

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Raymond Stroh

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
People of Faith Oral History project

Interview # PF-A-L-2016-010

Raymond (Ray) Stroh, one of the founding members of Atonement Lutheran Church of Springfield, Illinois, was interviewed on the history of Atonement Lutheran Church on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *People of Faith* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Feb 9, 2016 Location: Ray Stroh's home in Springfield, Illinois

Date: Feb 11, 2016 Location: Ray Stroh's home in Springfield, Illinois

Date: Feb 15, 2016 Location: Ray Stroh's home in Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:55 + 1:47 + 2:18 / 1.92 + 1.78 + 2.3 = 6.0 hrs

Session 1: Ray's childhood in Sibley, IL, college education and first job in Springfield

Session 2: Atonement Lutheran Church history from its creation in 1960s to 1991

Session 3: History of Atonement from 1991-2015 and blending w/other congregations

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on May 3, 2016.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Raymond Stroh, *People of Faith*, PF-A-L-2016-010

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Raymond ‘Ray’ Stroh was born on August 13th, 1942 in Bloomington, Illinois, and grew up in nearby Sibley, Illinois, where his father worked at a pipeline pump station for Shell Oil. The family regularly attended the local Lutheran church in Sibley, and religion became an important part of Ray’s life. He graduated from high school in 1960 and began college at the University of Illinois, where he also was active in Air Force ROTC. He finished college at Southern Illinois University, but since he was unable to pass the physical exam to become a pilot, he went into public service instead, getting a job with the state of Illinois in Springfield just ten days after graduating in 1966. At the same time, he married Peggy Whitacre. Ray worked in personnel management positions for several state of Illinois agencies, spending all but three years in Springfield. Peg had a successful career as a teacher and education for District 186 schools in Springfield.

Ray and Peg joined Atonement Lutheran church in 1966, at a time when the new congregation was just forming as a mission church. They became charter members of the congregation. The majority of the interview is an overview of the history of Atonement Lutheran Church, which was an American Lutheran Church which it was first established. In 1988 it became an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) when the ALC joined together with the Lutheran Church in American to form the ELCA. Atonement Lutheran was the only ALC church in Springfield in the 1960s and ‘70s, but following the merger, was one of five ELCA congregations in town. Ray talks extensively about the succession of ministers that served the congregation, beginning with Pastor Walter Ekeren, who served the church until 1969. Other notable pastors at Atonement included Pastor Kenneth Schlueter (1969-1976), Pastor Myron Bartel (1977-1979) and Pastor William Wake (1980-1989). He was replaced by Pastor Wayne Edmund, whose service at Atonement was short due to a difference of opinion on pastoral leadership styles. After a short period where the congregation was served by Pastor Paul Schwartzkopf as an interim minister, Pastor Jonathan Berg came to Atonement, serving as its minister until his retirement in 2015.

In 2015, Atonement decided to enter into discussions with two other ELCA congregations in Springfield (Luther Memorial and Faith Lutheran) about the possibility of merging. Due to the changing demographics of all three congregations, and coinciding with the retirement for each congregations’ pastors, the churches merged, holding their first service in September, 2015.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Sibley, Illinois; Atonement Lutheran Church; Peggy ‘Peg’ Whitacre Stroh; Harry Stroh; Pastor Jonathan Berg; Pastor William Wake; Pastor Walter Ekeren; Pastor Wayne Edmund; Pastor Kenneth Schlueter; Pastor Myron Bartel; University of Illinois; ROTC at the U. of Illinois; blending of Atonement Lutheran with Luther Memorial and Faith Lutheran churches

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham

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