

**"God Grows His Church...
In His Own Time"**

**THE HISTORY OF NEW LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH,
ROCKFORD, IL: 1988-2000**

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December 11, 2006

New Life Lutheran Church will always remain close to the heart of this writer. This former mission church is currently supporting their third vicar. The generosity, caring and friendliness of this congregation will make its impression on anyone who walks through the church doors.

This paper talks at length about the ministry of Pastor Mark Paustian. This paper would never have been written without the ministry of another man, Pastor Phil Henselin. Pastor Henselin instilled in His people a respect for God's Word and the public ministry. Pastor Henselin instilled in this author a love for God's Word, love for the ministry and a love for the people of New Life Lutheran Church. It is out of respect for the people of this congregation that I decided to write this paper. This paper by no means covers everything in the early history of this church. There are many other things that could be written. By looking at the early history of this church, one cannot help but notice how the Lord grows His church...in His own time.

A Time to Begin

The city of Rockford was a booming industrial town in the middle of the 20th century. Over time, however, manufacturing in Rockford declined and unemployment increased. As industry declined, people began moving away from the central portion of the city and out to the East.¹ As Rockford began to expand to the east, a WELS congregation in nearby Loves Park took notice. Under the leadership of Pastor Lawrence Olsen, Peace Lutheran Church performed a community profile of the Cherry Valley/South Rockford community in 1986-1987. It was determined that the increasing population together with the lack of churches made this community a great place to begin an 'Outreach Exploratory.' In turn, the WELS Home for Board

¹ With this movement, Rockford has really become a divided city. The east side of Rockford is full of nice homes and businesses- a safe place to raise a family. On "the other side of the river," the west side, you will find higher unemployment, poverty and crime rates.

Missions decided to call a pastor to serve this area. The call was declined three times before the Board sent a call to the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary assignment committee.

In May of 1988, the Lord led the committee to assign 25 year-old Mark Paustian to begin work at the Cherry Valley exploratory church. After receiving the call, the district president asked him, "Well, Mark, What do you think?" Mark responded, "Well, it's not what I expected." The thought of starting an exploratory seemed a little overwhelming and intimidating for this new graduate out of the Seminary.

Later that evening, Paustian had a conversation that prepared him for his mission work. While attending a graduation party, he had a great witnessing conversation. He called this talk "the best witnessing conversation I've ever had in my life."² Throughout the course of this conversation, Paustian could see how the Lord was preparing him for future witnessing conversations. This conversation showed him that with God's Word, he could be an effective witness after all. The Holy Spirit also used this conversation to show to Paustian that his calling was a high privilege and honor.

On July 1 of that year, Paustian moved into his first house located near the corner of Alpine and Newburg. As he began to investigate the area, he found that some of the original information that he received was incorrect. When Paustian received information about his assignment on call day, his statistics told him that there were thirty people waiting for him to come and be their pastor. When he got to Rockford, however, he learned that the actual number waiting for him was zero.³ With no prospects to begin with, and with no visible church to serve,

² In his book More Prepared to Answer Paustian used this experience to write the chapter titled "How could there be a good God when the world is such a bad place."

³ The original number of thirty people was based off of the statistics of a 1986 study. Within this study, there were thirty people who had expressed interest in the possibility of a new church. This information proved to be outdated and insufficient when Paustian began his call.

Paustian was ordained into the public ministry by the Home for Board Missions. Paustian's father, Henry, performed the rite of ordination.

After his ordination, Pastor Paustian went to work. The initial work included naming the church and identifying the target area for outreach.⁴ He also spent time interviewing several clergy and city leaders. After learning about the city, Paustian began to walk the streets. He spent the next six weeks going door-to-door knocking on anywhere between 1200-1500 doors.⁵ When he knocked on the door, he introduced himself and then gave them a survey of about six or seven questions. These homes produced about 250 prospects. After getting these 250 prospects, he then began to make second visits on them. Paustian called these second visits 'listening visits.' During this time, he would engage them in conversation and often be invited into their homes to listen and share the gospel with them. He would then keep in contact with these people by sending out different mailings, often followed by third and sometimes fourth visits.

During this time, New Life received their first two members: Ed and Pat Krueger. The Kruegers had been members at Hope Lutheran (WELS) in Belvidere. They came into contact with Paustian and became very important figures in the early history of the church. They helped Pastor with some door-to-door evangelism, provided encouraging words of support, and opened their homes for Bible Classes. Their home also served as a short-term parsonage for Pastor.⁶

Pastor continued his door-to-door evangelism work through the summer and fall. During Advent in December of 1988, the first Bible classes were held at the Krueger's home. These

⁴ The borders for the area of outreach were originally defined as: South- Newburg Rd, North- State Street, East- I-90, West- Mulford Rd.

⁵ The church received publicity for all of the work that they did canvassing. The city newspaper *The Rockford Register Star* printed an article that described the door-to-door work that Paustian was doing. The article is in the addenda at the end of this paper.

⁶ In May of 1989, Pastor Paustian was ready to move into a new house located on the SE corner of Newburg and Perryville Roads. On the day before he was ready to move, the new house had a fire and Pastor was left without a place to live. The Kruegers opened their home and pastor lived with them for several weeks.

Bible studies proved to be great opportunities, with up to as many as fifteen people attending. As people gathered around God's Word, the seed of faith was being planted, watered and began to grow.

In January of 1989, the church began making plans to organize a congregation. To help them organize this, Peace Lutheran Church borrowed some of their members to New Life to form a 'steering committee.' This steering committee met together and planned at the home of Rick and Kim Hutchinson. It was determined that the majority of their effort would be directed at organizing the first congregational worship service.

After many sessions, the plan was in place. The committee chose early May as the date for the first worship service. How would they find people to attend this service? First of all, phone calls would be made to find more prospects. St. Mark's in Watertown, WI (the church where Mark's father, Henry, was pastor), organized a group of volunteers to make 8,000 phone calls to the Rockford area. After the phone calls, a series of four mailings would then be sent to these prospects to advertise the church and its first worship service. Everything was beginning to take place with the exception of one minor problem- there was no place to worship.

With the beginning of May fast approaching, the steering committee spent many hours trying to find a place to worship. Pastor and the committee were looking everywhere and anywhere to find a worship space. The committee even attempted to secure a place from a local car dealership. Ed Krueger was employed at Bachrodt Auto on East State Street. He used his connection to try to persuade the owner to let New Life use the car showroom as a sanctuary, but the owner decided against it. Eventually, it became too late to pull off the opening service by the beginning of May. Pastor Paustian talked to his WELS mission counselors and they told him: "Mark, it's just too late. It's not going to work. Maybe you should be looking at the fall or the

following spring." So, 8,000 phone calls were ready to be made. Four different mailings were designed and ready to be printed. Now, they had to be canceled. Three, six or twelve months more of knocking on doors would follow. Three, six or twelve months more of bible studies without congregational worship. There was nothing that this growing little church could do but wait- wait for God to open a door.

