

HISTORY OF THE APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

*I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.
Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and
companions' sakes, I will now say peace be within thee.
Psalm 122:1, 7-8*

The Apostolic Lutheran Church of Seattle was incorporated in 1935. However, the history of the Apostolic Lutheran Church in the greater Seattle area dates back nearer to the beginning of the 20th century. Our national church federation, the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America, has its roots in the Laestadian Revival Movement which spread through Finland and the Scandinavian countries in the 1800s. There were adherents to the Laestadian Revival Movement in Kent, Washington, a community south of Seattle, in the very early 1900s and possibly the late 1800s.

There was an Apostolic Lutheran Church in Soos Creek—an area east of Kent, Washington, where many Finnish Christians from the Laestadian Revival Movement had settled. They had their own church building in Soos Creek, their own local preachers, and many of the elders of the faith from Finland and other parts of the United States had preached there. Pastor Isaac Seppala continued conducting services in Kent until the late 1960s. It was in the early 1950s; however, that the church in Soos Creek was sold due to declining membership. In the years immediately prior to that time, we had the practice of canceling a Sunday service in our Seattle church once each summer and both groups met in the old Soos Creek church. There was also another small Finnish Lutheran Church in Kent. In the latter years of that congregation's life, it was without a pastor. Their members invited Brother Isaac Seppala to conduct services in their church, monthly and sometimes twice a month.

In the north end of Seattle—at Richmond Beach, there was a group of Norwegian immigrants who came about the turn of the century, in the early 1900s. This group included a man by the name of John L. Johnson, known to most as J.L. Johnson, who came from Tromso, Norway. He was a preacher in the Laestadian Revival Movement and was active in arranging services in the Richmond Beach area with many of the services being held in his own home. He was also listed on the unordained ministerial roll of our national church and was instrumental in making arrangements for our rental of the Free Lutheran Church at Richmond Beach during the years 1945 to 1949. His wife Sigrid was the daughter of Anton Holmgren of Hammerfest, Norway. Pastor J.L. Johnson died in 1948.



Pastor Isaac & Mary Seppala



Pastor John L. & Sigrid Johnson

Across Puget Sound in Poulsbo, Washington, was another settlement of believers from the Laestadian Revival Movement—many of whom were also immigrants. A man by the name of John Fogman, who figured much in the early history of our Seattle congregation, had lived in Poulsbo before moving to the Ballard District of Seattle. In the case of the Erickson family they made their home in Poulsbo before moving on to Clatskanie, Oregon. In the 1940s members of our Seattle congregation would ferry from Edmonds to Kingston, Washington, to attend home services in Poulsbo. The last member of the Poulsbo group was Wendla Johnson—who passed away in the later 1970s. Bill and Hilda Isakson, who moved from Clatskanie, Oregon, to Suquamish (near Poulsbo) in the early 1970s, were close friends and frequent visitors with Wendla Johnson and commuted across the sound to attend our services.

And then in the city of Seattle there came to be many families of the faith in the 1920s and 1930s—so that by the early 1930s consideration began to be given to organizing an ALC congregation in Seattle. Among these early families were the John Selins, Isaac Seppalas, the Pihl families—Hilding and Folke from Sweden, Oscar Wirkkalas, Leonard Sathers, Leppaniemis, Degerstroms, John Fogmans, Leonard Smiths, Arnold Andersons, Ditlef Korshavens, Helmer Skutviks, Cornelius Forshaugs, and Carl Hansons. And when the economic conditions began to improve after the great depression, there was an influx of young single people to Seattle seeking employment.

Services were first held in homes—these Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian Christians meeting together and using the means of translating sermons in an effort to benefit everyone.

The organizational meeting was held on April 27, 1935, at the home of Oscar and Ida Wirkkala. The minutes of that meeting show that Isaac Seppala was selected as temporary chairman, Arnold B. Anderson as temporary secretary, and John Selin as temporary treasurer. These three men acted in these capacities at additional meetings until the constitution and by-laws were drawn up and approved. The first permanent board was elected at a meeting on December 1, 1935, with Isaac Seppala serving as pastor:

John Selin, Chairman
Cornelius Forshaug, Vice Chairman

Joseph Wirkkala, Secretary
Arnold B. Anderson, Treasurer

Oscar Wirkkala, Clarence Anderson, and John Wirkkala were later elected as additional board members. Mrs. Hjordis Skutvik was elected as the first Sunday school superintendent. An offering taken at one of the early meetings amounted to \$3.75 and the membership fee was established at fifty cents per person per year.

