

# CHURCH

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Pastor Siefkes also began broadcasting the Sunday service on the radio station KBKR.

That outreach has continued, first to a television broadcast and lately to a livestream on Facebook.

Sig's father was called to serve a church in Vanport, near Portland, in 1943.

"A large number of them were Lutherans from Minnesota, and they needed a pastor," Sig said.

(Created between Vancouver and Portland to house shipyard workers during World War II, Vanport was destroyed by the flooding Columbia River in 1948.)

Sig moved with his family to Portland, but came back to Baker City during summers, and after high school.

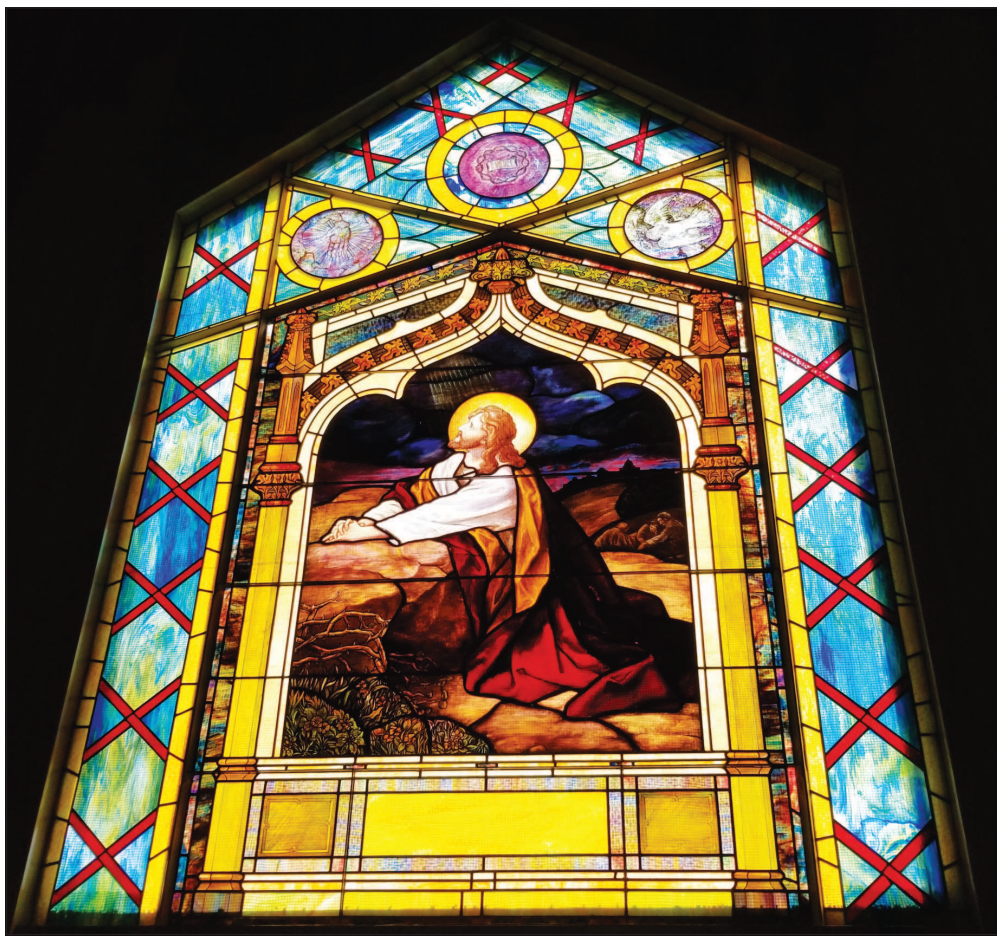
"My roots went down here," he said.

Although adult life took him to California, Sig moved back to Baker City in 1993.

During a span without a pastor — prior to Pastor Ian Wolfe's arrival in 2016 — the congregation took turns preaching on Sundays.

"A bunch of us took turns. I ended up doing it more and more," Sig said. "I was so nervous at first. But you can get used to anything after awhile."

On a recent Sunday, when Pastor Wolfe was out of town, Sig again delivered the



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

The stained glass window is the only part of the original First Lutheran Church that remains. The original church, built in 1921, was remodeled about 30 years later.

message — but this time he spoke the words of his father.

Pastor Siefkes' handwritten sermons are currently on display for the church's 100th celebration.

Dan Freeman, 76, grew up attending First Lutheran Church, and he's still involved today.

"The folks became members in '38," Freeman said. "There were six of us kids, and we all were baptized

and confirmed in the church."

The Freemans lived on a ranch outside town, and First Lutheran was the family gathering place.

"When we came to town, the church was where we'd always meet," he said. "The church was the social gathering in the community."

With a growing congregation, the church was remodeled and expanded by 1951.

Only the stained glass window remains of the original building (the window was enlarged with a border to create the current version).

The church underwent more change 50 years later with an expansion finished in 2001. The parsonage, which sat just south of the church, was moved to a different location in Baker City. A fellowship hall, with a larger kitchen and elevator, was constructed in its place.

Just like the original stained glass, other artifacts were saved such as the rose-

colored glass that was made into crosses to adorn the windows.

Another staple at First Lutheran Church has been Kids Club, started by Virginia Buchfinck in 1982.

Buchfinck, who turned 101 in October 2020, moved to Baker City in 1949, and immediately joined First Lutheran.

Over her many years of involvement at the church, it is the ministry to children that stands out in her mind.

"Kids Club was always it," she said.

A hay ride to the Freeman Ranch was a fall tradition.

"The minute they got there, they scattered," she said with a smile.

She started Kids Club, she said, when she noticed that children from the Lutheran Church were attending youth programs at other churches in town.

"I got this idea from the Lord, I'm sure," she said. "I didn't dream it up myself."



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Sig Siefkes, whose father, Siegfried, served as pastor of the Baker City First Lutheran Church from 1936-43, looks at the many photos and mementoes that document the church's 100-year history.

*"When we came to town, the church was where we'd always meet. The church was the social gathering in the community."*

— Dan Freeman, 76, whose parents joined the First Lutheran Church in Baker City in 1938

Kids Club met on Fridays during the school year. Activities included singing, a Bible study, crafts and games.

"We had 20-some kids in our own church," she said. "Then kids came from outside

the church."

Her involvement with Kids Club continued until 2016.

"I really enjoyed all the kids," she said. "And the kids seemed to enjoy all that we did."



Baker City First Lutheran Church/Contributed Photo

First Lutheran Church was organized and incorporated in 1921. This photo shows the original building.



Baker City First Lutheran Church/Contributed Photo

This photo shows Pastor Siegfried Siefkes, far right, and his wife Margarethe at the organ. Siefkes was pastor at First Lutheran from 1936-1943.

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