





1. Welcome and context	
  	<p>Hello, I'm Paul Kirk and proud to be your chair of the Lay Leadership team. I'm honored to be here with you tonight to share a bit about the story of St. Luke's.</p> <p>This has been a wonderful project to work on as it has led me to several conversations and uncovering of what really makes our church and community so special.</p> <p>In our time here tonight, I'm going to walk with you in the reflection of our journey as a church. How has our community evolved, from meeting at Northridge Elementary, constructing our building amongst the fields south of Denver; how does our story intertwine with Albertson's, St. Andrew's UMC, and Siem Reap, Cambodia? Let's walk through our story.</p>
2. Courage: The origin of St. Luke's	
	<p>The land that would become Highlands Ranch was designated to be developed by Mission Veijo company which paved the way for the master planned community of Highlands Ranch. The board was set for St. Luke's to develop.</p> <p>In 1979 Reverend Russ Brown, the lead minister of St Andrew's UMC, advocated for a new church plant on the southern edge of the Denver suburbs. Back then St. Andrew's was still north of County Line.</p> <p>The community would begin meeting soon after, supported by a faithful laity, starting at Powell Middle School (go figure) and then moving south of County Line Rd.</p> <p>This was the start of the evolution of St. Luke's, the heart of which has always been our laity.</p> <p>Reverend Harold Raines, our first assigned pastor, began surveying the area and connecting with residents – making over 1300 calls and visits, to identify community needs and the viability of a church this far south.</p> <p>St. Luke's was then chartered on 3/13/1983 and met in smaller rooms at North Ridge Elementary school with about a dozen people in attendance.</p> <p>At this time Highlands Ranch consisted of the Northridge neighborhood. As we grew, the school would give St. Luke's a larger room to meet in.</p>

There were additional ministries and small groups like United Methodist Women and our choir which met in Janet and Bill Fethke's living room. Janet writes that there were 6-8 people present and the youth group at the time was typically 3-4 participants.

Through these combined efforts along with the bid prepared from the RMC and St. Andrews, St. Luke's won the bid among 29 other denominational entities for the land our church sits on to this day.

3. Hope, grace, and the miracle of St. Luke's



It was not easy to start a church in the middle of open fields with one adjacent neighborhood off the bet that this area would develop into a community of 90,000 residents.

Additionally, there would be obstacles in funding that could have sunk St. Luke's before we had a chance to realize our potential. This is where the connections and grace of numerous institutions, organizations, and individuals would spur the continuation of St. Luke's.

- Shortly after we won the bid to our land, the conference was unable to provide the \$225K in promised funding. We needed \$300K to build the first phase of our building. As a result, St. Andrews and Park Hill UMCs underwrote an \$800K bond issue. They made their bet on us.
- We then constructed the first phase of our building starting on 9/14/1984 with a heavy debt burden.
- When we moved into the building, there were about 130 people attending each week.

However, adversity was on the horizon. Reverend Harold Raines left St. Luke's which led to the drop of our active congregation to about ten participants. However, the laity that remained were stalwart in their faithfulness in the promise and vision of St. Luke's and were extraordinary in their efforts to sustain our church.

However, as a result of the unforeseen circumstances of our church, the Rocky Mountain conference voted not to financially sustain St. Luke's development, meaning our building and land would be sold. But many still saw the potential of what St. Luke's could become.



- The President of Iliff School of Theology, Don Messer, saw the potential along with the bishop of the RMC, Roy Sano. They took it on to identify alternative sources of funding to keep our church alive.
- They were able to secure a \$500,000 donation from the CEO of American Stores (aka. Albertson's) over the course of a handful of years to sustain St. Luke's.

- Cliff funded an intern Pastor for our church in 1986, Jay Rundell who stayed on for one year.
- We went from a vote to not sustain from the conference to receiving a gift from an unlikely source which allowed our church to set a more sustainable foundation and move into our next phase.
- This is because of the commitment of our laity at St. Luke's. Without our engaged community, no one would have been in a position to commit to St. Luke's succeeding.

In 1987, Reverend Bill Selby was appointed by the RMC as lead Pastor where he would remain until 1993.

Building on the vision of St. Luke's would occur but not without headwinds out of our church's control.

Oil projects on the Western slope were closing, which led to a number of folks to move from Colorado, so there were some years in the mid/late 80's which didn't see growth as we anticipated.

From 1987-1990 for every 10 new members that joined St. Luke's 7 would move away. The story was similar in Highlands Ranch, as property in the community was devalued by 20% in the first half of 1987.

People were losing their homes, resulting in having to move away from the community. This led to a lot of grief counseling and families having to say goodbye.

