



LAMBS FOR THE SHEPHERD

Good Shepherd Lutheran School
30th Anniversary
1979 - 2009

It was apparent early in the history of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church of Downers Grove, IL, that there was strong support among those involved in the founding of the congregation for the establishment of a Lutheran elementary school. In the congregational meeting of January 2, 1976, it was reported that five children whose parents were members of the Downers Grove church were enrolled in the school of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) congregation at Palos Heights.

In the meeting of September 12, 1977, a resolution was adopted that Good Shepherd operate a Lutheran elementary school, the school to open in the fall of 1978. A principal-teacher was to be called, preferably a man with experience.

Furthermore, this meeting resolved that a “teacher/aide” was to be engaged from among the members of the congregation or from a congregation in fellowship. This person was to be primarily a Kindergarten aide but to serve otherwise when deemed advisable by the principal. The financial support for this school was to be the responsibility of the entire congregation through its overall operating budget.

In February of 1978, it was agreed to postpone the start of the school until the fall 1979. In the meeting of March 14, 1979, a call was extended to Mr. Ronald Zahn of Owosso, MI, who accepted and became the first principal and full-time teacher of the Good Shepherd School. During the middle months of 1979, Mr. Zahn traveled between Owosso and Downers Grove several times in an effort to get the school off to a smooth start.

Mr. Zahn, a native of Oshkosh, WI, graduated from Doctor Martin Luther College (DMLC, currently Martin Luther College) of New Ulm, MN, the WELS teacher training institution. He also has a Master's Degree in Education from Michigan State University. At the time, he had 18 years of teaching experience. He came to Downers Grove with wife, Joan, and their four children.

Mrs. Julie Skeels was the "teacher aide" at the start and served in that capacity for the first two years of the school. She remained until the congregation obtained a second full-time instructor in the fall of 1981.

The school opened on September 4, 1979, with Kindergarten starting on September 10th. On opening day, 18 children were enrolled with all grades represented except 2nd Grade. These 18 had been enrolled in several different schools in the previous year.

The education-fellowship plant covered 2,269 square feet and included an office-storage room, lavatories and a Pullman kitchen. Twenty-six school desks and chairs were obtained from the Elmhurst School District for \$3 each. The school day was to begin at 8:30 AM and close at 3:15 PM with Kindergarten ending at 11:00 AM.

There were a number of problems at the beginning. The construction was not entirely complete. Therefore, each pupil had to bring a plastic cup since there were no drinking fountains. Not all textbooks had arrived so the unmounted chalkboards were very much used. The village fathers, in granting permission for the operation of the school, had somehow been under the impression that they were dealing with a Sunday School. Some special restrictions were therefore placed upon the children at first when they were outside during recess period.

In the fall of 1981, Miss Margaret Ungemach, a native of Kenosha, WI who had graduated from DMLC that June, was added to the staff as instructor for grades Kindergarten through 4th. Miss Ungemach served Good Shepherd most efficiently for eight years.

In the fall of 1983, an aide was again obtained, this time Mrs. Susan Grosz, a member of the congregation. She was to direct most of her attention to pupils at the Kindergarten level. She served in that position for 17 years, then retired.

In the summer of 1985, an addition to the physical plant was constructed which added 3,500 square feet of floor space. This addition was built in part to provide a more ample kitchen, additional lavatories, a cry room and more efficient facilities for the Sunday School as well as a work room. A library room was provided for the school as well as an all-purpose room which could be used for physical education classes. Members were so cooperative with their assistance during the summer construction period that the elementary school did not lose one day of school time.

From a one-teacher/one-classroom facility for all grades, Good Shepherd expanded to three full-time teachers plus a Kindergarten aide and two pastors who instructed children in catechism and church history. With a steady growth in enrollment (56 in 1999), the “all-purpose room” served as the Kindergarten room and the 1985 addition was divided into three classrooms: Grades 1 and 2, Grades 3 through 5, and Grades 6 through 8. Kindergarteners attended school full-time on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Mr. Zahn taught at Good Shepherd for 11 years before moving to Michigan to serve in a sister congregation in 1991. Mr. Zahn was replaced by Mr. Joel Zink of Freeport, IL. He served for two years as principal/teacher. Currently, Mr. Scott Schmudlach holds this position. Mr. Schmudlach, a 1985 graduate of DMLC, taught 7th grade at Bethany Lutheran School in Manitowoc, WI, before moving to Downers Grove

with wife, Julie, and their 2 small children (they now have 3 children) in the summer of 1993. In addition to his principal position, Mr. Schmudlach taught grades 6 - 8 until the adding of another full-time teacher. Now he teaches grades 7 and 8. Mr. Schmudlach has 24 years of teaching ministry experience.

