

AGAINST ALL ODDS

The Northland Lutheran High School Story

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INTRODUCTION

In the early 1970s it was not at all unusual to find Lutheran high schools affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod not only in Wisconsin but also in quite a few other states. And so one could very well expect that in Wisconsin there were quite a number of Lutheran high schools and that anyone from Wisconsin interested in attending a WELS Lutheran high school surely wouldn't have too far to go.

But that was not at all the case for WELS Christians living in central and northern Wisconsin. The nearest Lutheran high school for many people in these parts who were interested in Christian secondary education was at least a ~~several~~ couple hours' drive away. There was no way for many of them to attend and commute from home at the same time.

And so an idea spawned in the minds of a group of WELS families to start a Lutheran high school in north-central Wisconsin so that their children might have the great blessing of Christian education on the secondary level. Some of these people had been instrumental in the development of other area Lutheran high schools. Trusting in the grace of God they began the task of planning for a Lutheran high school--a task that would at times be so difficult that success was only against seemingly insurmountable odds.

EARLY DREAMS AND ORGANIZING

In the summer of 1975 this group of WELS people in north-central Wisconsin formed the Northland Lutheran High School Association. The Association was centered in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. For about two years preliminary information was gathered and possibilities were explored. Work in these early years was channelled through six planning committees: organization, enrollment, financial, site, instruction, and membership.

Around September of 1977 the Association adopted for use a resource handbook entitled Planning for Lutheran High Schools. At the same time Pastor Wayne Borgwordt, principal of Fox Valley Lutheran High School, became available as a consultant.

Using the handbook as a guide the Association channeled their work into five specific phases: exploration, survey, planning, implementation, and operation. In the exploration phase the Association determined in February 1978 that 24 area congregations approved their request to conduct a survey among them. The survey would help determine how much interest there was among individuals in an area Lutheran high school. Since the 24 congregations represented 78% of area WELS congregations, the Association moved into the Survey Phase.

In March 1978 the Association began publication of a monthly newsletter called "NLHSA Update." In its first issues the newsletters promoted the cause of Lutheran education on a secondary level. It spoke of the fourth "R" of education, religion. Only with this dimension included throughout the school

in all its facets, it was stressed, could students have a truly worthwhile education.

In June 1978 the survey results were presented. The survey indicated that among 6th, 7th, and 8th graders 13 students definitely would attend the high school and 38 others indicated they probably would. Based on this information the Association voted to continue into the planning phase with the goal of opening school in the fall of 1979.

In October 1978 work in the planning phase led to the call to Mr. John Schultz of Lake Mills, Wisconsin, to serve as Administrator of the High School. The call was accepted. In the planning phase eleven of the 24 congregations also passed resolutions to join the Association. In this phase a constitution was adopted which among other things also vested administrative responsibility in a nine member Board of Directors.

In February 1978 delegates to the annual meeting of the Association directed the site committee to search for land in the Merrill area as a permanent location for the school. In May 1979 the Association approved the purchase of a 44 acre tract of land subject to percolation results. However, the soil testing proved the plot to be unacceptable.

NORTHLAND'S FIRST HOME

The rejection of the 44 acre tract, however, turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Shortly afterwards a tract of land for lease was obtained within the Merrill city limits. The lot was small as far as normal high school standards go. Since it

measured only 250' by 250' it could never be a permanent site. The location was also not ideal for a permanent facility, as it was located on the Northwest side of Merrill, too far from the Wausau--Schofield area.

However, this particular lot, located on Tenth and State streets, seemed ideal for a temporary home. The site had ample space for relocatable classrooms, driveway, parking area and athletic field. It was within walking distance of a local school whose gym and other facilities were available for physical education and other uses. The Merrill City Council granted NHLS a one-year land use permit, expiring June 30, 1980. The lease included a provision that old buildings on the site be removed and that necessary laterals be installed.

Association members and other volunteers got to work immediately at the site. Members provided equipment and volunteers provided time and energy. The movable classroom buildings were expected in August 1979.