Bill writes that at the beginning of November in 1987; all of the committees were ready to be nominated. By the end of the month almost all of the nominees announced they were moving to Houston TX.

St. Luke's persevered through this time, by being the spiritual center of Highlands Ranch at the time and being creative. This is thanks to an exceptional congregation and lay leadership that sustained our church. Growth was still occurring but that didn't mean it was easy.

As a matter of fact, monthly small group meetings were occurring at member's homes and as 87 turned into 88, we were experiencing what a growing church felt like.

The vision of St. Luke's becoming a regional church community was coming into fruition thanks to our church members and attendees.



4. Wonder: "Now, go forth and live your life such that when others meet you they will want to know your God."



It was in this exciting period of growth that we adopted a number of traditions, some we still carry on with today:

- Bible studies like Open Minds and Disciple Bible Study, shoutout Carl Cleveland
- The Kings Puppets for our Epiphany service were originally constructed by Bill and members of the church, which was something Bill brought with him from First UMC, his previous church in Casper, WY.
- Our baptisms and profession of faith we still conduct today
- Our kneeling rails, alter, and oak stands which were built by Dave Cupp, George Carlstrom, and Rev Bill Selby.

One tradition that didn't stick was a live nativity scene with Henrietta the donkey that was co-hosted with Christ Lutheran and Mission Viejo.

As we moved into the 90's, we grew by being present in a flourishing community. This was not just folks looking for a church, but folks looking for a sense of connectiveness from just moving into Highlands Ranch.

These were young professionals and families attempting to connect with others in a new place. We were growing by 50 new members every month by having our doors open and radically welcoming people.

There was a spirit of wonder at St. Luke's then as there is today. I have to share this story that Rev. Bill sent over to us:

"One of the most meaningful worship experiences was a Thanksgiving Worship Service. Leadership of St. Luke's made a concerted effort to invite every worship body or faith body to come to St. Luke's and celebrate together.

We took the Cross off the wall so that the only item we had was a table in the middle of the room with a candle and the chairs were in the round. There were Bahai, Buddhist, Wicken, Muslim, Jesuits, Mormons, and various protestant churches represented along with a Native American pastor.

Representatives of all of the religious bodies were asked to do only two things: share something that would help everyone know and appreciate something about their faith and to share a Thanksgiving Prayer. It became so apparent that we shared so many things that all valued. I

was tremendously proud of the members of St. Luke's for their progressive openness and affirmation of differences."

Again, this is a reflection of our community, our laity that is committed to radical hospitality, and building a safe environment for anyone wherever they are at in the spiritual journey.

This hospitality was crucial as growth in the early 90's was unprecedented. In 1991 there were 17,000 residents in Highlands Ranch, by 2000 there were 90,000

Our success in growing with Highlands Ranch was a flexibility to meet the needs of our community by listening and pivoting to the needs as they became apparent and making things happen.

Our radical hospitality was demonstrated by hosting Pax Christi Catholic Church to meet here until they had their building.

The Highlands Ranch Jewish community met at St. Luke's for almost a year. We joined with them in lighting the first Menorah in Highlands Ranch on the corner of Broadway and Plaza.

An independent Christian Church met at St. Luke's as well but unfortunately couldn't sustain, showing that just because a church is started in a new community does not guarantee that it will grow. Commitment from within the community is the secret sauce.



As engagement in the community continued to grow, so did our need for additional space. We planned the construction of the second phase of our building, including the Narthex, meeting rooms, Little School classrooms, and restrooms.



Dave Cupp writes that an interesting note is that with the explosive growth of Highlands Ranch, the need for expansion was obvious at St Luke's. In fact, as we were preparing to execute on the second phase of our building, we didn't have the funds to hire an architect and make this a reality.

Enter St. Andrews, who at the time was looking at expanding their existing building. Instead of doing that, however, they designated the funds to St Luke's to expand and meet the needs of Highlands Ranch.

In combination with the funds from St. Luke's the phase was constructed. It took every dime of what St. Luke's had and then some.

	<p>As a result, phase two was completed in 1994 thanks to the leadership of many in our community, not least of which the chair for the project, Dave Rhodes.</p> <p>Prior to the dry wall and final flooring were laid, everyone was invited to come in and sign walls, draw around their bodies, write thoughts and poems, and remember the time with personal sharing's. They remain there to this day.</p> <p>We were still boot strapping our church through the commitment of the laity and clergy. Reverend Dick Evans was appointed here in 1993 and recalls that lay members would consistently maintain the building, clean bathrooms vacuum or whatever else was required, with great enthusiasm.</p> <p>During Reverend Dick Evans tenure St. Luke's had more infant baptisms than any other church in the Rocky Mountain conference and witnessed over 300% growth in membership.</p>
--	--