Joseph Wirkkala, Clarence Anderson, Hilding Pihl, and Oscar Wirkkala were appointed as a committee to locate a church that would be suitable for rental. The Swedish Baptist Church, located at 14th Avenue NW and NW 67th Street, just north of the Ballard High School, was selected at a rental fee of \$5.00 per month. The congregation met at this location from 1935 until the summer of 1944.



Baptist Church Rental Location, 1935 - 1944

Isaac Seppala continued to serve as minister although there were other brothers who participated in the services. Among them were John Fogman, Leonard Sather, John L. Johnson, Leppaniemi, and Arnold B. Anderson. Translations continued to be used in an effort to reach everyone. In addition to John Selin, Leonard Smith, and Cornelius Forshaug, Elsie Selin, Melga Sormula, and Hazel Hilman were used in this translation work.

The Chris and Carrie Holmgren family moved into the area in the fall of 1940. In 1941 Chris Holmgren was chosen to be an assistant to Pastor Isaac Seppala. Isaac Seppala and Chris Holmgren continued in these positions until 1946 when Brother Seppala declined to remain as pastor. The roles were then reversed, and Brother Holmgren became pastor with Brother Seppala as assistant. Cornelius Forshaug also assisted.



Members of the Seattle Apostolic Lutheran Church – 1939

Bottom Left Step, Up to Porch and Back Down to Bottom Right Step

Isaac Seppala, Inga Holmgren, Elma Selin, Hilding Pihl w/child, Pearl Forshaug, Joe Wirkkala,
Chris Holmgren, Ida Wirkkala, Oscar Wirkkala, and Ivan Seppala (young boy)

Right side of Porch

Margrethe Questad, John Fogman, Mrs. Oscar Anderson, Selma Holmgren, Mary Seppala

The congregation met at rented facilities from 1935 until 1950. In addition to the Baptist Church already mentioned, the congregation also used the Finnish Lutheran Church in Ballard on 17th Avenue NW and NW 65th Street during the summer of 1944. This congregation was served by Pastor Otto Kaarto. During this era, the Finnish Lutheran Church congregation had listed their church for sale and had broken ground for a new building on NW 85th Street and 13th Avenue NW. Although our congregation submitted a bid of \$3,500 to purchase their NW 65th Street church and parsonage, we were not successful in purchasing it. Difficulties arose in the

Finnish Lutheran congregation and nearly half of the membership left. A considerable number of them began to worship with us. Most of these members were nearing retirement and many were already retired at that time; thereby increasing the senior population of our congregation. As for the Finnish Lutheran congregation, it continues to operate with the help of the State Church of Finland.

Next our congregation conducted services at the Free Lutheran Church at Richmond Beach from 1945 to 1949. The Free Lutheran congregation, now known as the First Lutheran Church of Richmond Beach, had begun the first phase of construction on their new church located on 8th Avenue NW just off Richmond Beach Road. Although their old church was offered for sale, our congregation voted against the purchase.



Richmond Beach First Lutheran Church Rental Location, 1945 -1949

The third effort to purchase a church was in Ballard—the Evangelical Free Church on NW 61st Street (a block south from the church we actually purchased). In July 1949 we submitted a bid of \$5,000, but it was not accepted. Our next effort was the purchase of a lot on North 105th Street and Linden Avenue. The county government denied a building permit because they determined the lot was too small—not enough parking space. The last rental facility of that period was the NW Branch of the YMCA in Ballard, later known as the Sunset Hill Community Club, located on 30th Avenue NW and NW 66th Street.