Miss Grace Wessel filled the vacancy left by Miss Ungemach in the summer of 1989. Miss Wessel, a 1989 graduate of DMLC and native of New Ulm, taught Kindergarten through grade 3 until 1992. She went on to pursue a Master's Degree in Church Music. Miss Wessel was replaced by Mrs. Jill Kaiser, a 1991 graduate of DMLC and native of Winona, MN. Mrs. Kaiser served for five years before her husband accepted a call to start a new school in Salt Lake City, Utah. During Mrs. Kaiser's maternity leave, Mrs. Rachel Diehm, a WELS member from the Chicago area, was called to serve as temporary teacher. Miss Joanna Behrens, of Bay City, MI, graduated from Martin Luther College in 1997, took over as "lower grade" teacher for Mrs. Kaiser in the fall of 1997 until God called her to heaven on January 29, 1999.

With Miss Behrens' absence, Mrs. Michele Cavalea and Mrs. Barbara Koch stepped up to become full-time instructors. They were team-teaching grades 3 - 5 on a part-time basis. Mrs. Cavalea instructed the Kindergarten through 2nd grade until the end of the year when she resigned as teacher.

Mrs. Cavalea had been a member of Good Shepherd church and was called to serve in the school in 1989. She is a 1973 graduate of Concordia Teaching College (now Concordia University) in River Forest, IL. She had 21 years of teaching experience.

Mrs. Koch had also been a member of Good Shepherd and was called to teach in 1991. She is a 1980 graduate of DMLC and has 24 years of service in the teaching ministry. Since Mrs. Cavalea succeeded Miss Behrens in the lower grades, Mrs. Koch stepped in to finish the rest of the year teaching grades 3 – 5 full-time. In the fall of 1999, Mrs. Koch became the full-time teacher of grades 3 – 5 until 2007, when she became teacher of grades 3 and 4.

In 1999, Miss Ellen Zank was called to be the Kindergarten – 2nd grade teacher. Miss Zank taught at Salem in Loretto, MN for six years and St. John's in Baraboo, WI for nine years before relocating to Downers Grove. She is a 1984 graduate of DMLC and has 25 years of experience.

Lisa Hermanson came to Good Shepherd in 1999 and taught in the school from 1999-2001. She received her Bachelor's degree from DMLC in 1994. She taught at Abiding Word in Houston, Texas for five years before she moved to the Downers Grove area. At Good Shepherd, Mrs. Hermanson taught Social Studies and Science for grades 3 - 6, and then switched to teaching Algebra and Pre-Algebra. During her time here, she also taught Kindergarten at Palos Lutheran, preschool at St. Timothy in Lombard, and has given music lessons to the children of Good Shepherd.

In 2001, Mrs. Julie Schmudlach joined her husband as part of the faculty. She filled the role of Kindergarten teacher, leaving Miss Zank with 1st and 2nd grades alone. Mrs. Schmudlach is a 1986 graduate of DMLC and has 12 years of experience. In the fall of 2008, Good Shepherd was able to offer a five-day, full-day with an optional Monday, Wednesday, Friday Kindergarten program.

Good Shepherd congregation decided there was a need to expand the school once again. In 2003, a new wing consisting of four classrooms, lavatories, a library/computer lab, an office for the pastors, a principal's office, a church office and a storage closet was completed. The classes were moved to the new wing and the former classrooms were transformed back into a fellowship hall and a room presently used for storage with the hopes of becoming a meeting room. The former library was converted into a staff work / meeting room. The former Kindergarten room was prepared to become the new pre-school room.