In many situations, people get frustrated because God does not seem to answer their prayers fast enough. God did not give New Life enough time to sorrow over their disappointment. After hearing the bad news from the mission counselors, Pastor went out for a ride. He decided to drive down State Street. As he drove down the street, he noticed a sign that said 'Rockford College.' He had never been there before, but thought he might as well take a look. He drove onto the beautiful campus, and noticed a unique looking building. He drove up to the building and he saw the words *Fisher Chapel* on the side of the building. He walked into the building and talked to the receptionist. He introduced himself as a Pastor of a Lutheran church whose church was looking for a place to worship. With these words, the woman's jaw dropped and she said: "Last night, there was a board of directors meeting. At the end of the meeting the new president of the board said, 'You know we have this beautiful chapel sitting here empty every Sunday morning. Couldn't we find someone to use it?'" After telling Paustian these words, she went off to tell someone the news. As he sat alone, Paustian looked at the chapel with seating for 250 people, a grand piano and a pipe organ. A little while later, Paustian would be back on the phone with his mission counselors, "We're back on."

After securing Fisher Chapel at Rockford College, the phone calling began. Two months before opening services were scheduled to begin, volunteers at St. Mark's in Watertown began calling. The callers made 8,000 calls and talked to about 5,000 homes. This calling process took

about three or four weeks and then the mailings began. The phone calling generated a list of about 1,000 prospects who would receive the mailings. In addition to the mailings, Paustian made more door-to-door visits to other prospects inviting them to come to New Life's first service. About one year after receiving his first call, Paustian was ready to lead New Life's first formal worship service.

New Life held their first worship service at Fisher Chapel on May 7, 1989. There were 257 people in attendance. There were many family, friends and members from St. Mark's that made the trip to Rockford for the first service. Along with all these WELS members were 50 families who were on the prospect list. In the midst of all these visitors, New Life had the joy of witnessing their first adult baptism, Jill Potter (Scott). Pastor Paustian also preached his first sermon on the blessings of the New Life in Christ. God had definitely blessed the work, planning and actions of his people.

The following week, Pastor Paustian and the steering committee delivered a loaf of bread to every family that had visited the first service.⁷ The following week 57 people attended worship, then 48 on the next Sunday, and then 40 on the Sunday after that. After four services, New Life had about 40 prospects who attended on a regular basis.

With the excitement of the first service still fresh in their minds, New Life continued to make evangelism a priority. Included in their evangelism activities that first year were: video tape outreach to targeted homes, inviting the community to a housewarming/cookout, canvassing, evangelism training of members, open letter to the community, Festival of Friendship, and giving away cassettes of the drama the 'Gospel of St. Mark.'

⁷ New Life would continue to deliver bread to any visiting prospect. Bread delivery is still carried on by the congregation today.

The church was not only busy with evangelism, but New Life also put a lot of time into inreach as well. In May, the church counsel was formed. In the fall, Sunday school and confirmation classes began. Later, youth group work began in cooperation with Peace in Loves Park. In November, there were family Bibles studies. Pastor also went around and demonstrated how to have home devotions. The church also held the first annual Adult Fellowship Christmas Party. Also during this time, New Life held their weekly Bible classes at different homes. This young church was busy both in nurturing, fellowship and trying to reach the lost.

During this first year, New Life also began thinking about acquiring land. The church had been renting a house on the corner of Newburg and Perryville.⁸ This is where Pastor Paustian and Dan Kroll, a vicar at Peace in Love's Park, lived. In December of that year, the church together with the board for home missions attempted to buy these five acres of land, but they were unsuccessful. This search for land was New Life's first attempt to find a property on which they could build their own church.

A Time to Grow

In the beginning of 1990, average worship attendance grew month after month. In the late winter and early spring, the members of New Life came together for their first Wednesday night Lent services. These gatherings provided an intimate atmosphere for fellowship as they were held at pastor's home. After Lent and Easter, the members of New Life celebrated their one year anniversary in May. In this service, 38 communicants were received as charter members.

These charter members of New Life worked hard to make visitors feel welcome at their worship services. Around this time, these members got used to seeing another particular visitor on occasion, Connie Kroll. Connie was the sister of Dan Kroll, who was living in the same house

⁸ Today, a large furniture store is located on this site.

as Pastor Paustian. Pastor and Connie had met through Dan and began dating. This relationship developed into a marriage that took place at Fisher Chapel on June 30, 1991. The members of the congregation welcomed Connie into their membership with open arms.

Connie Paustian had a major impact on the life of the church. She brought life and energy into the church. She also served as an organist, taught piano lessons, sang in the choir, participated in woman's ministry, and led a Saturday morning Bible study at a local restaurant. Even though she participated a lot in the life of the church, perhaps her biggest impact was the example of how a Christian handles difficult times. Connie suffered from lupus, which causes a lot of pain and suffering. The hearts of the people went out to her, and she persevered through the pain. The members of the congregation also appreciated the fact that Pastor would use her painful experiences as illustrations in sermons. These illustrations struck their hearts, and showed them how God's Word could be applied to all situations. One member summed up Connie's impact with these words: "Connie was indeed born to be a pastor's wife, and, more specifically, this pastor's wife. She was/is an extension of Pastor Paustian's warmth, goodness, and magnetic personality. She was an admirable example of Christian faith and forbearance throughout her serious illness."

While the members were blessed through pastor's wife, pastor's family was also blessed through the members. Most importantly, the church provided encouraging words, Christian fellowship and a joyful worship atmosphere. In addition to the spiritual support, the members were also generous with their possessions. While Connie was undergoing treatment for lupus, the members of New Life coordinated a benefit for the Paustians. The congregation invited members from Peace (Loves Park), Our Savior (Freeport), Good Shepherd (Beloit), and Hope (Belvidere) to come together to show support for their pastor. This benefit raised nearly \$5000 to help pay

for some of Connie's medical expenses. Throughout the years, the members also showed generosity by paying for chiropractor visits, paying for tennis club memberships, taking the family out for meals, spoiling their children⁹ with gifts at Christmas and birthday, and by providing many other things as well. The people of New Life served as great examples of Christian generosity.

June of 1991 was not only a happy time because of Pastor's marriage, but the congregation also received good news from the Board for Home Missions: New Life was given "Mission Status." This good news did not make the people lazy. Inspired by God's love for them, New Life continued to keep evangelism a priority. In the early 1990s, New Life tried these different methods for reaching the lost: newspaper ads, phone calls, Vacation Bible School, 'Lifetalk' radio series, training members for evangelism work, Christmas for Kids, Friendship Sundays, Travel Canvass Witness teams, and much more.¹⁰ The Lord blessed this work with numbers as the total communicant number rose from 56 in December of 1990 to 95 in December of 1995.

While the church continued to keep evangelism a priority, the early 1990s also saw many new programs begun within the church. Perhaps the biggest blessing to the church was the beginning of New Life Women's Ministry in January of 1992. This group became a very important source of spiritual growth for many women in the congregation. This group brought in guest speakers from different WELS groups, which helped the congregation understand the concept of 'synod.' The women were also very active. They formed an altar guild, took over the annual Christmas Dinner, provided fellowship snacks and coffee after church, started a drive to

⁹ Pastor Paustian has two daughters: Abigail Grace (born in 1993) and Hannah Joy (1996).