5. Wonder: Building a Regional Congregation

 	<p>It is in this time that we, as a congregation, identified Micah 6:8 as our defining scripture:</p> <p><i>“What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”</i></p> <p>It was also in this period that we developed a vision and foundation to live out – which was Invitational, Relational, and Missional.</p> <p>We lived out this vision in a multitude of ways, especially in being missional. In this period there was a focus on seeing the world beyond Highlands Ranch.</p> <p>A trip was organized by members of our church to bring 20 people to Zimbabwe to build a grinding mill to support children orphaned by AIDS. We did this because of our relationship with the initial Missionary-in Residence who was from Zimbabwe</p> <p>Dalay Day was hired as a Missionary-in-residence, who is from Cambodia and was aware of the need to build a Community Training Center in Siem Reap, Cambodia.</p> <p>A tall task for any church, but in true St. Luke's fashion, our community met the call and raised \$125,000 to make this happen. This was the foundation of what would become a great effort in missions in our region and the world beyond.</p>
---	---



This was a period of adversity for St. Luke's as well. As Dick Evans wrote this was the best of times and the worst of times, sometimes at the same time. Our community responded in new and miraculous ways.

Our community was directly impacted by the shooting at Columbine on April 20th, 1999 as we lost two students, Lauren Townsend and Steven Curnow

We adjusted to meet the needs of our community. Pastor Evans writes that we had students, teachers, staff, and first responders who were directly impacted.

We held packed services Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and three on Sunday to grieve together. This ended up being a stabilizing anchor for our community. We were a community of faith in support for the larger community. It's in these trying times that we gather together, we face our fears, we have hope."



St Luke's met our needs around physical space by planning and building our sanctuary that we are sitting in today, which opened on March 4th, 2000. This gave us quite a mortgage, as we built for future growth instead of responding to the absence of space in the present time.

This made it so we had to continue to grow to meet our mortgage and obligations. There were months where we weren't sure how we'd meet our mortgage payment but ended up coming through.

Through this season St. Luke's encountered some change as Rev. Fred Venible was appointed as interim head pastor in 2003, along with Licensed Local Pastors Dave Money and Pam Rowley, members of St. Luke's, showcasing the leadership that was coming from within our community.

It was the leadership and willingness of our laity that enabled St. Luke's to continue to evolve in the early 2000's. The adversity of this time could have hampered the growth and development of any church, but thanks to leaders within our laity we persevered and grew stronger.

6. Beyond: The maturation of St. Luke's



In 2004, we were able to continue growing at a breakneck pace along with Highlands Ranch. However, we were now 18 years old and entering a season of required maturation and increased structure to set our church up for sustained growth.



Rev. Janet Forbes was appointed as head pastor in 2004 and among the first moves she made was to work with our SPR team and ensure we had our full time Worship Director by hiring on Jim Ramsey.

At this time we also conducted an Appreciative Inquiry Project to foster alignment to the strengths of our church.

The expectation from Clergy and Lay Leadership was that music and performing arts would lead the list but the reality is that Mission work was our highest rated strength and desire as a community followed by our baptisms.



This led to a number of diverse initiatives to bolster our outreach and mission work, including:





- Youth, family, and Adult mission trips (Thailand, Cambodia, Disaster Relief) – did Zimbabwe, Thailand, and Cambodia happen after Janet's appointment? Maybe include a few locations of the youth and/or family mission opportunities
- Chancel Choir music tours
- Pura Vida and the work we continue in Guatemala
- Warren Village
- We Don't Waste
- HAAT Force
- Urban Peak
- Love INC
- Lunches in the Park
- Feeding of the 5000
- Itch to Stich



As we built internal structures we were then able to provide ministries like:

- Congregational Care & Stephen Ministries
- Seasoned Voyagers
- Wesley Players and the Performing Arts Academy
- Expansion of our children's ministries with Joy TREK and PEAK
- Children's Dinner Theater, Summer Bible School, Holy Listening and the blessing balms.

When I go through this list I think we have absolutely met the promise of the sanctuary built in 2000 that we were committed to future growth.