The one year lease provided the Association Site Committee enough time to obtain a permanent site. At that time plans were to relocate the movable classrooms to the permanent site. They would serve as a temporary facility on the permanent site until a permanent building could be financed and built.

RELOCATABLE CLASSROOMS PROVIDED

In the summer of 1979 three movable classrooms were purchased at the cost of \$11,000 each. The buildings measured 20' by 40' and were to be situated alongside each other to form one 60' by

40' building. Additional units could be purchased later at the same price as needed. It was intended that these buildings later be sold when a permanent building should be constructed.

The building was very functional. The outside 20' by 40' buildings were divided into two 20' by 15' classrooms each leaving a 10' by 20' area on each side available for bathrooms, closets and hall space. One of the classrooms would be used as a science-art lab. The center building would be an all-purpose center that would house the library, media-center, an office area, a meeting room and the student lunchroom.

OPENING SERVICE

Many years of praying, planning, and preparing came to an end when Northland's doors were finally opened. On September 2, 1979, an opening service was held at Salem Lutheran Church in Wausau. The Rev. David Kock preached the sermon based on Philippians 2:5 and reminded the hearers that Christian secondary education attempted to instill in Christian young people "the mind of Christ."

The opening service also doubled as a dedication of the new facilities, as well as an installation service for Northland's second full-time teacher, Mr. Delbert Draeger, an instructor in science and mathematics. The high school's facilities on Tenth and State streets in Merrill were opened to the public during the afternoon and early evening of September 2. Over 500 people toured the building.

On September 4, 1979, Northland held its first day of school. Twenty-two students were present that day. Two more students were enrolled in the following week, bringing the attendance to twenty-four. The first student body numbered twelve freshmen and twelve sophomores. All the students were members of WELS congregations in north and central Wisconsin and upper Michigan. Students came from nine of the eleven associated congregations and from five non-associated congregations. Four programs of study were offered. They were the general program, the pre-college program, the pre-teacher program, and the pre-ministerial program.

TRANSPORTATION

All but two of Northland's first students were able to commute from home. Those not able to boarded with WELS families in the Merrill area. Students living in Wausau were able to use the public school bus routes both morning and afternoon. Students living in Schofield were transported privately in the mornings and were able to use the public school buses in the afternoons. Students in the Medford, Tomahawk and Rhinelander areas were transported by volunteers of Northland who used three automobiles purchased by Northland. The transportation program became the lifeblood of the school since it was needed by nearly every student.

STUDENT LIFE

As with any students at a new school, the Northland students had a lot of adjustments to make and a lot of things to do they had never done before. But unlike other students new to a school, Northland's students had opportunity to establish lasting traditions at the school. In Northland's first year, its students first formed a student council. The students chose a school nickname, the Trojans, symbolizing their need as Christian young people to put on the whole armor of God in order to do battle with their spiritual enemies. They chose a school color, royal blue and silver gray. They chose a name for their student newspaper, the "Nuntius," Latin for "messenger." Finally they also chose a name for their student-produced yearbook, "Odyssey," by which they could relive the "adventures" of their high school years.

PERMANENT SITE CHOSEN

At the November 11, 1979 meeting of the Northland Lutheran High School Association, delegates considered and eventually adopted a proposed planning procedure for a permanent site and for permanent facilities. The first phase of this plan involved site purchase, land preparation, and the purchase of additional relocatable classrooms that would hold the school over until permanent facilities would be built. The second phase of the plan would involve the eventual construction of a permanent building when God made it clear that this could be done.

The delegates adopted the proposal of the Site Committee which recommended purchase of one of several sites that it had considered and presented at this meeting. The proposed site was

located about ten blocks south of the school's temporary location on State Street and County F. The property would sell for \$61,00, contingent on Northland's request before the Merrill city council for rezoning from R 1 residential to public use.