¹⁰ For more information, look at the "God's Leading New Life to this Day: December 1994" in the Addenda.

earn funds for a sound system, made Easter banners, supported missions, visited members in nursing homes and did many other things as well.

Women's Ministry, however, was only one of the many new programs during the early 1990s. Home Bible Studies, Cottage meetings, and every member visits shaped the attitude of this young church. These intimate gatherings fostered a close-knit relationship between many of the members. This contributed to the loving and caring atmosphere that many visitors enjoyed about New Life. The Church also started "Worship in the Woods" during the summer months. The congregation held these outdoor worship services once a month at the site at Newburg and Perryville. The majority of members enjoyed this change of pace and relaxed atmosphere.

In addition to the evangelism and different organizations, New Life also had a major learning experience in December of 1993. This was the month that Pastor Paustian received his first call to another congregation. Since many of the members were not life-long WELS members, they were not familiar with the call process. Pastor Paustian returned the call, but this would not be the last. Throughout the rest of his ministry at New Life, it seemed as if Pastor was receiving a call every six months.¹¹ These calls provided opportunities for Paustian to teach the congregation about the doctrine of the call. The divine call was a reality that any early member of New Life experienced for the next seven years.

A Time to Build

An important landmark in any mission church is having their own place of worship. Throughout the WELS, many exploratory churches worship in gymnasiums, community centers or abandoned stores. They all long for the day when they can have their own beautiful church to worship in. Even though New Life rented beautiful Fisher Chapel, the members also wanted to

¹¹ Paustian estimated that the number of calls was between 13-17 from 1993-2000.

have their own building. In hindsight, some people thought that the church was too building oriented in their early history. Others thought that building a church was vital for continued growth. Either way, the search for a permanent worship site was a major project that played a key role in the history of the church.

In June of 1990, the church purchased the land at Newburg and Perryville. This had been the site that the church had previously been renting as pastor's parsonage. This site served as the center for many Bible classes, Lent services and Vacation Bible Schools through the years. Around the time when Pastor was married in June of 1990, the parsonage was remodeled and given a new roof. Since the budget was relatively low and since Fisher chapel was serving the needs of the congregation, the church was not in a rush to build on the present land.

As the church continued to grow, support for a building program also grew. Many people thought that the lack of a permanent building turned many visitors away. The general feeling was that a church building would bring a lot of visitors back. In May of 1992, the leaders of New Life held an important meeting in Oconomowoc, WI. As a result of this meeting, the committee made plans to build by May of 1995. The church supported the leaders, and they made the decision to pursue the building program. By January of 1993, the building committee was organized and functioning. In April of that year, the church held a building kick-off celebration at Peace. This celebration raised \$2700. The council also committed \$10,000 to the project.

While enthusiasm for the building program increased, the WELS Board for Home Mission introduced a new financing policy for mission churches. As a result of this change, the church decided that they needed to sell the present land and pursue a different location. Selling the old location proved to be very difficult. There were many properties for sale in Rockford, and

potential buyers offered ridiculously low prices. As a result, the building program stalled. This caused a lot of frustration for many different members.

As frustration over the stalled building program grew, the church went back to the old plan and entertained thoughts of building a church on the Newburg/Perryville location. There were many different reasons why this did not happen. First of all, the land itself would have needed major developing before anything was built. There was a ravine that needed to be rerouted in order to build a church and a parking lot. There was a high density of trees that would have been very costly to cut down. The existing parsonage had to be moved or torn down in order to have a favorable location for the church building. A lot of dirt would have needed to be brought in. The site had poor ingress/egress.¹² All of these factors caused the committee to look elsewhere. In October of 1995, this property was finally sold at a break-even price.

While the church was still in the process of selling the original site, the church experienced perhaps the biggest event in its short history. In March of 1995, the board started pursuing Calvary Baptist church on the south side of Rockford. At first, this site looked very intriguing. The price was reasonable (\$275,000). This church was already built, so the waiting period would not be very long. There was a nice parking lot. They would be able to reach out to a different part of the community. At first, the church seemed to be supportive of the decision to buy. New Life even held a church service at this location so that members could get a feel for it. The building committee and majority of the congregation liked this location. It looked as if New Life was ready to purchase their first church property and building. A voter's meeting was scheduled for October.

While support for this location grew, some negative information about this sight was discovered. As the building inspector looked into the church, the total price of needed

¹² Ingress/Egress is the ease of driving in and out of a certain location.

renovations kept going up and up. With each report the price kept getting higher. With these rising prices, other problems that were overlooked started looming larger. There was a baptismal pool that needed to be removed. Wheelchair ramps were not easily accessible. It was too far from their target area. The acreage on the property would make it difficult to build a school someday. The parsonage was right next to the church, which some did not like. Many other expensive repairs were also found. This information started coming in as the voter's meeting neared in October. At the meeting, the voters decided not to purchase this church. As a result, some members of the church were hurt, and hard feelings followed.

It is unfortunate that hard feelings occur in a congregation over things that are neither commanded nor forbidden by God. Yet, until we stand with our Lord Jesus in heaven, we still have a sinful nature that produces hard feelings. Perhaps a little understanding of the dynamics of the situation can help some understand what happened. There were many members who had been with the church from the beginning. These people were eager to see the church grow. Over time, however, the weekly financial struggles, delays in the building program, and other frustrations that come with a small mission church were adding up. These people had been searching hard and long for a good place to purchase, and they were tired of not seeing any progress. But then, something happened that gave them new energy: a permanent place where they could worship. They saw a perfect opportunity in a church that was already built.

On the other hand, there were also people who were not tired. These people had not experienced the frustration that the older members had felt. They felt that New Life was perhaps settling for something that they didn't need to buy. They wanted to keep looking for something

else. This is not to say that it was one group against another. There were two different groups¹³ who felt strongly that their view was the best way to serve the Lord. Regardless of the result, one member put things into perspective with these words: "The Lord wins and time heals."

After this decision, a new committee was formed. The first project that this committee undertook was the purchase of a new parsonage. In December of 1995, the members unanimously voted to purchase a home at 1206 Griggs. In January, Pastor Paustian and his family moved into the parsonage.¹⁴ This decision was only the beginning for this committee.

After purchasing the parsonage, the church began pursuing land for a future church building. This process was long and difficult. The committee had to deal with difficult realtors, a small (but growing) building fund, sellers who suddenly backed out and numerous other obstacles along the way. There were over forty different sites that were thought about or suggested. The sites that caused the most interest were the following: The corner of Bell School and Rote Rd,¹⁵ corner of Lyford and Spring Creek,¹⁶ Newburg Road near Mulford,¹⁷ and a site on the East side of Lyford Road.¹⁸ After a while, people wondered if a sight would ever open up.