YMCA Rental Location, Summer – Fall 1949

Next we will see how God led us to the church in Ballard on NW 62nd Street that would become our church home for twenty-three years from 1950-1973. In 1949 our national church federation invited the first visiting minister from Finland to tour the United States after World War II. Eino Miettunen from Rovaniemi, Finland, was called. He was not a State Church pastor, but was a cantor and organist in the State Church of Finland. At this time our congregation was holding services in the YMCA building. Pastor Chris Holmgren expressed dissatisfaction with that facility for the upcoming series of special services and asked his son Alvin Holmgren to accompany him in search for a church that could be rented for this occasion. After driving around in the Ballard District, they came across the Zion Lutheran Church on NW 62nd Street and 20th Avenue NW. While driving slowly by the church they saw an open door on the east side of the building. They stopped and knocked on the door to inquire whether or not the church building could be rented to us for a series of services scheduled in the near future. The pastor invited them in for a tour of the facility. Then he suggested: "Maybe you would like to buy this church? It is for sale." The Zion Lutheran congregation rented their church to us for the three days of services with Eino Miettunen. This gave our congregation sufficient opportunity to evaluate the building and consider purchasing it.



*Zion Lutheran Church Rental Location
Special Services 1949*

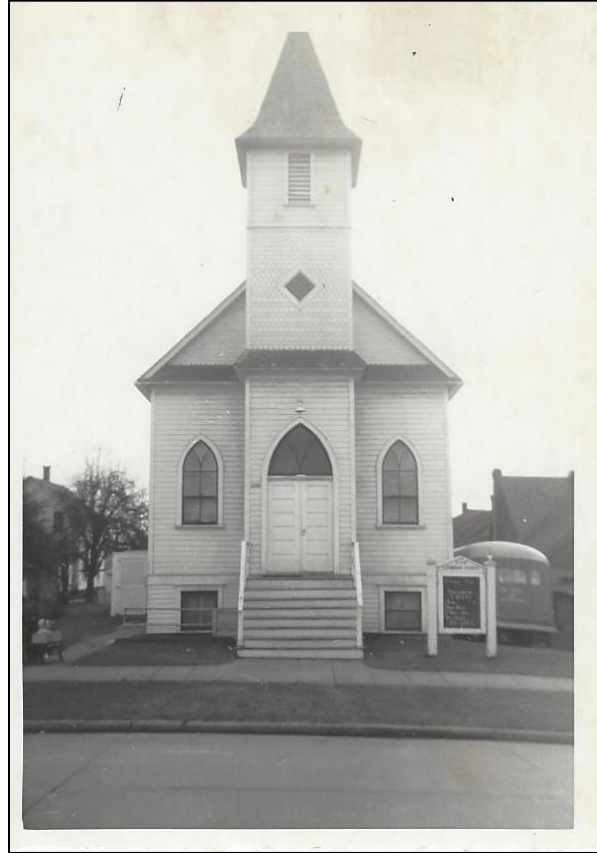
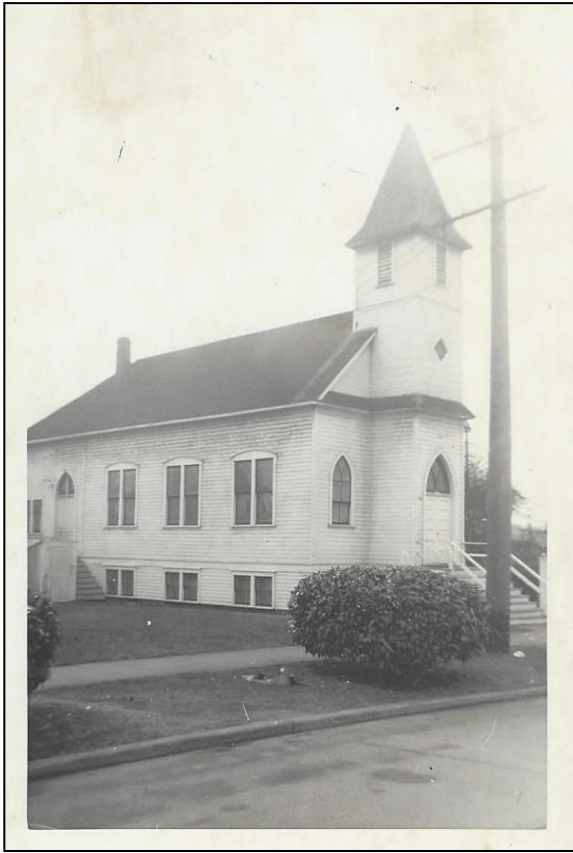


1949

*Pastor Eino Miettunen (age 34) was the
first pastor from Finland to be called for
the annual ALC convention after WW II.
He served as a cantor in Finland.*

The three-days of services in 1949 with the Finland pastor were well attended. The sermons delivered by Pastor Eino Miettunen were spirit-filled and ably translated by Pastor Arnold B. Anderson, a charter member of our Seattle congregation, who at the time was the pastor of the ALC in Esko, Minnesota. Special memories of those services have lingered long in the hearts of the attendees as voices were raised in praise and thanksgiving to God.