The proposed property had thirteen usable acres, with the remaining ten located along a wooded creek known as Devil's Creek which flowed from the Wisconsin River. The decision to locate within the city of Merrill, as opposed to a rural school setting, was made after city engineers reported that a septic system on ²per₃able land would entail considerable ~~cost~~ over-and -above land cost. The decision to purchase the proposed site ended the work of the Site Committee which was thanked for its dedicated work. A new committee would be formed to develop a master plan.

VOLUNTEERS

Northland Lutheran High School would never have existed without the dedicated efforts of many motivated volunteers. Early labors of love included the preparation of the temporary land site and the remodeling of classrooms. This volunteer work saved Northland thousands of dollars. Hundreds of dollars more were also saved by other volunteers. Thanks were due to congregational ladies groups who provided time, energy and even food for the hot lunch program. Some members served as volunteer bus drivers. One volunteer taught courses which could not have been included in the budget. Secretarial assistance was provided on a volunteer basis which made possible the production of instructional, promotional, and other materials. The newly formed Northland Lutheran High

School Ladies Auxiliary was instrumental. Others provided assistance by serving on various boards and committees, by providing legal advice and health care services, and by donating items from organs and choir robes to library books and a flagpole.

EARLY RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Critical to the continued existence of the high school was a growing enrollment, and that made recruitment a primary concern. During the months of February and March of 1979, Administrator John Schultz visited 24 confirmation classes or day schools. He was often accompanied by Northland students. He presented a slide program and also joined with his students in explaining the purpose of the school. He explained course offerings and obtained the names and addresses of interested students. Near the end of April a banquet served by the NLHS Auxiliary was planned to which the prospective students were invited and at which Northland students would provide entertainment. During the summer months prospective students would also be visited by faculty members. It was hoped that these efforts would help tap the potential that existed among the 171 eighth graders in congregations in the Northland area for a larger Northland student body.

ATHLETICS

Northland's athletic program did well in its first year of existence. Nearly every student was involved in either interscholastic or intramural sports at Northland. The school

provided opportunities to participate in a wide variety of sports. It joined the Wisconsin Independent School Athletic Association beginning with the 1980-81 season. The only significant sport that was not easily implented was football, as the existence of the program depended to a very large degree on the availability of equipment. All practices were held during the school's activity period, thus greatly reducing any transportation problems. A local pastor served as temporary athletic director and he was assisted by another local pastor.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN NORTHLAND'S HECTIC FIRST YEAR

At the annual meeting of the Association in February, the NLHS Board of Directors reorganized. Rev. Ralph Jones was elected chairman, replacing Mr. Robert Otterstatter, who was instrumental in the early years of formation. Except for the chairman, secretary and treasurer, all board members served as chairmen of the Board's six standing committees. These were the Site Committee, the Transportation Committee, the Finance Committee, the Instructional Committee, the Internal Relations Committee, and the External Relations Committee, with Administrator Schultz serving as ex officio member of the Board and its committees.

In May a new supportive organization was formed. The NLHS Men's Club was formed to serve the same purpose as the Ladies' Auxiliary, encouragement and support of Christian secondary education and Christian fellowship. It was thought that one area that could benefit through the support of a men's club would be athletics. The Association asked Mr. Dale Walz, athletic director

at Lakeside Lutheran High School in Lake Mills, Wisconsin, to present a program that demonstrated how a men's club could assist in the area of athletics. Mr. Walz also used visual slides to demonstrate the impact of athletics on school spirit. The group set a goal of \$5000 as an amount hoped to be raised to assist in the purchase of school equipment.

The Recruitment Banquet served by the Ladies' Auxiliary in April was a big success, with 140 in attendance. The NLHS choir entertained with modern music, a "sound on sound" medley of students singing and being choreographed against a backdrop of recorded orchestration. The school year closed with an attendance of twenty-eight, as four more students were enrolled during the school year.

PREPARATIONS FOR SECOND YEAR

Two more full time instructors were called in order to prepare for Northland's second year, a year which would see the addition of a junior class. Mr. Kurt Troge was called to teach English and Mr. Jeff Davis was called as athletic director.

