

One in the Light:
St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church and School

Church History
CH3031, Professor Brenner
Daniel Lange
December 8, 2009

*“One in the Light, One in the Light, in the Light,
We are reaching out to you to bring to you all the love of God.
Nurturing the faith He gives so you can live in the peace of God.
We’re equipped to serve the Lord by the power of His Word.
Before the world began God first created light
And set in place His saving grace
To fill the world with light.
The Light! The Light at St. John Lutheran School
Erased the dark and lit the spark
That formed a Christian school.”¹*

What does it take to form a Christian school? Doris Guggisberg knew and confessed in this song it was by the grace of “The Light,” Jesus Christ, that St. John Evangelical Lutheran School (SJELS) was formed. St. John Lutheran Church and School is located in Redwood Falls, MN. The congregation celebrated the school’s 25th Anniversary in 2008; twenty-five years of serving an established congregation that began over 110 years ago. The congregation is presently laying foundations for a new school building and a spirit of growth and optimism accompany God’s people at St. John. As each block is laid in its place to support the new school one is reminded of the “blocks” of history which came together throughout the life of the congregation to form the school. What a privilege to see God’s hand build SJELS as he guided Christian men and women through the challenges and blessings of beginning a school within an established congregation! This paper aims to explore those unique challenges and blessings 1) by highlighting the history of St. John Ev. Lutheran Church’s Christian education, 2) by examining the dynamics and atmosphere of the church in the years leading up to the school’s founding and 3) by investigating the different ways a growing school affects a church and community.

¹ Doris Guggisberg’s “One Light” stanza 1, written in commemoration of St. John Evangelical Lutheran School’s 25th Anniversary.

Highlights from History: A congregation's zeal for Christian education

As early as 1860, a group of Lutherans began gathering in each other's homes to worship privately in the small community of Redwood Falls, MN. And on "January 2, 1898 this group founded and organized St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and called Pastor Henry Koch to be the first shepherd of the flock."² A short year later the congregation purchased and built its first house of worship. It was at this time that the first and most important block of history was set in place: "This new Lutheran congregation was founded upon the doctrine of the Apostles and the Prophets of which Christ is the Chief cornerstone. This gave the fledgling group a firm foundation and a healthy start."³

Since its beginning the congregation took Christian education seriously. Even before the congregation received its first full-time pastor the members showed their dedication to train the next generation in the Lord. They listened faithfully to the "injunction of our Lord to 'feed my lambs'" and "established a Sunday School in April of 1901."⁴ From this point on the congregation's zeal to feed His lambs never faded and God continued to bless St. John's efforts to carry out that task.

During the first few years the congregation did not have a pastor who resided in town. Pastor Koch would faithfully travel to Redwood Falls and the congregation would gather for worship every few weeks. Then on August 23, 1903, God blessed the congregation with its next shepherd, Pastor J.H. Paustian, who was installed as St. John's first residential pastor.⁵ A few months later the congregation established a week-day school on November 2, 1903 with Pastor

² St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church's Seventy-fifth Anniversary booklet, 1973 p. 1

³ Ibid. p. 2

⁴ Ibid. p. 3

⁵ Ibid. p.3

Paustian as the instructor. The school was a “German ‘church school’ type” in which “children preparing for confirmation attended for a number of years prior to confirmation.”⁶ The child was released from public school for the day to attend the church school. Pastor Paustian gave “instruction in the three ‘R’s’ and in German in addition to the religious instruction. The school continued into the 1920’s.”⁷

Prior to 1916 St. John’s in Redwood Falls existed as a dual parish with the pastor serving another Lutheran congregation in nearby Morton, MN. During this year the congregations of Redwood Falls and Morton decided to split and each called its own pastor. The Lord blessed this decision and Christian education at St. John’s received even more attention.⁸

By the time of the Golden Anniversary of the church, celebrated in 1948, it was evident in many ways how richly God had showered his grace upon St. John. The congregation had literally outgrown its first church building. To accommodate all the parishioners they started conducting three services on Sunday along with two sessions of Sunday school instruction. The congregation had reached the size of “600 souls, 380 communicant members and 140 voting members.”⁹ However, because of the “German conservative spirit, and a keen remembrance of the difficult days of the Great Depression”¹⁰ it took over a decade of worshiping in these crowded conditions until the congregation voted for change.

On April 13, 1954, St. John’s celebrated the groundbreaking of its new facility which they dedicated in May of the following year. Only six years after the dedication of the new facility, some in the congregation raised their voices for more expansion, especially in the area of

⁶ Ibid. p. 18

⁷ Ibid. p. 18

⁸ Ibid. p. 4

⁹ Ibid. p. 7

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 8

Christian education. They drew up “plans for the erection of a two story Education Building”¹¹ but these were rejected in 1961. In spite of this, the spirit of growth could not be squelched. The members of the congregation continued to make it a priority to feed Jesus’ lambs.