In 1950 our congregation purchased the church building in Ballard from the Zion Lutheran Church, a congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. The purchase price was \$7,500. A member of our congregation financed an interest free loan of \$6,000. We had joint occupancy of the building with Zion Lutheran until the end of the year. The Zion people continued the use of the morning hour and we held our services in the afternoon.



1949 – Left to Right:
Anna Korshaven, Carrie (Rostad) Holmgren, Signe Rostad, June Jacobsen, Julie Hellum, Pearl



*Our Ballard Church Sanctuary
with Ida (Holmgren) Kumma at the piano*



Seattle ALC Congregation - 1954

Our former church home located at 1763 NW 62nd Street, Seattle, Washington, is the oldest church building in Ballard that is still used as a church. It was built in 1890 and is on the list of historic buildings that prevents exterior alteration and is also pictured in a book titled *Early Churches of Washington State* by Arnold and Esther Pearson, published 1980, University of Washington Press. The German congregation that built it in 1890 was served for five years by a pastor who made his living working at one of the many shingle mills in Ballard. Later the congregation was not able to continue without a pastor and so they rented it to the Ballard School District for use as a school building. It was in 1904 that the congregation reclaimed the building, enlarged and renovated it, and began its ministry again.



While we were still in this building, each year one of the professors in architecture at the University of Washington would bring his students to see this classic church. A couple dozen years ago the present owners of the building made major repairs to the exterior—replacing the roof and large sections of siding, repainting, pouring new sidewalks, etc.

It was in 1950 that our congregation joined the federation of churches known as the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America.

When Alvin Holmgren returned from military service in 1953, he was elected as the Sunday School Superintendent. By 1955 the congregation asked him to participate in the services by leading in prayer and giving testimonies of faith as well as leading the weeknight Bible studies. Alvin Holmgren was ordained into the ministry in June of 1958. Pastor Andrew Mickelsen came for the ordination service; Alvin's father Pastor Chris Holmgren assisted in the ceremony.

Alvin Holmgren leading the Sunday school general lesson – 1950s



During this era, Larry and Harriet Rasaka were members of our congregation. Brother Larry Rasaka assisted in the preaching of the Word as well as in translating sermons. Sister Hilda Matta also translated sermons when the Finnish language was used.



In 1959 the congregation purchased the house on the west side of the Ballard church from Mrs. Lulu Rud who was permitted to live in the house as long as she was able. The house was then demolished in the mid-1960s and the lot developed for parking.

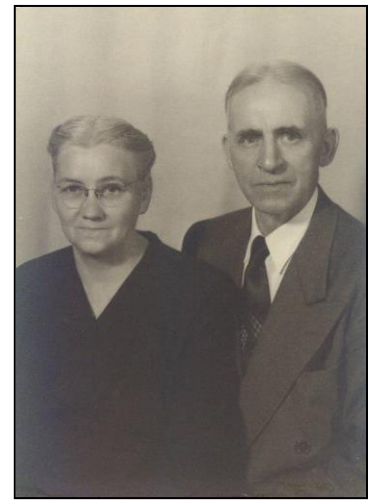


In 1964 Alvin Holmgren was elected as pastor of the Seattle congregation and in February of 1965 began full-time ministry which continued for 30 years before Pastor Holmgren opted for semi-retirement and the opportunity to travel and accept speaking invitations from congregations within the federation.