  	<p>As our church continued to grow we needed even more space, which made up the fourth phase of our building developing in the form of our Chapel, youth ministry and adult education spaces.</p> <p>Sure enough, you responded and we were able to plan and develop the space needed to build our building to what we have today.</p> <p>Highlands Ranch continued to develop and churches popped up throughout the community. This included St. Andrew's moving from their previous location near Goodsen Rec Center to where it is currently, at University and Colorado BLVDs.</p> <p>Though this appeared tense and a bit like St. Andrew's encroaching, St. Luke's turf</p> <p>Both churches had talented and experienced clergy, engaged and committed lay leadership, and St. Luke's was set apart with our legacy in growing with Highlands Ranch, our unique mission work and the strength of our ministries.</p> <p>A reflection of how strong our laity engagement was is that in 2007 Rev. Brad Laurvick, who grew up at St. Luke's, was appointed as an associate pastor and helped lead us in a contemporary worship, continuing a legacy to meet the needs of our community where they are.</p> <p>We also were lucky to have Reverend Sallie appointed as an associate in 2009. Further meeting the needs of our community was the formation of the Center of Spiritual Engagement in 2010.</p> <p>Rev. Ryan Canaday was appointed in 2012 and helped continue our legacy of casting our net wide and encouraging our congregation to ask questions and value our stories. This season at St. Luke's was one of experimentation and engagement.</p>
<p>7. Beyond: A New Vision and Season</p>	
	<p>Additional transition was spurred on with the retirement of Janet Forbes in 2016. As a result, St. Luke's engaged in a novel approach to clergy through Co-Pastoral team with three pastors, Revs Jessica Rooks, Ryan Canaday, and Sallie Suby-Long.</p> <p>This ushered a new period of change for our church, demanding further engagement from within our community to help identify who we are in this new chapter resulting in the formation of our updated mission statement: we exist to reflect God's love, deepen people's connection to Christ, and show compassion to all in a way that changes lives.</p> <p>And identification of our core values:</p>

- Grace
- Courage
- Wonder
- Beyond

Grace leads us to Courage. Courage moves us to Wonder. Wonder leads us to go Beyond. Beyond moves us to Grace for all.

Tell me our story doesn't represent this!

So let's talk about how we continue to build on our story and go beyond.

Outside our doors, the greater Highlands Ranch community matured and is no longer experiencing monthly growth.

When St Luke's opened there were 3 churches south of County Line Road, now there are at least 35. We had to pivot and will continue to have to pivot in the future to meet the diverse needs of the families in our larger community.

There are examples of our we have all engaged in the evolution of St. Luke's to meet the needs of our community at-large.

Even in this season, great work was occurring in and through St. Luke's. Jessica and Ryan were able to engage in hard questions from the pulpit.

These questions and sermons reflect our desire as a congregation not to avoid hard conversations but to embrace them.



We have also leaned into going beyond our comfort zones and out into the world. A partnership was forged with Abundant Life Christian School in Honduras.

With the support and assistance of St Luke's, Reverend Ryan was able to follow his call and, start FREE, a community for addicts, loved one of addicts and spiritual refugees.

I see this sprouting from the ethos of what St. Luke's is. That ethos is to be a community that is radically welcoming, to all folks, wherever they are on their spiritual journey.

This is evident today and occurs in how we engage with one another and take action in our community.

<p>8. Grace, Courage, Wonder, and Beyond: St. Luke's Today</p>	
  	<p>As a result, leadership within our community decided to adopt a more traditional clergy model, which led to the assignments of Reverend Michele as lead pastor and Rev. Liza as Associate Pastor, along with a renewed focus for Sallie Suby-Long becoming our Minister for Healing and Wellbeing.</p> <p>Just as we made a big and strategic decision on the direction of our church we would have to respond to unprecedented circumstances.</p> <p>This time with the onset of the Covid Pandemic. Luckily, resiliency is in our DNA and as a community we were able to make the shift to remote church.</p> <p>The circumstances of 2020 guided us deeper into our season of introspection and discernment, to truly reflect on our community and how we can serve one another in an unprecedented time, while evolving our church in a sustainable matter, not just within the community but also financially.</p> <p>Through the commitment of leaders in our community, like Ken Fong, Jim Ramsey, Marty Davidson, Julie Gustafson, and so many others, we were able to respond to these challenges stronger than we were before.</p> <p>We continue to grow and stretch ourselves to meet the evolving needs of our community because of the great work we put in behind the scenes.</p> <p>It became clear during the pandemic that to foster St Luke's beyond our 40th year it is going to take all hands-on deck to realize the mission and vision of St. Luke's. This is already happening.</p> <p>The Brave Spaces team has been created to involve one another in anti-racism action and partnerships, which speaks to loving justice and becoming radically welcoming of diversity.</p> <p>Community Raisers was spun up to connect each other and raise funds to become a more financially sustainable church year-round. This is loving kindness.</p>



And finally, we walk humbly with God, with an energy of hope and a renewed embrace of God with Us theology that creates forward thinking momentum. That refreshes our Excitement and inspires a deeper desire to connect with our broader community so the circle of God's love can be expanded wider through our love and actions.

We are blessed to be here and are at the precipice of evolving our church to meet the needs of families within our ever-changing community.

We belong to a living church and I am so excited for what the next 40 years and beyond have to offer at St. Luke's I believe we are just getting started.