A major event in the history of the school was the move to the new permanent site. The original 40' by 60' building was moved in one piece. The move to the new site ten blocks away was done via a round-about route that took eight hours. A second "new" building measuring 24' by 72' was purchased from the Tomahawk school district and was also moved in early summer. A third building was constructed in the summer of 1980 and was to be ready by early August. In addition an earthmoving project was

undertaken to avoid purchasing large amounts of landfill needed for the temporary classroom site and to backfill an abandoned basement. Several thousand dollars were saved. An enrollment between 45 and 72 was expected for the 1980-81 year.

Delegates to the June 1980 Association meeting approved a \$158,000 budget which included a \$20,000 capital purchase item in preparation for the second year. Anticipated capital purchases included two 30 passenger school buses, boys and girls basketball and track uniforms, typing class used typewriters, microscopes, folding chairs, teacher's desks and chairs, student tables, overhead projectors, athletic equipment, used sewing machines and science equipment.

NORTHLAND'S SECOND YEAR

August 31, 1980 was the date for the opening service of Northland's second school year. Due to the addition of a junior class and a larger freshman enrollment the enrollment increased from 28 to 50. 70% of the students came from associated congregations, 26% from non-member congregations and two non-WELS students. The \$158,000 budget was about a 67% increase over the \$940,000 budget figure of the previous year.

The high school benefited in its second year from the summer facelift. During the year the graded areas of the campus were sowed with grass in anticipation of having athletic fields ready for the 1981-82 school year. A football-soccer field, a grass track and a baseball infield-outfield were planned.

A more thorough recruitment plan was developed by the External Relations Committee. Brochures and other motivational materials were prepared, including a sound slide presentation entitled "This is Northland Lutheran High School Today." The student newspaper "Nuntius" was mailed to all prospective students in 6th to 8th grades. A new slide program was shown on recruitment trips. Parents were addressed and pastors and principals were asked to help in the recruitment program.

In a September 1980 meeting of the Association, delegates approved the sale of private notes in order to help finance the Phase One land and buildings of the school. At this time indebtedness for Phase One had reached \$140,000 and the purchase of another classroom building for the next school year was anticipated. A \$260,000 indebtedness ceiling had originally been proposed. It was hoped that the sale of the notes would negotiate \$200,000.

On November 17, 1980 a critical issue was addressed by the Association. At issue was the need to expand the course offerings and provide additional teachers in preparation for the addition of the senior class in 1981-82 in spite of the current budget crunch. The delegates approved the motion to do so. One part-time teacher would become a full-time teacher in the following year and a pastor would be called to serve full-time also, heading the religion-foreign language department.

At a time when Northland's financial deficit was becoming more and more a concern, the Lord blessed Northland with an excellent response to a fund-raising event. A "Night with Northland" banquet was held on February 15, 1980. It was

sponsored by the NLHS Men's Club. The banquet and program followed the annual meeting of the Association in the afternoon. The keynote speaker for the program was Synod President Carl H. Mischke. "Night with Northland" became an annual event from that time on.

In March of 1981 a tuition assistance program was developed. Several families from the Wausau area made this possible. The Board of Directors developed a policy for granting tuition assistance. It was strongly felt that no student wanting a Christian secondary education should be denied one due to a lack of funds.

At the annual meeting of the Association the Board of Directors was reorganized and Mr. Donald Stoffer was elected NLHS Association President.

A new Northland tradition was started in 1981 with the implementation of a May banquet. Northland's first junior class picked the theme "We've Only Just Begun," based on a popular song.

Another fund-raising banquet was organized by AAL branches and held on May 31. Guest speaker Professor Paul Kelm spoke on "Excellence in Christian Secondary Education." The event was also planned as a surprise celebration of Administrator John Schultz's 25 years in the teaching ministry. The banquet was called a "huge success." Over 300 people were in attendance and an offering of \$8647.63 was matched by AAL for a total of \$17,295.26 which was used toward the purchase of a new sixty passenger bus.