Left:
*Pastor Alvin & Mary
Holmgren, 1966*

Right:
*Pastor Chris & Carrie
Holmgren, 1953*

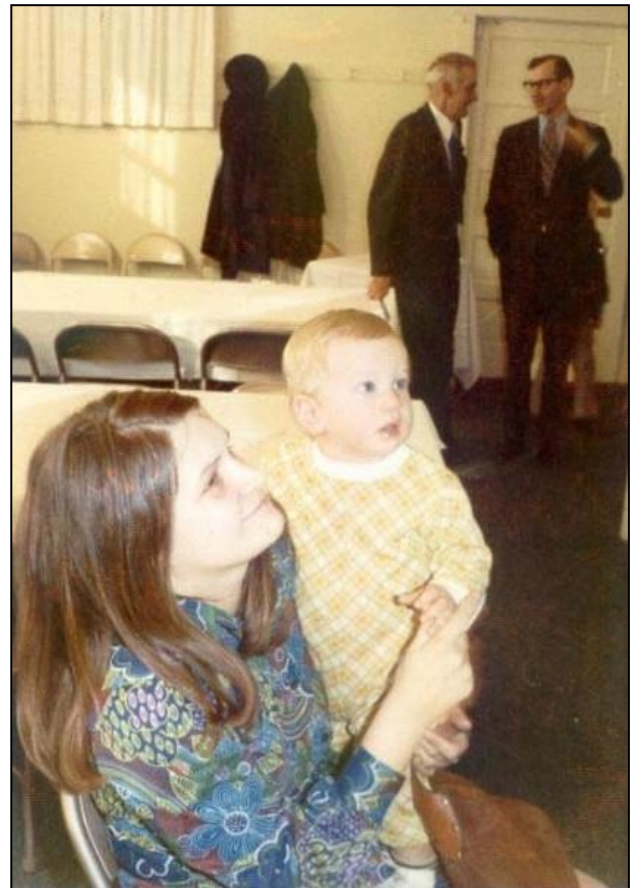


The elder pastors Chris Holmgren and Isaac Seppala remained active in the congregation's ministry until advanced age. During the latter years of Chris Holmgren's ministry, he was no longer eligible for a driver's license, so his son Alvin Holmgren assisted him with hospital calls, nursing home visits, funerals, weddings, and so on. However, Pastor Chris Holmgren and his wife Carrie did not need transportation to the church in Ballard as they lived in the house next to the church on the east side. Following the death of Pastor Chris Holmgren in 1971, the congregation purchased the Holmgren home on the east side of the old church from Mrs. Carrie Holmgren. Pastor Isaac Seppala passed away in 1973 and his widow Mrs. Mary Seppala relocated to the Bay Area to live near their son Ivan Seppala and his family.



*Ballard Church Basement
Fellowship Hall*

1972 - 1973



*Above
Easter Sunday 1973*

*Carolyn Questad w/ son Brian
Kelly & Alvin Holmgren in background*

*Left
Senior Citizen Luncheon - 1973*

In 1966, with a view toward building a new church, a lot was purchased on the east side of Aurora Avenue on North 167th Street and Stone Way. However, due to the economic downturn of the late 1960s, this lot was sold in 1970 and thought was given toward enlarging the old church in Ballard. The city refused to grant permits for the proposed project, so we began looking for land north of the city of Seattle.

In 1972 our Shoreline location was purchased for the sum of \$25,000 and our Ballard church was sold in 1973. During a period of six months we shared our Ballard church with the buyer. Our worship hour was at 9:30 a.m. and the buyer began their service at 11:30 a.m. During that time we were unable to have our regular Sunday school sessions, so we devoted a part of the worship time for the children. After the opening hymn and prayer, a message for the children was given and a song from the children's section of the book was sung. The remainder of the service was the same. Our agreement with the buyers stipulated that if we needed to remain in the church building longer than six months, we would pay rent. When the six-month sharing period was over, we decided to rent the Nordic Hall facility in Ballard, allowing us to return to our normal schedule. We even hosted the ALC West Coast Fall Services there.