God blessed St. John’s efforts and “in July of 1963, the congregation, due to extremely crowded conditions in the Sunday School, once again requested the church council to investigate the expansion of educational facilities.”¹² Yet because the church was also in need of a new parsonage the education building was postponed. Finally, on June 26, 1966, the congregation held a groundbreaking service for the new education wing. By May of the following year the new education building was complete. This building which is still in use today measures “104 feet by 75 feet with 10,390 square feet of floor space on two levels.”¹³ It was enough to host 23 Sunday school stations, eight of which could be converted into three large classrooms if necessary. This project was commendable for several reasons: the congregation met its immediate needs; with a mind on the future and through careful planning they allowed the building to be highly versatile through the use of folding doors and enormous floor space; and, whether it was within the foresight of the members or not, this building provided the perfect structure for St. John Evangelical Lutheran School.¹⁴

The Dynamics and Atmosphere of the Church: The years leading up to the establishment of the school

One may safely conclude from these brief historical highlights that St. John set a strong precedence on Christian education. Because of this, one might also conclude that beginning a

¹¹ Ibid. p. 11

¹² Ibid. p. 12

¹³ Ibid. p. 12

¹⁴ Two more minor highlights from the history of St. John’s Christian education: 1) “The establishment of a Christian Day School was seriously considered by the congregation in 1971-72.” (75th Anniversary Booklet) It was resolved not to begin the school for reasons which will be discussed later. 2) In 1976 “donations kept coming in as several members wanted to see a future Christian Day School and so this fund grew.” (100th Anniversary Booklet, p. 8) Whatever happened to the money in this fund was never mentioned later in the history booklet.

Lutheran Elementary School (LES) among such a congregation would be rather natural. That conclusion did not necessarily follow. Many obstacles and challenges were in the way of beginning an LES in Redwood Falls. Beginning a school within a congregation will always have its unique challenges no matter how long the congregation has existed. How do those challenges look for a congregation with more than seventy-five years of history? Pride in the success of the past, one generation desiring the same things for their children, fear of change or failure, and etcetera...these are all challenges that an established congregation faces when moving in a new direction. Starting a LES was a new direction for the congregation in Redwood Falls but God through his gracious guidance continued to set the blocks in place to form the school.

What happened within the congregation to spark the interest in a LES? The congregation had a rich history of strong Christian education but now there were members who desired more. Several families in the congregation expressed their desire for a LES. Similar voices were raised in the past decade to begin a school, but these voices were always in the minority. The number of members in support of the school was steadily increasing. Pastor David Kehl, who began serving as assistant pastor at St. John in 1981, remembers, "There were a few families (e.g. Scharlemann, Huhnerkoch, Remmele etc...) who had a strong desire for Christian education for their children. Some were driving their children to Sanborn to attend the Lutheran school there."¹⁵ Pastor Douglas Lange, who served as vicar for St. John from 1980-81, has similar recollections, "I recall a large, dedicated number of young parents who were very interested in a Christian school for their children."¹⁶ The idea of a grade school was slowly gaining popularity as older members

¹⁵ Pastor David Kehl, email interview, November, 2009.

¹⁶ Pastor Douglas Lange, email interview, November, 2009.

began to support the idea. Gary and Linda Zick, long-time members of St. John, observed, “The members in leadership felt strongly that it was time for our congregation to have a school.”¹⁷

Many of these families had experienced disappointment in the past. In 1978 a survey was done among the congregation to study the feasibility of a grade school. This survey led to a motion to establish a Christian Day School but this “was voted down by a vote of 29 in favor and 51 against.”¹⁸ David Madson, another long-time member of St. John, remembered the main concerns at the time being “financial and unfamiliarity with Christian education.”¹⁹ It was “the conservative nature of the congregation” which at the time felt that they “would not be able to afford the costs and still maintain the church budget.”²⁰

In addition to the financial concerns, the congregation members pointed to the Catholic church in town which had a school, but closed because it was unsuccessful. Pastor Kehl remembers the opponents of the school argued, “If the Catholics started a school and it failed, we’ll never be able to do it.”²¹ The fear of failure was real and many members felt the example of the Catholic school was enough to prove that a parochial school in Redwood Falls could not survive.

There was a strong attitude among the congregation that the public school system in Redwood Falls was more than adequate for their children. Pastor Lange summarizes the prevailing attitudes of those who opposed the school,

I do recall that the people of Redwood Falls, including the members of St. Johns were and remain very proud of their public school system. It was and remains a strong school system and the community has a right to be proud of it. They have worked hard to make it a great school system for their children and a real rallying point for the community. Many of the

¹⁷ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview, November, 2009.

¹⁸ St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church’s One hundredth Anniversary booklet, p. 19

¹⁹ David Madson, email interview, November, 2009. “Unfamiliarity” with the LES system of full-time Christian education.