In late 1997, a site of six acres at 1100 N Lyford Road became available. The board was mixed in the selection of this site. There were some concerns about who the neighbors to the

¹³ This isn't to say that the church was taking sides with each other. There were also those who would have supported the decision either way. The reality is, however, that many felt that this division caused some hard feelings that lasted for a long time.

¹⁴ This site still serves as the present parsonage of Pastor Henselin and his family.

¹⁵ This site was rejected mainly for two reasons. 1) The owner brought in fill that was full of unstable materials. It would have been costly to clean it up and bring in more fill. 2) There was a water treatment site on the property that would have been a major eye sore.

¹⁶ This sight looked very promising, but the Assembly of God church that owned it suddenly and unexpectedly took it off the market.

¹⁷ This sight was rejected for two main reasons: 1) ingress/egress problems 2) This was a hilly sight that would have required a lot of fill.

¹⁸ This site required too much money for the size of the land.

North would be. Others expressed concerns about the noise from the I-90 toll way. Still others were concerned that this site was out of their target area and was too close to Peace in Loves Park. The positives, however, outweighed the negatives. This two lane road had plans to expand to four lanes. The visibility from the toll way would be terrific. The site was in an area of growth. The seller and the committee worked out the following deal for the land: the net cost would be \$137,500. The price would be \$25,000 dollars/acre for the six acres. The seller would donate half an acre for a water retention area. In March of 1998, the voters of the congregation approved the purchase of this site in a voters' meeting. Finally, New Life had a location for their future church.

Throughout the next year and four months the committee hired an architect, worked out financing for the project, carried out every member stewardship visits, worked on building plans, and performed other necessary functions. The committee spent countless hours meeting with the architect to design the church. One piece of architecture that the committee wanted was a high cupola with a steeple on top. In the initial building plans, the architect introduced a cupola that would have been higher than the present one. Also in this plan was room for a sacristy and offices behind the present altar. As financial models came in, it was determined that the church could not afford this model. Instead, they scaled down and decided to build the present church building.

In August of 1999, New Life celebrated groundbreaking at the present site. Once building got under way, construction went smoothly. Things continued to go well until the process came to a halt as the contractor waited for glu-lam beams to come in. This caused a rather major delay, but eventually the beams came in and construction resumed. The building began to take shape and the congregation watched with great interest. One of the highlights was the day that the cupola went up. A crane came to the building site, and lifted the cupola off of the ground and

placed it into its present location. Some of the members videotaped the event and hummed along "The Church's One Foundation."

Pastor Paustian called the time of construction "a pleasant, fun and exciting time. As the building neared completion, many members became involved in finishing touches."¹⁹ Different members were involved in painting the walls, staining the woodwork, cleaning up the site, feeding the workers, landscaping and many other tasks that required volunteer help. One of the biggest projects undertaken by the volunteers was the sound system. Kurt Duesterhoeft and Scott Myers spent countless hours and nights putting together the present sound booth along with all of the wiring. Other final touches were added and the church planned a dedication service for August 20, 2000.

On July 23, 2000 the members of New Life gathered together to worship for the first time in their new building. The people came to worship in a church that had no carpeting and was still a construction site. The congregation gathered outside the church doors, read a responsive Psalm, threw open the church doors and walked in. Pastor Paustian carried in the processional cross with the means of grace behind him. While they were walking in, the church sang "God Himself is Present." As the sanctuary filled up, the sound echoed off the walls and the bare floor and "the place just rocked." Pastor Paustian preached on Mary breaking a jar of oil to pour over Jesus and the extravagance of her gift. The day was very happy and emotional as the church celebrated the relief of finally having their own building.

After this service, the church finished all of the last minute details and dedicated the building on August 20. Professor Dave Valleskey from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary came and preached on Joshua 4:19-24 with the theme "What do These Stones Mean?: They are a Monument of the Mercy of God, They are a Reminder of the Mission of God." Pastor Paustian

¹⁹ One member, who was a mason, also helped in the actual construction of the building.

performed the dedication rite over the baptismal font, pulpit, and the altar. The Lord had blessed this patient and persistent congregation with a permanent place of worship.

A Time to Say Good-Bye

During the late 1990s, the church did not lose the focus of their mission. The congregation continued to place a heavy emphasis on evangelism and spiritual growth. After some slower growth in the mid 90s, the Lord once again blessed New Life with large growth in numbers. In December of 1994, the total number of communicants was 81. In December of 2000, that number increased to 144. The congregation also continued home Bible studies and cottage meetings. Such intimate gatherings increased the feeling of fellowship that believers possess. Now that the church had a permanent building, they would have a permanent place to come together for fellowship.

While this new church building brought about a lot of joy, there was also some sadness in saying good-bye to Fisher chapel. At the last service, many members became emotional. Pastor carried out the cross, and the means of grace followed behind him. The congregation left singing "Go My Children with My Blessing." While Fisher chapel was not a permanent place, some people had grown to enjoy the blessings that New Life had before a permanent building.

The members of New Life agreed that worshiping at Rockford College had many advantages. First of all, the seating was in a 'round theater' setup. The congregation was seated close to the Pastor and close to each other. The smaller setting provided for an intimate setting that provided a 'family-like' atmosphere. There was a room that was ideal for people to take their small children. Many people in the community knew where Rockford College was located, so it

was not too difficult to give directions to worship. Since there was no place to meet for Bible Class during the week, Bible class was held in people's homes. This provided a lot of time for fellowship and the development of close, spiritual friendships.

While Fisher Chapel had these advantages, there were some disadvantages as well. First of all, there was no place to call 'home.' A couple times of year, New Life would get bumped out of the chapel, and have to scramble to find a place to worship. Every Sunday morning would involve setting up the sound system, the altar, the pulpit, banners, hymnals and seasonal decorations. During worship, the lighting in the chapel was a little dim. The storage space was very small and leaked water. After church, there was a lot of cleanup. There was also not a lot of room for fellowship. The ladies had to use the bathroom to prepare the coffee every Sunday. Outside of the church, there was not a lot of room for parking which meant that some people had to walk quite a distance. So, while saying good-bye to the chapel was difficult, saying hello to a permanent building was exciting.

In December of 2000, the people of New Life would have to say good-bye once again. This time it wasn't to a building, but to their Pastor. Even though Paustian had many calls throughout his years in Rockford, there was nothing that could prepare the congregation for this. Pastor Paustian announced in October that he had accepted the call to teach at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN. When the congregation heard the news, their emotions ranged from 'sad', 'shocked', 'devastated', 'afraid', and even 'betrayed.' One member said that 'losing a pastor is on a par with the death of a family member.'