*Ground Breaking Service, October 7, 1973
Carrie Holmgren, Pastor Chris Holmgren's widow, and Anna Korshaven, Charter Member*

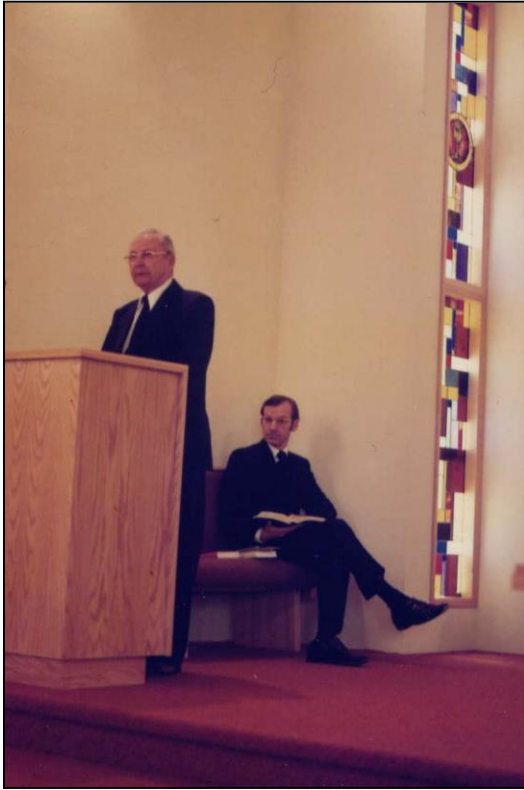
Ground breaking for our new church building was on October 7, 1973, the first service was conducted on March 31, 1974, and the first wedding, David and Karen (Selin) Impola, was conducted a week later. The second wedding ceremony in our new church home was that of our future pastor and wife, Stan and Shirley (Holmgren) Lampinen, on December 7, 1974.

At the time of construction, our church address was considered an unincorporated part of Seattle. Our property now falls within the city limits of the City of Shoreline. We owe much to many members of our congregation for what was done to enable us to build our current church building. The members of the congregation worked well together. Former member Ted Halone, who was living in California at the time, volunteered to supervise the job. Len Holmgren's general contractor's license was used since Ted Halone did not carry a Washington State license. Edward Selin was the treasurer at the time and was much involved in the project. Clarence Holmgren and Olaf Johnson and many others were active in the construction process.

L to R
Ted
Halone
Olaf
Johnson
Edward
Selin
Kelly
Holmgren
w/
Harriet
Holmgren



Dedication of the new church was on June 2, 1974—the Day of Pentecost that year. Our late brother and faithful laborer Pastor Andrew Mickelsen came to dedicate the church.



Brothers Ivan Seppala and Ben Johnson, who also began their preaching here in the 1960s, served with Pastor Alvin Holmgren until they moved from the city. Ivan Seppala continues to serve the Berkeley, California, congregation, and Ben Johnson serves the Astoria, Oregon, congregation.

In later years, God called three of our local young men into the ministry: Stan Lampinen, Bruce Selin, and Gene Mixon. First, brothers Stan Lampinen and Bruce Selin began serving with Pastor Alvin Holmgren in our congregation in the mid-1980s as well as answering the call of the ALC Western and Foreign missions. Stan Lampinen and Bruce Selin were elected as Associate Pastors in our congregation and both were ordained into the ministry in 2004. Pastor Earl Kaurala was the ordaining pastor for Stan Lampinen, and Pastor Ivan Seppala was the ordaining pastor for Bruce Selin. While Gene Mixon was serving as our Sunday School Superintendent, God called him to preach his Word as well.



L to R: Pastor Gene Mixon, Pastor Alvin Holmgren, Pastor Stan Lampinen - 2006

In 1995 Pastor Alvin Holmgren went into semi-retirement and, as his health declined over the intervening years, the congregation began to depend upon our three local speaking brothers to deliver the sermons and conduct the work of the church. Alvin Holmgren retired as pastor on December 31, 2005, and was granted the title Pastor Emeritus in recognition for his 47 years of service to the congregation since his ordination.