THE SUMMER OF 1981

In the summer of 1981 Reverend Richard Kogler accepted Northland's call to serve as the fifth full-time teacher. He was called to serve as the head of the religion-foreign language program. Mr. Earl Monday became the sixth full-time teacher at Northland when he accepted the call to head the school's English department. Mrs. Sally Davis became the seventh full-time teacher as she accepted a call to teach business education.

In the summer of 1981 the Northland Lutheran family experienced an emotional blow when the Lord graciously called home Mark Ralph Steiner, who had been Northland's first junior class president and who would have been a member of Northland's first graduating class. The members of Northland thanked the Lord for providing him with the years of Christian education he received and prayed that all Northland's students would be always ready to be called eternally home.

NORTHLAND'S THIRD YEAR

Despite all its difficulties in the early going the Lord graciously blessed Northland with two years of solid growth. In Northland's third year the enrollment expanded from an original 24 to 70. The school had progressed from one temporary building on a temporary site to four temporary buildings on a permanent site. The federation grew from eleven congregations to fourteen. Two full-time instructors were present in the beginning of the first school year while seven were in place at the beginning of the third.

One obstacle remained, however, and that was the fact that the temporary facilities would not do for long. In view of this need and of the past blessings the Board of Directors instituted a program of commitment called "Northland's Future--Bright as God's Promises." It was stressed that a permanent structure would include not only classroom space but also provision for physical education, athletic and practical arts needs. It was stressed that these needs had to be met in order for Northland to achieve its full potential of 250-300 students. Emphasizing the privilege of having a Lutheran high school in their midst, a goal of \$300,000 was set.

THANKSGIVING DAY TELEVISION SPECIAL

Using an idea that grew out of a suggestion by Rev. Ralph Jones, the External Relations Committee came up with a means of taking Northland's story and needs to every interested congregation and individual who might have a desire to participate in the Northland program in some way. They developed a half hour television program whose purpose was to share the nurturing effect that the gospel had had on Northland and its people and at the same time present the school's needs. It was a professionally narrated program using a documentary format in which the eye of the camera learned about Northland through interview and action. The program was aired on WADW-TV in Wausau on Thanksgiving Day. The \$2300 cost of the production was funded for the most part through special gifts.

FIRST GRADUATION

Northland's first graduation service was held on May 30, 1982, with a graduating class of eleven. From its humble beginnings and through all its difficult organizing years, Northland finally had begun to fulfill its heart-felt purpose--to prepare young Christian men and women as spiritually trained and competent proclaimers of the gospel. It was the strong feeling of Northland's original planners the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers meant that the large body of lay people could best carry out the Great Commission. Rev. Neil Hansen of Schofield preached the sermon and Northland's choir sang. Over 400 were in attendance.

FOURTH YEAR

Northland's fourth year began with an attendance of 83 with a freshman class of 30.

On September 27, 1982, the Northland Association approved a motion to enlist the service of the WELS Stewardship Office to organize a capital fund drive. The intent of the drive was to "eliminate the present capital indebtedness and to erect a permanent building at Northland Lutheran High School." Mr. Jerry Kirschke of the Stewardship Office would organize a five-week program beginning in the first week in February in which he would train members to conduct an every member visitation program. It was to be a feasibility study that would determine the people's commitment to the program and set forth also its purpose.

When the time came for the stewardship drive, a goal of \$500,000 over a three year period was established. The theme of the fund drive was "Time to be Counted."

"IS NORTHLAND TO CLOSE?"

In the November 1982 issue of Northland's "Update" newsletter, Administrator Schultz speaks of a question asked of him in his sophomore religion class: "Is Northland to close?" So the question was being asked along the grapevine. That Northland had survived as long as it had seemed to have been only against all odds.

The entire Northland faculty took this question to heart. They circulated a statement of intent among the associated congregations which stated their joint committment to, among other things, fervently pray and work toward the success of Northland, to keep budgetary requests to a minimum, and to also forego the opportunity for summer schooling in the summer of 1983. In return they asked for committment from the congregations to help Northland survive and prosper.

