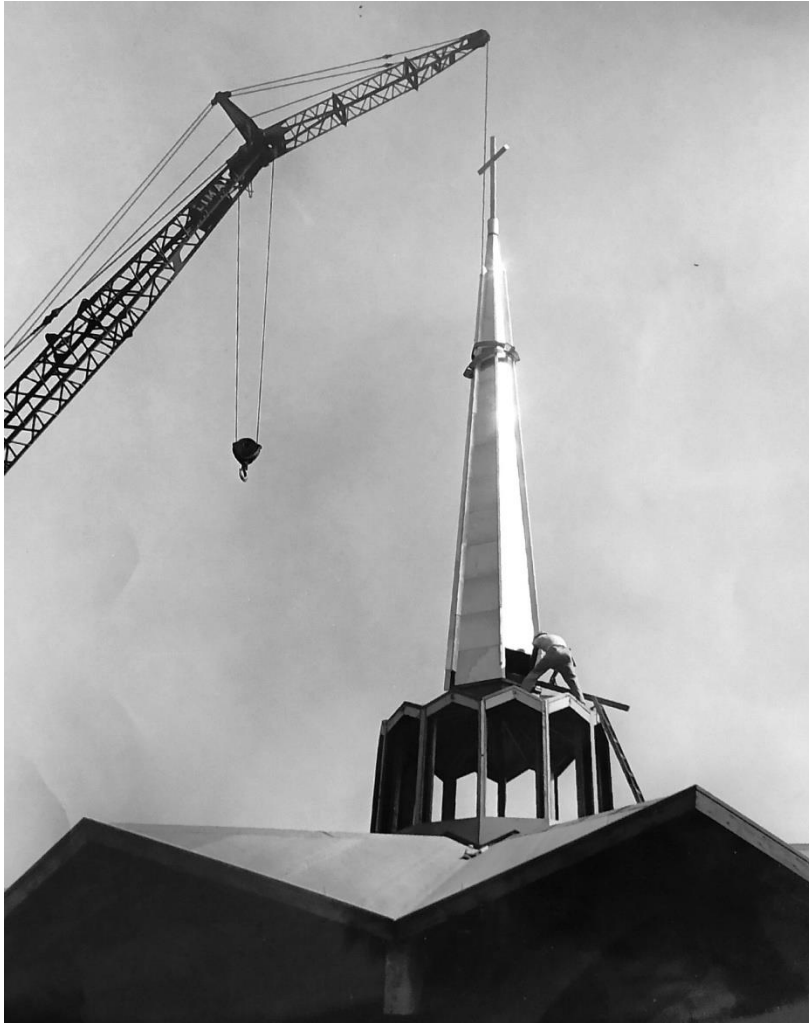
Blessings Remembered

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

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Lift High the Cross, Times Three!

[Jesus said] "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." John 12:32



The spire and cross being installed at Prince of Peace in the summer of 1964
Photo from Prince of Peace Archives

The Hymn "*Lift High the Cross*", #837 in the **Lutheran Service Book**, begins with the refrain; "**Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim Till all the world adore His sacred name.**"

During the years 1963 through early 1965, Prince of Peace was in the middle of a building program to construct a new house of worship at a new location. This was deemed necessary because the congregation's original Church building, constructed at 13th Ave S. and 26th St. and dedicated in 1926, had become too small for the growing membership.

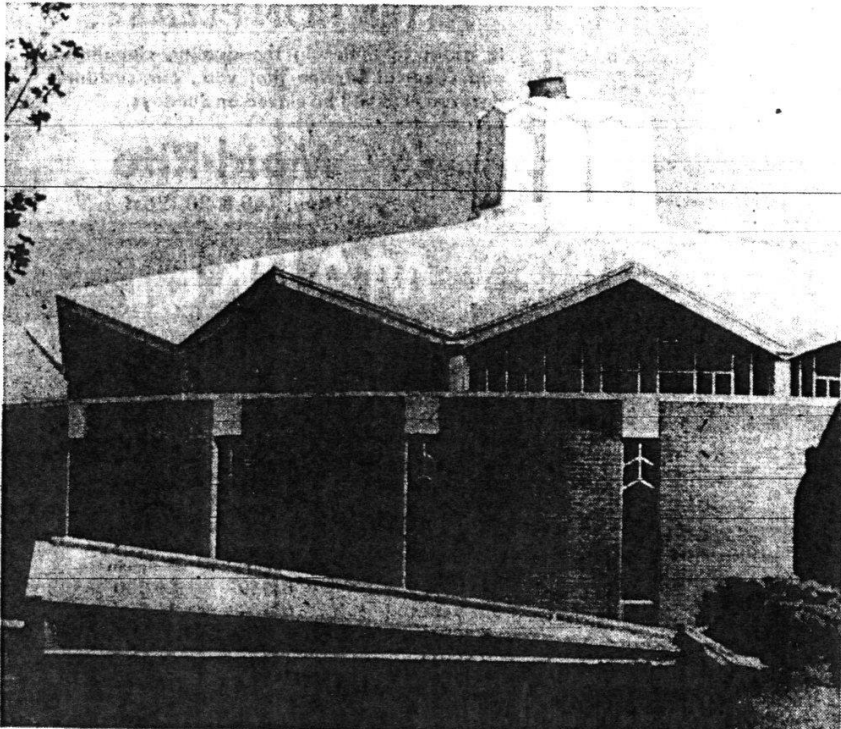
When it was dedicated in 1965, the new building was crowned with a spire made of wood covered with aluminum and topped with a bright aluminum cross. The cross towered close to 75 feet above the ground. It could be seen brightly reflecting the sun in the sky above the local homes over the neighborhood as it declared the congregation's desire to "proclaim the love of God in Jesus Christ". It invited all people to God's house of worship, where they would hear about the love of Christ.