Another significant factor was the fact that Paustian announced his leaving on a Friendship Sunday. Many visitors that day saw a congregation gasping and crying over the loss

of their Pastor. Many felt as if this was terrible timing. So why did he announce his acceptance on a friends day? Paustian explained his decision:

I had held the call for a very long time and was definitely feeling that pressure. So my decision had finally come during that week before the Friends Day. Unfortunately, the following weekend I was going to be gone to preach for a former member's wedding in Michigan. Also, there was no way to guess how long we would all agree that I could or would stay in Rockford once my decision was made, so that delaying another full two weeks to start the transition process was unthinkable. So, if I was going to tell everyone at one time, it just had to be that Sunday.... Anyway, the timing seems awful - we had just taken on this new building with all its obligations and even more, with all its potential. But finally, I came to a settled certainty, one that I couldn't explain to the people of New Life any more than I can still explain it to myself, that I was leaving and that it was right. Anyway, the announcement was an awful moment, literally sickening, and I don't make myself think of it very often. I can honestly say that no heart was breaking more than mine that day. Nor was there a way to explain how grateful I was to know them, and for all they meant to me...and how much I believed in them and in the Lord of the Church to take care of them in every way."

On December 24, 2000 Paustian led New Life in worship for the last time. The service was memorable as a Bible information class had just completed their instruction. Paustian had the privilege of confirming twelve adults, and even baptizing a couple of them as well. As the service came to a close, many people in the congregation were in tears. The church was about to find out what it was like to be without a pastor.

After Paustian left, the church worked together as a congregation. Many people in the church began to realize that the church is not built on the pastor, but on Christ alone. Many men in the congregation stepped up as leaders. The church remained strong during a fourteen month vacancy. They had the privilege of growing in their knowledge of the synod as many Seminary students, professors and other pastors preached in their pulpit. They had the joy of installing another talented pastor in Phil Henselin. The Lord used Pastor Paustian's departure as another way to teach His people that He works on His own timetable, not ours.

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- Also used but not included in this bibliography are conversations over vicar year with Pastor Henselin and all different members of New Life. These members mentioned things in general conversations that helped me put together a full view of New Life's history.

History of New Life Lutheran Church: 1988-2000

Addenda

Pastor Paustian's Historical Timeline of the Church

Stories from Members of New Life Lutheran Church

Ministry Statistics

Worship Statistics

Article from Rockford Register Star in Northwestern Lutheran

(This Letter and Calendar of Events is an Exact Copy of Paustian's service folder for the dedication of the church on August 20, 2000.)

Dear Friends in Christ,

I thank the Lord of the Church who did not let this unlikely missionary be put to shame, as any other god I could have trusted would certainly have done. Jesus, you have been keeping your promise, the one that has sustained me: "I will build my church." The joy we all feel today, we return to you as worship and praise.

I thank my wife, Connie, for being so many things I am not and a breath of fresh air in the parsonage of New Life. It's been ten years since I last felt truly alone.

I thank my parents, Pastor Henry and Elaine Paustian, for giving me a very good life, and for passing on to me the faith I've been trying for twelve years to put into words.

I thank the people of New Life for exceeding my expectations and for making this day possible. If I were to try to mention all your names and what you have done and how well, I would fill many books and still have targets for all that has been left out. So, I mention your names to the Father, though he already knows.

I thank President David Valleskey for bringing us the Word today, with heartfelt thanks that such a man leads our seminary.... and for all who have taught me Jesus along the way.

I thank the musicians who brought their gifts to the King in this hour of worship, as we listened and sang along: Peter Schaeuwe and Constance Paustian (keyboard), Paul Frisque (trumpet), Lisa Chodorowski (violin) and our very own Beth Strimel (choir director and soloist), along with the singers that joined us from Peace in Loves Park, as well as the choir and children of New Life.

And to all our other family and friends, your presence today is a gift, a cause of genuine delight. May God pour out grace upon grace, through the Spirit he is so willing to give.

In Christ,

Pastor Mark A. Paustian

God's Leading of New Life To This Day

1986-1987

A "Community Profile" of the South Rockford/Cherry Valley community was initiated by Pastor Lawrence Olson, while he served at Peace Ev. Lutheran Church in Loves Park. There was no nucleus of WELS members waiting to be served. Rather, strong residential growth in an area served by few churches led to the recommendation of this area as an "outreach exploratory" mission field to the Board for Home Missions. The call to serve this field was extended and declined three times before turning to the seminary assignment committee.

May 1988

Seminary graduate Mark Paustian (25) of Watertown, WI, was assigned.

July 1988

Pastor Paustian moved into an apartment in Rockford on July 1 and was ordained by his father, Pastor Henry Paustian, in a worship service on July 10 at Peace Ev. Lutheran Church, Loves Park. His brother, Pastor John Paustian, delivered the sermon on Jeremiah chapter 1.

August-December 1988

The exploratory work included such decisions as naming the church and defining the target area for outreach; and involved such preparations as interviewing community leaders and preparing printed materials. The work began with an extensive door-to-door canvass (1200 homes), mailings and follow-up visits to nurture and witness to hundreds of unchurched people. The Rockford Register Star's religion editor took notice of our work, and published several prominent articles. (One was reprinted in the "Northwestern Lutheran.") The first New Life members, Edward and Pat Krueger, assisted with distributing door hangers and, during the season of

Advent, offered their home for the first Bible Studies ever held by New Life.

January-April 1989

Efforts were underway to organize a congregation and plan for its first worship service. Planning sessions were held at the home of the first congregation president, Rick Hutchinson and his wife, Kim. Several members from Peace in Loves Park were "on loan" to New Life's steering committee. A phoning campaign to 8000 homes in the Rockford area was conducted out of Pastor Paustian's home church of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Watertown, WI. A temporary worship location, Fisher Memorial Chapel on the campus of Rockford College, was secured just in time by a miraculous turn of events.

May 1989

New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church began worshipping on May 7. 257 people attended the opening service that included New Life's first adult baptism, Jill Potter (Scott). A choir consisting of many singers of Peace and of the pastor's own family sang "The First Song of Isaiah." Pastor Paustian preached on the blessings of the New Life in Christ. Loaves of bread were delivered as gifts to 50 families that visited from the community. The following Sunday, there were 57 in attendance, then 48 on the Sunday after that, then 40.

Pastor Paustian moved from his apartment into a rented house on a large property which the congregation was considering for purchase. This was located on the SE corner of Newburg and Perryville Roads. (Because of a fire in the house just prior to moving day, Pastor Paustian had also lived with Ed and Pat Krueger for several weeks.)

July 1989

On one occasion, Pastor Paustian was the only WELS member of 46 people attending worship at New Life. Summer worship attendance usually remained in the upper 20s and low 40s. Pastor shared his home with, among others, Vicar Dan Kroll serving in Loves Park.

September 1989

Brad Krause

Many programs were initiated at New Life, such as Sunday School, confirmation classes, witness training, vacation Bible School, Bible studies and youth group (in conjunction with Peace, Loves Park). Weekly contributions in the congregation that consisted of many new Christians averaged \$235.

December 1989

Attempts were unsuccessful to purchase 5 acres of then inexpensive property on Perryville Rd.

May 1990

38 communicants were received as charter members on New Life's first anniversary Sunday.

June 1990

New Life purchased the Newburg property that was already being used as a parsonage. Outdoor services would be held under the beautiful tamarack trees during that and the following summers.