In 2004, Mrs. Kelly Stech, a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, was hired to be a part-time instructor for the 7th and 8th grades, allowing the principal to have more administration time. When Mrs. Stech and her family moved to Delavan, WI, in 2005, she was replaced by another Good Shepherd member, Mrs. Vicki Smith. Mrs. Smith was a 1990 graduate of Concordia College (now Concordia University) in River Forest.

In 2003, Good Shepherd expanded its K-8 grade school to include a pre-school. Miss Sarah Rautenberg was called to begin this operation. She was able to conduct the first pre-school class on September 2, 2003 with eight students. Miss Rautenberg taught pre-school in the mornings and 5th and 6th grades in the afternoons until 2007 when enough students were enrolled in the pre-school for her to teach pre-school full-time.

Mrs. Kathleen Gihring, a member of Good Shepherd, joined the pre-school staff as an aide in January of 2005 where she continues to serve.

When the addition to the school was built, plans were made to eventually change the structure of the classrooms from three grades per room to two. In 2007, Mrs. Vicki Smith was called from her part-time position in the 7th and 8th grades to be the 5th and 6th grade teacher. She has 10 years of experience.

With the 7th and 8th grade part-time position now eliminated, help for the principal was sought in another area. Members of Good Shepherd with math experience were brought in to teach Algebra and Algebra 1 and 2. Mrs. Debra Vicker joined the staff in 2000 for this position. In 2004, Mrs. Patty Warner replaced Mrs. Vicker as Algebra Teacher. In 2008, Mrs. Warner added 7th grade math to her teaching responsibilities.

The Fall of 2008 brought changes to pre-school as well. A second teacher, Mrs. Kathryn Schwartz, was added to the faculty. Mrs. Schwartz, wife to Pastor Matthew Schwartz, teaches a Tuesday/Thursday pre-school class for three-year-olds.

Mrs. Schwartz is a 1996 graduate of MLC and has five years of teaching experience, having previously taught at St. John's Lutheran School in Saginaw, Michigan from 1996-2000.

Good Shepherd School has two pastors on staff to instruct Catechism and church history. Pastor David Rutschow has been involved with the school since its inception in 1979. Pastor Rutschow graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1970 and was called to serve as pastor for Good Shepherd Church in 1977. He had been serving in a sister congregation in Peoria, IL, for six years before moving with his wife, Pauline, and two children to Downers Grove (they now have three grown children). Pastor Rutschow also serves as President for the Southeastern Wisconsin District of the Synod. He has 39 years of ministry experience.

Pastor Daniel Witte began his service with Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in July of 1992, one month after graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and marrying Debbie Frisque. He taught Bible and Catechism to the 7th and 8th graders. He and his wife currently have six children. He remained in the congregation, teaching and preaching until he received and accepted a call to Bradenton, FL, in 2001.

In 2001, Pastor Matthew Schwartz accepted the call to Good Shepherd. Upon graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1999, he was assigned to Nebraska Lutheran High School where he served as an instructor and dormitory supervisor. The following year he was assigned to similar duties at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin.

Pastor Schwartz currently teaches Catechism to the 7th and 8th graders. He has 10 years of ministry experience. He and his wife, Kathryn, have four children.

A School Committee was formed in 1977. This committee directs its attention exclusively to the elementary school and pre-school and consists of two members and one chairman, all members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. They are elected by the voting members of the church and serve a two-year term. Our current committee consists of Chairman, Shawn Pipes and Committee Members Todd Oard and Andrew Rush.

Good Shepherd School engages in athletic, academic, and artistic competitions within our school and with eight other schools of the Chicago Area Lutheran League (CALL). Athletically, the school has offered or now offers softball, soccer, basketball, track and field, and cross-country. Off-site facilities such as the YMCA are used for physical education and sporting events, as well as for entertainment events. Academic and artistic competitions include forensics, mathematics, spelling and geography bees, as well as music recitals, art and science fairs. The nationally known and accepted standardized *Metropolitan Achievement Test* has been used in the past. Currently the *Terra Nova Standardized Test* is used. Good Shepherd pupils regularly score far above the national average.

New opportunities became available to the school as it continued to grow. In 2007, a band was formed and is led by Miss Beth Robinson. The first band consisted of 10 members. Also, a children's choir is taught by Mrs. Jan Henriksen. These children sing in church services and at the Spring Recital.

