

## **Grace and Glory Lutheran Church Breaks Ground!**

The ground-breaking ceremony held on Sunday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011, at the 10 acre church property in Palmyra, Virginia, was the fulfillment of a 10 year dream by the charter members of Grace and Glory Lutheran Church. The group had been attending services in one of the Lutheran churches in Charlottesville, 20 miles west of Palmyra in central Virginia. The time was ripe, and they were ready to start the first Lutheran church in Fluvanna County. The first service of this fledgling congregation was held on February 11, 2001, in a fitness center, with Pastor Bill Stewart, recently retired from Peace Lutheran in Charlottesville, as part-time development “shepherd”.

As the congregation grew, The Rev. Ken Albright was called as its full-time pastor, and the congregation's visibility in the community sharpened, with member involvement in Meals on Wheels, Habitat (with whom the congregation has a covenant relationship), Food Bank, Christian Service Society, Prison Ministry, etc.

The ground-breaking ceremony, led by Pastor Albright, involved four readers positioned at the four corners of the proposed building, each reading in turn a passage from the bible, then driving a stake into the earth, consecrating the land for God's works. With the chiming of the multi-generational hand bell choir, led by music director Julie Martell, all 150 attendees were invited to close ranks in the center of the property to sing the joyous and moving hymn, “All Are Welcome (in this place)”. When the weather turned suddenly ominous, with black clouds and lightning traveling quickly in, the decision was made to continue the ceremony across the road at the Fluvanna Public Library. One can surmise that, while we surely place our trust in God, it's wise to plan for all of His contingencies!

Honored guests and speakers were Virginia Synod Bishop James Mauney; the Rev. Chip Gunsten, Assistant to the Bishop and the Synod's Mission Director; The Rev. Bill Stewart, Pastor Developer; and Frits Geurtsen, Congregational President. Using a trowel, Ceremonial Groundbreakers and Building Steering Committee members symbolically turned over the earth that had been quickly scooped up in a small box and brought to the Library. After the Youth choir sang, all in attendance were invited to “break ground” in the same symbolic way as they came up to partake of a picnic dinner prepared by parishioners.

The new building will hold 180 people, with expansion opportunities built in. “We're looking to develop our ministries further”, says Pastor Albright, “and having our own building will be a tool to help us as we reach out into the community. We ask ourselves, 'What Does God Expect of Us?', and we need to stand ready to answer and act.”

Construction is expected to begin shortly on the 7,243 square foot building, with a completion date around June of 2012.