Through the following years, the tall shining spire and cross gave its witness over southeast Fort Dodge. Inside the church walls, the faithful people of Prince of Peace regularly gathered to receive the blessings of the Cross of Christ crucified, through Word and Sacrament.

Then, on Wednesday, May 16, 1979 (fourteen years *to the day* of the building's dedication and coincidentally fifty three years *to the day* of the dedication of the congregation's first house of worship) a sudden windstorm tore the spire and cross off the peak of the sanctuary, sending it crashing to the ground. The next day, **The Messenger** newspaper reported the incident saying; "*While mere humans braced themselves against strong, gusty winds Wednesday and still made some progress, a metal and wood structure strained and finally gave way to the forces of nature.*" The article continued to say that the structure came crashing down about 3:00 pm while the secretary, Margaret Siefert, was in her office. Margaret was quoted as saying; "*I was in the office, but I never heard it or saw it.*" She learned about it by way of a phone call from a neighbor. (That neighbor was none other than congregation member Sue Macek, who had noticed and contacted Margaret who thankfully was unharmed). Although the spire and cross

were damaged beyond repair, there was very little damage caused to the church building. A wonderful blessing! In this, we remember that God is true to His Word; ***“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.”*** Psalm 57:1. For, ***“Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”*** Proverbs 30:5

The **Messenger** article went on to say; *“winds yesterday gusted up to about 30 miles per hour, not normally considered strong enough to damage buildings. But the Rev. W.H. Jenke, (their misspelling) pastor of the church, said ‘there was always action up there’ when the wind blew.”*



A spire perched atop the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church was blown off by a gust of wind Wednesday afternoon. The 36-foot structure of wood and metal was damaged

beyond repair but caused little damage to the building when it toppled over. No one was nearby when the accident occurred.

—Messenger photo by Ruth Hall

Photo published in the Thursday, May 17, 1979 edition of **The Messenger**.

From the microfilm archives of **The Messenger**

The congregation was suddenly left with its church building no longer giving highly visible witness to the Cross of Christ lifted high for all people. Yet, it was never without the gracious benefit of the Love of God in Jesus, Who was lifted on the cross to suffer, die and rise from the dead. Losing the cross outside did not

stop the blessings of the proclamation of the Gospel. The members continued to receive the Gospel promise of God's forgiveness of sins and life everlasting for the sake of Jesus. For the cross high above the sanctuary had only outwardly served as a reminder of God's gracious promise to each person in the Victory of Jesus' death and glorious resurrection from the dead.

Still, God gave another blessing to be remembered. Through the faithfulness of member John Macek, a temporary cross was soon built and positioned atop the circular sanctuary roof. Though certainly not as tall as the one before, a cross again gave witness high above the neighborhood surrounding Prince of Peace. This second cross, constructed of white painted wood, was only intended to be temporary until a more durable replacement was chosen. Though temporary, the second cross that was "lifted high to proclaim the love of Christ," lasted many years before it succumbed to constant sun, wind and rain. The wooden cross finally deteriorated to the point that it needed to be replaced.



A photo of the second cross when it was laid to rest.

Photo courtesy of Sue Macek

In 1994 the church roof was in need of repair. As this project moved ahead, the present steel cross was constructed and installed atop the sanctuary. This third cross came at no cost to the congregation. The cost was covered by an anonymous donation, another remembered blessing from God.

Below are photos of the three crosses over the years.



Photo from Prince of Peace archives



Photo from Prince of Peace archives



Photo: Bill Van Nostrand

There have been three different crosses on the Prince of Peace house of worship over the almost sixty years of its presence within the community of Fort Dodge. To this day Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, both outwardly and most importantly within its walls and among the lives of its members, continues to lift high the cross, proclaiming the love of Christ. Most certainly, through His promise of “Blessings Received” for the sake of Jesus, God’s love never fails.

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:22 - 23

As we remember God’s Blessings to us we keep proclaiming the love of Christ to the community and to one another in the wonderful blessings received and remembered as people dearly loved by God in Jesus Who was lifted upon the cross for us all.

Stanzas 4 and 5 of “*Lift High the Cross*” speak of this so well:

*“O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree.
As Thou has promised, draw us all to Thee.”
“Let ev’ry race and ev’ry language tell
Of Him who saves our lives from death and hell.”*

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. Colossians 1:19–20

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Author’s note: The Wednesday May 16, 1979 edition of ***The Messenger*** gave the day’s weather forecast as a high possibility of storms. Do you think they got it right?

All Scripture quoted from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016) Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

“Lift High the Cross”

Text: George W. Kitchin, 1827-1912; rev. Michael R. Newbolt, 1874-1956, alt. Music: Sydney H. Nicholson, 1875-1947]