June 1991

New Life, with 64 communicant members and worship attendance in the 50s, was granted "Mission Status" by the Board for Home Missions- we were here to stay!

Pastor Paustian married Constance Kroll at Fisher Chapel. (Vicar Kroll was asked to move.) The parsonage was remodeled and given a new roof.

January 1992

New Life Women's Ministry was formed and became the source of continual blessings.

April 1992

The members of New Life, together with the area WELS congregations (Peace in Loves Park, Our Savior in Freeport, Good Shepherd in Beloit and Hope in Belvidere) put on a marvelous event as a "benefit" for Pastor and Connie Paustian. Over \$4500 was presented to them to defray medical expenses occasioned by Connie's serious illness.

May 1992

The first formal resolve of New Life to build its own facility ("by May of 1995") was made at a pivotal leadership retreat organized by Wayne Johnson and held in Oconomowoc, WI.

April 1993

The Building Program and Building Fund were formally launched at a memorable "Kick-Off" Celebration held at Peace in Loves Park. Because of changes in the synod's policies towards missions, it was determined that the property must be sold and another location be found. Communicant membership was 81, but a period of decline would follow during the first major delay in our building plans.

December 1994

An example of the many creative programs carried out by the people of New Life was "Christmas for Kids," which was picked up by a local television station. (Other interesting efforts have included: "It Works or We Will," Bible Information Class, "Lifetalk" radio program, elaborate "Festivals of Friendship," Marriage Enrichment Nights, "Kid's Kingdom," Family Nights, Parenting Seminars, Worship in the Woods, lay-led Home Cell groups, "Grow and Go" Evangelism Evenings, "newcomer" phoning, Leadership Retreats and Congregational Planning Sessions, Travel Canvassing Witnessing Teams, Mission Festivals, tape ministry for friendship evangelism, use of MIDI technology in worship, "Bible Story Evangelism," neighborhood canvasses, prospect sponsoring, website, Youth Group overnights to the Paustian's cottage, boy and girl Pioneers, creative mailing and advertising such as kids' balloon launch, and many others. "

October 1995

The Newburg property was finally sold at a "break even" price. New Life reached a difficult decision not to purchase a former Baptist church on the south side of Rockford. A parsonage/ministry center was purchased at 1206 Griggs Rd. The long exhaustive search for our ultimate church site began.

January 1996

Communicant membership resurged to break 100.

Brad Krause

New Life Lutheran Church History Addenda

January 1997

More than half of our communicant members have come through adult instructions; a highly significant factor in the character of the congregation and a cause of genuine joy. Just one example is a former Baptist minister, now chairman of evangelism, Steve Sipe. His influence on the congregation has been felt from the start as he thrilled to the teachings of grace, together with his family.

May 1997

After exhaustive self-study, representatives of New Life attended the "School of Outreach" in Madison, WI. The congregation's warmth, fueled by its deep heart for the message of Jesus, is consistently identified as its great strength, along with the level of trust it has in its lay people to carry out significant ministry.

New Life has also excelled in its highly tangible generosity toward the occupants of the parsonage including help in the time of need, a steady flow of gifts, friendship and hospitality along with consistent support and prayers.

July 1997

New Life had 113 communicant members. (Worship attendance would break into the 70s that year.) The land search continued as the building fund broke \$100,000.

March 1998

New Life voted to purchase 6 acres for its permanent facilities at 1100 N. Lyford Rd.

June 1998

After exactly 10 years, New Life received its last operating subsidy check from Synod.

October 1998

Led by current president Tom Monigold, great efforts were made to improve our organization, culminating in a new constitution for New Life. A new vitality was experienced through a stewardship effort in which a third of the members were trained to bring

Scripture and encouragement to the other two thirds of the congregation in their homes.

December 1998

New Life has been generous in allowing its pastor to serve beyond the walls of the congregation, such as leading a year-long "Small Church Task Force" and accepting opportunities to write.

February 1999

Communicant membership reached 125. Worship attendance first broke 100 in a non-festival service.

May 1999

120 attended New Life 10th Anniversary.

July 1999

After intensive ministry planning, exhaustive preparations by the building committee, and *unanimous* congregational approval, the final approval of our Phase I building was granted by the Board for Home Missions. (New Life would be field-testing a new approach to building projects for WELS missions.)

August 1999

Groundbreaking!

October 1999

New Life baptized Zachary Todd Wellens, "*the son of the sister of the friend of the father of a teenager*" that Pastor Paustian met on his first canvass in 1988. We also hosted a joint-Reformation Service with Peace Loves Park, and packaged our "Step-by-Step Festival of Friendship" that is being shared throughout the synod.

November 1999

A Lutheran Elementary School feasibility committee, organized by Bill Bitner, held its first meeting. (An important discussion began at New Life, the search for the next challenge to serve as a unifying vision for the congregation. This may be through adding more staff, launching a signature program in our community such as a school, and/or beginning to plan Phase 2 of construction."

February 2000

New Life has strived to celebrate its lay leaders and give them opportunities to minister, such as "Lay Leadership Sunday," when a stirring message was delivered by New Life elder, Joe Vanderveff.

March-August 2000

Construction includes a major volunteer effort from New Life members, such as painting and varnishing, sound system and booth, wiring, clean-up, even feeding the workers. New Life entered its new sanctuary with a song for its first worship service there on July 23, 2000.

August 2000

The 180 souls of New Life dedicate their "Phase 1" facility to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Worship Locations

Circumstances have caused New Life to worship in many different locations over the years, besides Fisher Chapel.

Newburg parsonage living room
Outdoors on the Newburg property
Museum church at Midway Village
Peace Lutheran Church
Calvary Baptist Church
St. Anthony's Hospital Chapel
Burpee Center at Rockford College

New Life Ministrations

59 Child Baptisms
19 Adult Baptisms
15 Child Confirmations
111 Adult Confirmations
13 Funerals
27 Weddings
26 Professions of Faith
68 Transfers from other WELS churches
220 Total of all people ever received into communicant membership at New Life

New Life is currently

132 Communicants
180 Souls

Faithful People

There have been countless men and women, too numerous to mention them all, who have led and carried out the ministry of New Life- past and present Board for Lay Ministry members, past Building Committee members, Sunday School teachers, Women's Ministry officers, Dedication committee, leaders of "Family Night" and other wonderful programs, evangelism committee members, choir directors, musicians and singers, greeters and nursery attendants, ushers and altar guilds, youth leaders, all who hosted programs and events in their homes, prayer chain members, encouragers, do-ers, extravagant givers.....and on and on we could go.

