



A Brief History of  
**St. John's Lutheran Church**  
Antioch, California  
1947- Present

**I**n the summer of 1944 a young missionary from the Augustana Home Mission Board in Minneapolis, Miss Olga Lundmark, conducted a survey of prospects for a Lutheran church in Antioch. The survey indicated a small number of families were interested. Pastor Lloyd Burke of St. Paul's in Oakland and Pastor Carl Samuelson of Sharon Lutheran Church in Port Chicago continued the groundwork. On March 16, 1945 Pastor Samuelson entered an ad in the Antioch Ledger announcing a meeting of a new church to be held in the Boy Scout Shack on 11th and E Street.

**T**he first service was held at this improvised location on March 18, 1945. Twelve people attended; Pastor Samuelson presided. The first offering of \$4.20 was received. Services continued at that location. The room was set up on Saturday evenings for Sunday services until it became too crowded. Services were moved to the Seventh Day Adventist Church on 11th and "H" Street in March of 1946. During the fall of 1945 Pastor Reuben Swanson conducted confirmation classes in a member's home. Sunday School was started in January of 1946.

**S**everal pastors helped this struggling "mission" until Pastor Clarence E. Carlstrom was called from the U.S. Army Chaplaincy in Illinois. Pastor Carlstrom and his family arrived in November of 1946. On Sunday April 20, 1947 St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Augustana Synod was officially organized. Sixty-two adults signed the charter. Total baptized membership was 92.

**I**n 1949 three lots were purchased at 19th and "C" Street at a cost of \$5,000. The cornerstone for the sanctuary was laid on a rainy Sunday afternoon, February 2, 1951. Construction was begun and the congregation dedicated its new building on September 2, 1951.

**P**astor Carlstrom passed away January 15, 1955. The congregation was deeply saddened by the loss of this dynamic man who did so much to establish St. John's.

**T**he Rev. John Victor Strom was then called from Omaha, Nebraska to be pastor of the growing congregation. In October of 1959 Pastor Strom resigned to accept a call to Chesterton, Indiana. Pastor Roger Oliver was then called from Illinois. He began his ministry here in February 1960. St. John's became a congregation in the newly merged Lutheran Church in America in 1962.

**P**astor Oliver resigned in October 1965 to accept a call to Yreka, California. The Rev. Gerald St. John was then called from Phoenix, Arizona. Pastor St. John resigned to accept a call to Carson City, Nevada in February of 1970. Michael Rogers was called as a seminary graduate from the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley. He began his ministry here in June 1970. At the beginning of 1972 St. John's had a confirmed membership of 229 and a baptized membership of 353. Our annual budget had grown to just under \$28,000.

**P**astor Rogers resigned in 1975. Pastor Roger Lee was then called to be pastor of St. John's in 1976. Special fellowship groups stand out during this time, home dinners, marriage encounter and Koininia, to mention a few. These groups brought members together for discussions and enjoyment. The teenage youth group grew with the addition of youth ministry.

**I**n the early 80's our council started a study to determine the best way for our congregation to grow and become more of a witness in Antioch. Our property would not allow needed growth. Concordia Lutheran (our LCMS neighbor) also needed to strengthen its ministry. Our council and congregation, after much prayer and deliberation, agreed to join in ministry with Concordia.

**S**t. John's was sold, funds were used to improve the Concordia site, and joint worship began. An office building was constructed and together St. John's and Concordia were ready to "go forward". However, a serious earthquake fault was discovered on the Concordia property, which limited any additional expansion. As a result the Concordia property was also sold and a joint search for a new church site began. St. John's and Concordia, each with it's own pastor, worshipped together in a school auditorium, which was cold and unattractive. Finally, with financial help through the ELCA Synod and many dedicated members from both congregations the present church sanctuary was built in 1986.

**A**fter about 15 years with St. John's, Pastor Lee was called to another congregation. This brought many problems to the delicate balance of the "joint" St. John's/Concordia structure. St. John's members strongly wanted to maintain an ELCA identity in Antioch. St. John's and Concordia concluded that they needed to go their own way in order for both to continue their ministries. St. John's bought out Concordia's interest in the building in 1995. At the time St. John's separated from Concordia the congregation was down to fewer than 80 adult members, many of who were retired with fixed incomes. The number of children worshipping could be counted on one hand.

**P**astor Rod Platte and his wife Jeanette accepted our call in 1996. In 1998 St. John's began planning for a Christian School and called pastor Karen Woida to assist Pastor Rod and to act as the school administrator. The school plan had to be abandoned at the last minute. Pastor Rod resigned shortly there after.

**P**astor Woida was called to be senior pastor by St. John's in 1999. In 2004 and 2005 new church offices were constructed, the worship center was remodeled, a new professional sound system was installed and the nursery was expanded. In 2005 Pastor Woida resigned her call for health reasons.

**I**n July, 2006, Pastor Linda Vogelgesang was called to St. John's. With the continued growth in truly dedicated members, and by following the guidance of the Holy Spirit St. John's is an ELCA congregation with a future.