Need had reached the critical point. Congregations and individuals began to respond. In the December 1982 issue of "Update" unsolicited student editorials from their student publication "Nuntius" were published to show the strong student desire for the success of Northland. Students were very willing also to make some sacrifices and accepted some definite inconvenieces to help ease the strain on the school's budget. The students were willing even to go so far as to accept elimination

of the winter sports. The board, however, while implementing some changes which involved inconveniences for the students, made other adjustments that allowed the winter sports schedule to remain intact. The students also overwhelmingly accepted the request for their volunteer involvement in recruitment. Further recruitment development resulted in the attendance of 75 students from Christian day schools in Northland's first annual Christian Day School Spelling Contest on April 16.

The December "Update" issue also reported a strong congregational response in the amount of \$11,008.50 in special gifts which helped ease the budget deficit and the financial crisis.

FIFTH YEAR

Because projected enrollments for the 1983-84 school year were for over 100 students, and since the 1982-83 enrollment of 82 was "about capacity," the Association decided at its June 21st Association meeting to erect a fifth relocatable classroom. A proposal to construct the gymnasium phase of the permanent building was narrowly defeated. By June of 1983 \$316,961 of the \$500,000 "Time to be Counted" goal had been pledged.

In response to this decision the Merrill City Council called for a presentation of a timetable for construction of a permanent building as a condition of its approval of this fifth building. The Council was concerned that the temporary buildings might become permanent and that the growing complex of wooden buildings might deteriorate and that it already did present a fire threat.

On August 23, delegates resolved to submit a timetable to the city council which called for beginning construction on the gymnasium phase of the permanent building sometime in 1984. Even then the delegates realized that to do so would be against all odds. It was felt that enough support from the congregations would be present only when additional congregations joined the Association. Therefore the Association also determined to ask the City Council for additional time to submit a timetable.

In addition to purchasing a fifth classroom, extensive remodeling was done to help facilitate the new student body. Two new rooms, for computers and for the guidance department, were added; the library was enlarged by removing a wall and entrance ways were reconstructed.

The 1983-84 school year opened with 94 students, slightly below projections. In this school year more recruitment projects were implemented including a November 12 math meet which was attended by five teams from two schools. \$200 worth of scholarships to attend Northland were awarded the individual winners. The annual spelling contest held on April 14 also awarded similar scholarships to individual winners.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO BUILD

At the April 1, 1984 delegate meeting, delegates adopted a refinancing proposal that would allow the Association to borrow sufficient funds in order to begin to construct a phase of the permanent building. \$875,000 would be borrowed in order to consolidate existing debts and to provide for a \$300,000 building

project. A loan repayment schedule would call for \$22,000 per month from the congregations. A possible July groundbreaking date was set.

SIXTH YEAR

At the end of the 1983-84 school year attendance had dropped from 94 to 89. The 1984-85 school year began with an enrollment of 92.

A significant faculty change was occasioned by Rev. Richard Kogler's accepting of a call to a California parish in July. He had been the head of the religion and the foreign language department. It was necessary for the Association to replace Pastor Kogler with a one year replacement from the Seminary. This "emergency call" was perpetuated each year with a new replacement from the Seminary.

Even while these changes were taking place, the possibility of Northland's even being able to open its doors for the new school year was still an open question, though the date was only weeks away. As with so many times in the past, the pressure was on!

But at this critical moment the Lord blessed Northland with a heartfelt emotional lift. Within days of receiving a letter calling attention to the critical situation, \$102,000 in cash and pledges were received. The response grew to \$106,000 with over \$66,000 of the amount in cash. Once again school opened as more and more families struggled with the thought of losing for good local Christian secondary education for their children.

Another very significant blessing came about in December. An offer came from the Sisters of the Mercy of the Holy Cross in Merrill for free library materials. The free books came from the former Holy Cross Junior College and High School which had closed ten years before. It eventually became apparent that literally thousands of books were being made available free of charge to Northland. A library collection full of variety and depth was truly an unforeseen blessing.