Through the years, Good Shepherd has been blessed with a number of congregation members and school parents who are able and willing to render various forms of instructional assistance in physical education, competitive sports, music and academics. These countless hours spent by volunteers have greatly enhanced the education of the children.

Many hours of work by dedicated volunteers proved fruitful as Good Shepherd Lutheran School achieved the status of accreditation in 2006. Good Shepherd is fully accredited by WELSSA (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation).

Graduates have produced an admirable record in various schools. Many have chosen to attend worker training schools within the WELS. At the present time, eight graduates attend high school at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, WI, four are attending Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN, and one is attending Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

The school symbol and team name is AMNOI, an original Biblical word for “lambs”. It is the prayer of staff, school committee, and congregation that the lambs who have attended Good Shepherd Lutheran School during the past 30 years remain faithful sheep in the fold of the Good Shepherd.

Good Shepherd Lutheran School Graduates

~Class of 1980~

Todd Zahn

~Class of 1981~

Randy Niles

Erich Schaser

~Class of 1982~

Erik Pless

Mark Scott

~Class of 1983~

Becky Pesek

Christopher Wiley

~Class of 1984~

Aaron Miller

Kevin Niles

Paul Rutschow

Kristin Schaser

~Class of 1985~

Beth Beringer

Martin Wegner

~Class of 1986~

Heidi Thompson

Aislinn Wiley

~Class of 1987~

Sean McLelland

~Class of 1988~

Richard Hull

Chuck Rhodes

Kristin Rutschow

~Class of 1989~

Christine Grosz

Tom Kriewall

Kurt Schaser

~Class of 1990~

Pam Hull

Mark Kowalke

Adam Nemeth

~Class of 1991~

Caresse Broker

~Class of 1992~

Ray Fjeldheim

Kristina Krug

Cathy Rhodes

Annette Rutschow

Gretchen Wiley

~Class of 1993~

Kevin Mehnert

Joe O'Malley

~Class of 1994~

Eric Latsch
Nathan Krug
Mark Zager

~Class of 1995~

Alex Belobraydich
James Garrison
Jesse Garrison
Kari Guldberg
Eric McLelland

~Class of 1996~

Daniel Barnas
Michael Cavalea
Jackie Latsch
Sean O'Toole
Celeste Plautz
Eric Zager

~Class of 1997~

Jon Anderson
Ann Bartels
Erica Barnas
Chantal Cavalea
Nils Guldberg
Daniel Krug
Paul Latsch
Kate O'Malley
Philip Paulino

~Class of 1998~

Zach Belobraydich
Christine Garrison
Melissa Halik
Keith Mehnert
Nicole Rardin

~Class of 1999~

Bjorn Anderson
Rachel Appelt
Jim Loszach
David Rhodes
Jean Carlo Stech

~Class of 2000~

~Class of 2001~
Matthew Appelt
Samantha Grunze
Kjerstin Guldberg
Adam Hashem
Amanda Koch
Alicia Spriggs
Melissa Stanek
George Stech
William Zager

~Class of 2002~

Inga Anderson
Justin Barnas
Michael Loszach
Brittany Toliver
Joshua Troutman

~Class of 2003~

Justin Bruess
Matthew Key
Jack Micnerski
Benjamin Schmudlach
Aaron Spriggs
Michael Stech
Jennifer Vicker

~Class of 2004~

Camille Bruess
Krystle Eiting
Louis Goros
Jonathan Koch
Audrey Lagos
Rachel Lechelt
Maggie McGrath
Matthew Rardin
Everett Stech
Benjamin Troutman
Jessica Troutman
Noah Troutman

~Class of 2005~

Shannon Barry
Seth Bohlmann
Erin Massoni
Elizabeth Vicker

~Class of 2006~

Aaron Bohlmann
Melanie Lagos
Jacob Lechelt
Joseph Schmudlach

~Class of 2007~

Kaitlyn Bryant
Kris Kiefer
Sarah Kim
Sarah Lechelt
Sarah Rardin

~Class of 2008~

Alyssa Hannenberg
Luke Hannenberg
McKinzie O'Neill
Trent Smith
Robert Vicker

~Class of 2009~

Joshua Bohlmann
Karmina Bruess
Anna Massoni
Leah Pape
Samantha Schrage
Aaron Sic