Though we regret the many names that space doesn't permit us to mention, no one will begrudge the special recognition that belongs to a few individuals. These have demonstrated an uncommon behind-the-scenes commitment for nearly a decade in some cases, in other cases they've spent countless hours on a weekly or even daily basis: Don Nordmoë the true champion in the cause of volunteer labor- we'll never forget the way you worked on this project virtually every single day; Scott Myers for setting up Fisher Chapel perhaps five or six hundred times and for your tireless work at the site (especially the sound booth) among many other things; Kurt Duesterhoeft for your outstanding contribution to our worship through the wiring and sound work at the new church and with MIDI technology; Tom Kojfoed for tens of thousands of beautiful bulletins and your gracious, creative touch that has showed up in so many other places; Laura Lehrke for your outstanding role in our children's ministry and in so many other programs all this time; Gene Gosseaux for your trusted work as treasurer for nearly a decade in addition to your role on the building committee. These and all who serve the Lord at New Life deserve our warmest appreciation.

The following leaders are mentioned to complete this brief history. Each, in his own way, has been outstanding.

PRESIDENTS

Rick Hutchinson	1989 (3 months)
Ed Krueger	1989-93
Bob Andreimi	1993-98
Tom Monigold	1998-

BUILDING COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Wayne Johnson	1992-1995
Frank Walter	1995-2000

CURRENT BUILDING COMMITTEE

Gene Gosseaux (construction subcommittee)
Don Nordmoe (volunteer labor subcommittee)
Jean Walter (design subcommittee)
Mike and Toni Kofoed
Roger Myers
John Wilhelm

WOMEN'S MINISTRY PRESIDENTS

Nadine Kriigbaum (founder)
Dona Heyer
Char Ratzlow
Jean Morrow
Kathryn Wilhelm (current)

THOSE WHO HAVE SUPPORTED US IN SYNODICAL ROLES

Pastors Bob Hartman and Wayne Schulz

Brad Krause

New Life Lutheran Church History Addenda

Mission Counselors
Pastors Ken Gast, Donald Buch and Keith Free
District Mission Board Chairmen

Mr. Art Franke
DMB "Shepherd"

Pastors Harold Hagedorn and Peter Kruschel
Board for Home Missions

Pastors Don Bitter and Herb Prah
District Presidents

SPECIAL GIFTS!

Many outstanding contributions have been quietly made (such as the beautiful altar furnishings by women's ministry, our piano, sound system, security system, wood chancel, chancel cross, chairs and carpet, etc.). Other gifts given as Memorials will be celebrated as their purpose is fulfilled (such as for stained glass). These will all find their way into permanent record (such as the altar chair given in memory of Helen Clark, whom we dearly miss.)

OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Architect:

Phil Jensen, Jensen & Associates

General Contractor:

Gary Larson, Larson & Larson Builders, Inc.

Altar Furniture designed and built by Ejner Pagh,
The Wooden Touch

Electrical Contractor Dan Heitz, Universal Quality Electric, Inc.
Provided extra help above and beyond

A Couple Stories of New Life Adult Confirmands

The Scott Family

Jim Scott Sr. had grown up as a member of the Methodist Church. After he was married, he and his wife Mary Anne remained Methodist. Over time, they were not regularly attending church anywhere. In the summer of 1988, one of their teenage sons, Jim Jr. came into contact with New Life Lutheran church while Pastor Paustian was out canvassing.¹

Here is a quote from Jim Jr. describing his first meeting Pastor Paustian:

"If memory serves, Pastor rang our doorbell during the summer of 1988, (I think May or June), after I had graduated from High School. Pastor rang and I felt very comfortable inviting him in. I had never attended a church on a regular basis and had not attended church in many years. I felt compelled to talk with Pastor. There was no question or hesitation about inviting Pastor in to talk. ...just knew it was the right thing to do. There was something about him that made me feel comfortable and at ease. Soon after, we started bible study classes at the Krueger's".

Jim Jr. also talked about how his entire family eventually became members of New Life:

"First, my girlfriend (now wife) Jill started attending church and bible classes with me and she was baptized by Pastor Paustian. My parents were very curious about what I was doing...probably wanted to make sure I hadn't joined a cult ☺. Once they started learning about the church and WELS they joined along with my brother Brent. Brent's wife, Lorri also became a member. My wife's brother, Jeff and his girlfriend at the time, Monica Durham, also went through bible class, were baptized and became members of New Life. Pastor Paustian married Jill and me in 1993. I believe we were his first marriage. Pastor baptized our first child, Alec in 2000."

Jim Sr. and his wife Mary Anne would later become members as well. This is Jim Sr.'s story about how he and his wife came into contact with New Life:

"In spring or summer of 1988 Pastor Paustian was knocking on doors in our neighborhood and my son Jim invited him in. They both talked for quite awhile and Mary Ann and I were very curious about what was going on at our dining room table – neither one of us knew who our son was talking to, or what they were talking about. This is how it all started. First our son Jim took classes and became a charter member, then his brother Brent joined, and Mary Ann and I met with Pastor Paustian

¹ Here, Pastor Paustian and Jim Jr. remember things a little differently. Paustian recalls leaving a door hanger behind while he was canvassing, and then getting a call from Jim Jr. to come over and talk to him. Jim doesn't remember calling him to come over, but says that Paustian rang on the doorbell and he answered. Either way, we can see the Lord guiding the events.

and took classes, asked many questions and became members – all because of the example set for us by our sons."

Pastor Paustian also found a lot of joy in meeting and instructing the Scotts. Pastor remembered presenting the great exchange with Jim Jr. in the kitchen of their home. As he spoke the gospel to him, Jim responded by saying, "Man, this is great. This is the greatest news I've ever heard." Pastor Paustian was amazed at the response of this teenager. After their meeting, Jim responded by saying, "Can you tell this to my girlfriend?" Pastor then presented the Great Exchange to Jim's girlfriend, Jill Potter. While he was presenting the gospel to her, Jim was in the background saying, "Wait until you hear this part."

As Paustian got to know the family, many other opportunities for evangelism presented themselves. For example, one time Paustian's computer broke down, and Jim Jr. said, "I know someone that can fix that for you." Jim then introduced pastor to Bob Andreini. After fixing his computer, Bob attended a church service at Fisher chapel. The week after, pastor's wife took a loaf of bread over to Bob's wife and said, "Even if you don't come to church, we can still be friends." The Andreini's began coming to church, and the Holy Spirit worked faith in his heart. Bob would serve as president of the church from 1993-1998.

In all, Paustian guessed that around twenty-five people came into contact with New Life through the Scott family. Pastor remembered baptizing Zachary Todd Wellens in October of 1999. Zachary came into contact with Paustian by being "the son of the sister of the friend of the father of a teenager (Jim Jr.)." The entire Scott family: Jim and Mary Anne, Jim and Jill and their two sons Alec and Benjamin, and Brent and Lori and their two sons Sam and Drew and their daughter Ella are all members of New Life today.

