

First LCMS Mission Church Plant in Pittsburgh in the 21st Century

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world."

The Holy Cross Evangelical-Lutheran Mission held its first service on Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2018 in St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the Hazelwood neighborhood of the City of Pittsburgh.

In August of 2017, Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries (PALM) held a Community Day in Hazelwood which included booths from several of the area congregations and mission outreaches along with City of Pittsburgh Fire, EMS, and Police, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and games by our Pioneer Camp and Retreat Center in Angola, NY.

Since that Community Day, the Rev. Dr. Douglas Spittel, PALM Urban Ministry Director and Senior Pastor of First Trinity, Pittsburgh, PA, has been spending time in the neighborhood meeting merchants, residents, and local volunteers. Along the way he has often been asked to pray in and for the neighborhood, businesses, and non-profit organizations. He especially developed a close relationship with the members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church at the corner of Second Ave. and Mansion St. where their free clothing and food distribution is a pillar of the community.

This very small congregation welcomed the ministry of PALM so warmly that they invited Pastor Spittel to conduct an Ash Wednesday Service for them. Now a full ministry of the Word and Ash Wednesday being the first day of Holy Lent, Pastor Spittel and the PALM President, the Rev. Brian Westgate of Redeemer, Oakmont, PA, thought it appropriate to rename the "Hazelwood Mission Project" to the "Holy Cross Evangelical-Lutheran Mission." The Ash Wednesday Service at noon was the Office of Prayer and Preaching from the Lutheran Service Book with the Imposition of Ashes and Corporate Confession and Absolution. Eighteen souls were present for the Service. Pastor Douglas Spittel and Leigh Spittel, along with Bob and Cynda Souer from Peace, McMurray, PA attended. Everyone else in attendance came from the Hazelwood neighborhood. Several people in attendance had not been to church in several years.

Pastor Spittel preached on the Gospel for Ash Wednesday, concentrating on the words of Jesus, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." These words encouraged the new mission to focus on Jesus as our enduring hope and His precious death and resurrection as the cure for our sin. Where there is forgiveness of sins in Christ, there is life and salvation. Today, there is life and salvation in Hazelwood. This is a humble beginning. Please support this new mission with your prayers, time, talent, and treasure. All glory be to God!