The February 1985 issue of "Update" included a number of articles written by students who wrote about subjects of interest to prospective students. These articles attempted to alleviate a potential student's concerns. The articles were entitled "Making the Grade," "Making the Team," and "Making Friends." It was another good example of students volunteering their help in recruitment.

At the April Association meeting it was resolved to begin a new fund drive that would replace "Time to be Counted," one that would cover the three-year period 1986-88. A Director of Development was hired for a six-month period. The program was called "Abundantly Sow...Abundantly Reap." Mr. Al Brockelman of Menomonie, a retired AAL representative and an active WELS member was hired. \$700,000 would be sought in non-interest notes, in cash, and in three-year pledges. The gymnasium would be constructed when the \$600,000 mark was reached. Rev. Roy Hoenecke of Wausau accepted the position of pastoral advisor.

A SEVENTH YEAR

Volunteer labors of love once again abounded in preparation for the 1985-86 school year. Thousands of dollars were saved with a \$1600 investment and hundreds of man-hours of volunteer labor. From painting, plumbing, carpentry and cabinet-making to the donation of appliances, cash and food, evidence of an immense effort to keep Northland going abounded.

The new school year enrolled close to 100 students.

In the early part of the school year the Board of Directors established a Blue Ribbon Committee of about 25 members that had three purposes. The committee looked at reasons for an increasing attrition rate among students, the recruitment efforts being undertaken and the reason for the relatively slow growth rate in recent years. Especially in connection with the attrition rate, parents were often encouraged to not let their children make their own decisions about their spiritual welfare.

In December the Student Council implemented a "Tripod Program" whose purpose was to promote harmony among students and between students and teachers. The tripod apparatus was used as a symbol of the fellowship between a student, his fellow brother or sister in faith and the Lord. Practical examples included sitting with the person at lunch, helping them with homework and showing support, kindness, and offering prayers.

The NLHSA had established that \$475,000 would be necessary before construction on a permanent building could begin. Commitments, however, totalled only \$275,000. In March 1986 approval was given to the concept of forming a group of men and women to be called "Gideon's Army" who would be trained to go out and actively gather the anticipated shortfall.

In June 1986 the \$1400 cost of producing and printing the "Update" newsletter had to be removed from the budget. Another publication called the "Communicator" had been instituted in March as an intended supplement to the "Update." The monthly "Communicator" bypassed printing costs and assumed the "Update"'s former role.

THE 1986-87 SCHOOL YEAR

Northland's most recent school year began with a significant drop in enrollment to 77.

A second setback befell Northland in the summer prior to the new school year when a large congregation with membership over 1100 withdrew from the Association.

Nevertheless in November 1986 Association delegates resolved that despite all odds seeming to go against them, Northland should not close. In an attempt to dispel uncertainty of past years, they resolved that "Northland Lutheran High School will continue in its present location and shall not close." They resolved to build no later than May 1, 1987. In February 1987 this decision received congregational ratification after much discussion.

An uplifting experience was the receipt of \$651.78 given as first school year quarter mission offering from the children of St. Paul's Lutheran School in Hales Corners. Their mission theme was "Reach Out to Help a Friend."

In February Northland supporters read for the first time some of the details of the first phase of the new permanent building to undergo construction, God willing, within three months. The 140'

by 130' structure was to include a 98' by 82' gymnasium, three classrooms including a science lab, and an office area along with locker rooms and bathrooms. It is expected that the building should be ready for use in November.

CONCLUSION

As with so many other moments in Northland Lutheran High School's history, the school is presently at a critical stage. The groundbreaking date is less than six weeks away. Only the Lord knows what lies ahead. Only the Lord can make Northland Lutheran a success. Whatever its future, it already has a past filled with God's blessings. Northland's supporters continue to trust the Lord and pray for the wisdom, the guidance, the strength, the direction, and the blessing which he promises and gives.

SOURCES: The primary source for this paper was Northland Lutheran High School's "Update" newsletter, volume 1, #1 through volume 9, # 1. Other sources include the school's "Communicator" newsletter, volume 1, #1 through volume 2, #3, and the student handbook 1986-87.