Steve and Linda Sipe

Steve Sipe came into contact with New Life Lutheran Church in 1996. He heard about a church that was worshiping at Fisher chapel from someone at work. This former Baptist minister and his wife Linda would become members of the church in 1997. He has been very active in the church, providing words of encouragement to many of New Life's members. Many people in the church appreciate him as a man who understands the life of the Christian under the cross. Steve explains what caused him to search out for a new church home:

"After years of burnout from being associated with Fundamentalist, semi-Pelagian theological systems, I began searching for a place I could spiritually nurture my wife in her new faith. I decided that Jesus was more interested in our loving each other than He was in a rigidly strict theology (the very type of theology that the Pharisees and al-Quida congratulate themselves in holding). My one criterion was to find a place where Christ's love was evident. I figured I'd work out the theological implications later..... My first objection was with the Absolution. I remember thinking "who is this that forgives sins . . . no one can forgive sins but God!" Once I spoke with Paustian about it, we laughed about how quickly a Pharisaical thought jumped

into my mind. He explained Absolution, and pointed to the scriptures that backed it up, and my sin-wearied heart embraced this as a gift from God."

Over time, Steve grew in his understanding of objective justification and the forgiveness of sins. Steve was a tremendous gift of God not only to the members of New Life, but also to the WELS. His understanding and concern for souls is a tremendous blessing to all who come into contact with him.

A Treasurer's Brief Overview of the First Twelve Years

Gene Gosseaux served as the treasurer for just about all of New Life's history. He still serves as money counter to this day. Since he was the treasurer, Gene was very familiar with the financial difficulties that all mission congregations encounter. Tight budgets, lack of funds and loans are all part of the history of most mission congregations. Gene gave a brief overview of New Life's cooperation with the synod in financial matters:

"We had real ups and downs during the first eleven years. With only a few members and being a mission congregation we had to rely on our mission subsidy from Synod for much of our income. There were many times that we had to decide who to pay and who not to pay. Not that we didn't pay them they just got paid late. As our subsidy decreased the ability to pay things sometimes got harder. At that time the subsidy was scheduled and it went down each year. There was one time we had to petition the Synod to raise our subsidy because we were having such a hard time meeting our obligations. They redid our subsidy schedule for us to help us make it through those rough times."

MINISTRY AT NEW LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH (1989-2000)*

END OF YEAR	Communicants	Souls	Transfers In	Professions of Faith	Adult		Child		Adult Baptisms
					Confirmations	Baptisms	Confirmations	Baptisms	
1989	18	59	9	4	6	0	7	1	
1990	56	80	10	13	20	0	4	2	
1991	69	98	5	6	8	2	8	1	
1992	76	100	5	1	6	2	7	2	
1993	77	108	4	0	4	3	8	0	
1994	81	110	7	1	11	0	6	1	
1995	95	135	3	5	7	2	4	0	
1996	108	147	11	2	7	4	2	2	
1997	114	155	0	1	10	0	4	5	
1998	120	163	11	0	13	0	4	0	
1999	130	178	5	0	10	1	1	2	
2000	144	188	3	3	13	1	4	2	

* These statistics are taken from Paustian's monthly reports to the Board for Home Missions.

New pastor plans to knock on doors

by Peggy Howe

If Mark Paustian comes to your door, introduces himself, and you slam the door in his face, don't think you won't see him again.

He's not easily discouraged.

But that's probably why he was chosen by his denomination, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), to come to the Rockford area to start a mission church in Cherry Valley.

Paustian, 26, has lived in Rockford since July 1 and is a recent graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wis. He was ordained a pastor in July at Peace Lutheran Church in Loves Park.

He said he is ready to face whatever obstacles might cross his path on the way to starting a church.

"I know what it is like to have someone come to my door and people won't be open right away. If doors are slammed in my face, these are the people I want to talk to. I want to find out what people don't like about the church," he said.

Paustian said he is not out to force religion on people or steal them away from other congregations, he just wants to find out why people aren't going to church and what they would like in a church.

"I firmly believe what I have people want and need. We need more from our God than just a hand. We need a Savior, and we have that in Jesus. And whether or not people are interested in being a part of my church, I want to share the good news with them," he said.

"My goal is to get to that point where people listen and what I am saying makes sense," he said.

But first he needs to meet people.

Armed with brochures that will get his name into homes, he will go door-to-door in an area bounded mostly by Mulford Road, East State Street, Harrison Avenue and I-90. His goal is to visit 1,000 homes.

Follow-up visits will include surveys asking people about their feelings on the Bible, church, salvation and Jesus.

As people become interested in what Paustian is doing, he will organize Bible studies and hopes to be conducting church services by May. The name for the new church is New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Paustian has certain qualities needed in a pastor

starting a new church, said Peter Kruschel, associate administrator on the board for home missions of the WELS, headquartered in Milwaukee, Wis.

Kruschel was not involved in the selection of Paustian, but knows him well enough to comment on what he has to offer to the community.

"I find him to be very personable. He is intelligent and on top of the work that needs to be done. He has a strong desire to meet people and to share the good news about Jesus with them," he said.

Cherry Valley was selected as a site for a new church because the area does not have many WELS churches, Kruschel said. The only WELS churches in the Rockford area are Peace Lutheran in Loves Park and Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belvidere.

The denomination with 420,000 members and 1,200 congregations nationwide has a goal of starting 15 to 20 churches each year. WELS churches in Illinois are mostly in the Chicago area, Kruschel said.

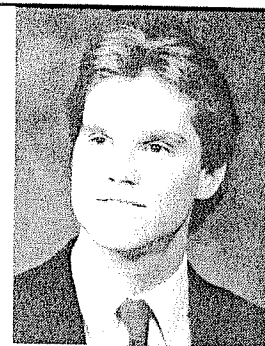
The synod is a conservative church body that was closely affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod until a split in 1961 because of doctrinal differences. Doctrinal differences kept the WELS from joining the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Kruschel said.

"They (ELCA) don't take as strong a stand on the inerrancy of God's word and that's a basic difference," he said.

Paustian plans to spend his entire life sharing God's word with people.

"The unchurched will always be an emphasis of my ministry. It's a way of life for me. Anytime I meet someone, I am wondering if they could use what I have and how can I talk to them about Christ," he said.

"The most important thing to me is my message, what people need and how I can help them with those needs," he said. □



"I want to share the good news with them."

Peggy Howe is a religion columnist and feature reporter for the Register Star, Rockford, Illinois. The article is reprinted with permission.

New Life Lutheran Church Average Sunday Worship Attendance*

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1989	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	102	47	50	41	47	44	41	46
1990	47	52	58	61	75	42	47	47	59	57	59	63
1991	59	48	62	62	53	49	53	52	63	66	57	69
1992	67	68	71	77	71	54	54	46	64	61	66	59
1993	55	52	63	83	63	64	70	68	72	66	68	78
1994	63	58	52	68	57	58	52	54	65	58	74	88
1995	59	61	75	75	69	N/A	62	86	70	77	72	72
1996	67	74	85	73	79	61	67	58	70	77	80	80
1997	55	64	95	65	60	65	67	60	76	78	81	91
1998	61	76	86	91	64	59	65	77	84	75	96	99
1999	73	89	99	96	84	63	78	81	81	116	90	112
2000	75	94	109	105	81	87	94	162	95	105	113	115

* These statistics are taken from Pastor Paustian's monthly mission reports to the home for Board Missions.