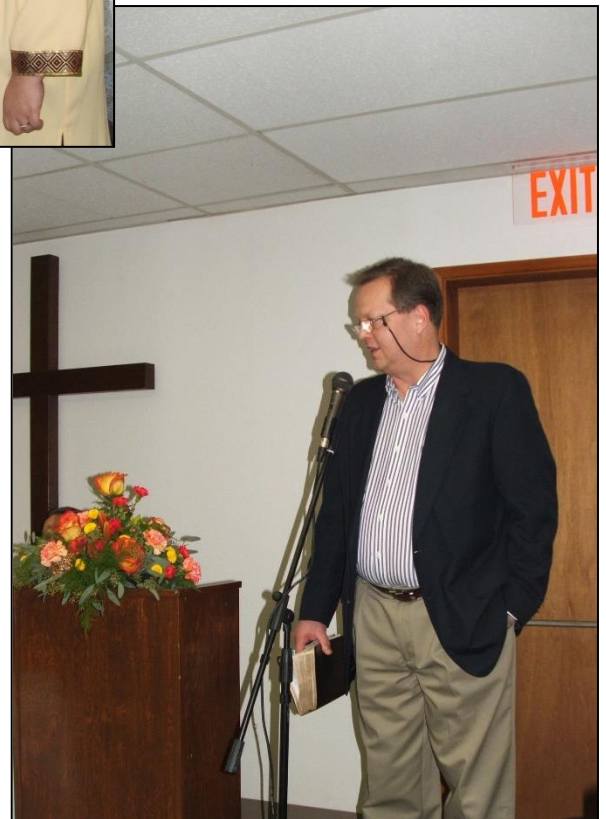
Brother Gene Mixon was elected pastor and installed on January 8, 2006, and was assisted by Associate Pastors Stan Lampinen and Bruce Selin. Pastor Mixon served the congregation for eight years until he resigned and relocated to the Tri-Cities, in Eastern Washington, the summer of 2014. Associate Pastor Bruce Selin served the congregation until September 2015.



*Pastor Gene & Aurora Mixon
January 8, 2006*

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

John 10:14-18.



*Pastor Bruce Selin
2006*

Associate Pastor Stan Lampinen was elected to serve as pastor in October 2015. As of that time, Pastor Lampinen has been a member of our congregation for 40 years and had served in many capacities. He and his wife Shirley and family have been a blessing to our congregation for several decades.

When Aaron and Renee Hendrickson and their family relocated to the Seattle area in 2007, Aaron was elected to serve as Sunday School Superintendent. He and Renee have been our Sunday school leaders for many years and during this time God also called Aaron to preach his Word. The congregation elected Aaron Hendrickson Associate Pastor on January 16, 2016.



Pastor Stan & Shirley Lampinen



Pastor Aaron & Renee Hendrickson

The Lord is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous and the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. Psalms 118:14-15

*Karen Impola
Pianist/Organist*



*Maija Lampinen
Pianist/Organist*

Our Seattle congregation has hosted two national conventions of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America. The theme selected for the first one in 1980 was taken from Isaiah 54:10, *“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”* Little did we know that Mount St. Helens would experience a severe volcanic eruption one month prior to the scheduled convention. Pastor George Wilson, who was the chairman of the ALCA Central Board, told us that he received many calls from throughout the country requesting that the convention be moved to a safer place. Some thought attendance would be severely curtailed for fear of other eruptions; however, all arrangements had been made with the Seattle Pacific University, an institution of the Free Methodist Church, and cancellation would have resulted in a penalty of a portion of the rental fees. The convention remained in Seattle and attendance was greater than we had expected before Mount St. Helens erupted. The second convention we hosted was held in 1998 and was the 90th annual convention of the federation. The theme selected for this convention focused on Psalm 119:130, *“The entrance of thy words giveth light.”* The facility that we used, Shorewood High School, is located near our church.

Beginning with the 50th anniversary of our congregation, celebrated in 1985, the congregation has marked each decade by hosting special services. Pastor George Wilson, of New York Mills, Minnesota was our first guest speaker in 1985. In later years, we have hosted Reformation Services the end of October which also coincides with the anniversary of incorporation. Pastor Ron Holmgren, of Hockinson, Washington, was our guest speaker for the 2015 Reformation Services at which time we also marked our 80th anniversary. In the eighty years since our congregation was incorporated, these ten men have served as chairman of the congregation:

John Selin
Cornelius Forshaug
Hugh Matta
Olaf Johnson

Ivan Seppala
Ben Johnson
Clarence Holmgren
Edward Selin

Gerald Stratton
Hans Lampinen

History Compiled by Pastor Alvin C. Holmgren
Updated by Carrie H. Kandoll

* * * * *

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.

Psalm 119:89-90