²⁰ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview

²¹ Pastor David Kehl, email interview

parents of children of the congregation had attended the public schools in Redwood Falls and had received a quality education. Because of that, many of those members did not understand “WHY” there was a need for the church to have its own school. Closely associated with that was the idea that a school at St. Johns might not be well received by the community in general. It was sort of the idea that “our community schools are not good enough for you people at St. Johns” or “do you think you are better than us so you have to start your own school?” Those seemed like very real thoughts to me in a very close, tight-knit community like Redwood Falls.²²

The members had witnessed the success of the public school and many of them went through that very system. Would a LES match such a system? Not only that but what effects would a LES have on the public system? Members also thought that establishing a LES would draw children out of the public schools thereby weakening the numbers and funding of the community school.²³ Was it worth upsetting the community by starting a school? Would this school end up creating a barrier to St. John’s gospel outreach? These were serious questions which required prayerful consideration on the part of each member.

Another factor in the decision was the public school program called “Release Time.” Each Wednesday morning the public school would release students for one hour to “various churches in the area.”²⁴ In 1973, St. John enrolled “145 students in their Wednesday School.”²⁵ Because of the instruction the children received through this program many members at St. John felt like this was enough for the week.

Not only did members point to the sufficiency of “Release Time,” but there was also the argument that St. John’s strong Sunday school supplemented the remainder of religious instruction for the children. No one could deny that St. John’s Sunday school program had been and was an outstanding success. In 1973, over “two-hundred children age four through the

²² Pastor Douglas Lange, email interview

²³ Pastor David Kehl, email interview

²⁴ David Madson, email interview

²⁵ St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church’s Seventy-fifth Anniversary booklet, p. 8. According to the One hundredth Anniversary booklet, “This instruction continued until 1994 when the Redwood Falls Public School changed the start time of the school day.” p. 18

sophomore year in high school,” were enrolled in St. John’s Sunday school and the staff consisted of “thirty teachers” and they met twice a month to study and plan lessons.²⁶ The Zicks called to mind, “Most people felt that Christian education needs were being met by confirmation classes and Sunday School.”²⁷

Even with all these challenges and obstacles which stood in the way of the school there still remained a core group in the congregation that pushed for full-time Christian education. There were many legitimate reasons to not begin a school, yet many looked past them to the invaluable blessings of a LES. With strong feelings on both sides of the issue some tension arose in the congregation. Those who opposed the school would say, “This is a phase that some of you are going through, let’s get it out of your system.”²⁸ Those who wanted the school were frustrated at the situation and ^{their} their frustration spread throughout the congregation.²⁹ Some felt that the proponents of the school were pushing the issue too forcefully and this simply was not appreciated by the rest of the congregation.³⁰ Pastor Kehl could sense the tension, “When I arrived in 1981 the attitude against the school was obvious. It was good to be a new person on the block and not have to carry the baggage of the past discussions into a re-study of the issue.”³¹

Looking back at the vote in 1978 it was obvious the congregation was not ready for a LES but God had other plans. A year after the motion for the Christian Day School was voted down, God blessed the congregation with a new pastor. In August 1979, Pastor Brian Terrell accepted the call to St. John.³² Pastor Terrell brought with him a passion for Christian education. David Madson remembers the new pastor’s feelings toward starting a LES, “Pastor Brian

²⁶ St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church’s Seventy-fifth Anniversary booklet, p. 18

²⁷ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview

²⁸ David Madson, email interview

²⁹ Pastor David Kehl, email interview

³⁰ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview

³¹ Pastor David Kehl, email interview

³² St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church’s One hundredth Anniversary booklet, p. 8

Terrell's relentless pursuit of the idea, along with the Holy Spirit of course, appeared to influence a number of additional people." Members recall Pastor Terrell's encouragement for the school was "more convincing" than in past years.³³ He placed a high value on Christian education not only with his words but also his actions. Pastor Lange remembers,

The pastor when I was a vicar was Brian Terrell and he had 3 young children who were just beginning their grade school years. He decided to send his children to the nearest WELS elementary school, which was in Sanborn, Minnesota, about 25 miles away. It was a decision that mandated two round trips daily to transport his children to the school in Sanborn. I think when the congregation saw his commitment to Christian education it had a positive effect on many of the members. Pastor Terrell also began to talk with the congregation more and more about the viability of starting a school at St. John's in Redwood Falls.³⁴

With the arrival of Pastor Terrell new hope for the future school was kindled. God's hand continued to lay the foundation needed to begin the school and in 1981 he put the final block in place.

The congregation had seen substantial growth during the 1970's and in 1981 they called their second full-time pastor. Pastor David Kehl accepted the call to assist Pastor Terrell. Both pastors shared the same vision for a future LES at St. John and together they set out to share their vision with the congregation. Pastor Kehl shares their strategy,

I'd have to say it had to do with united pastoral leadership on the issue, a lot of listening to members' concerns, and providing researched answers to the questions. We asked members for their concerns and showed respect for each perspective by researching an answer for them. I interviewed the new superintendent of the Redwood schools (another timely benefit since he was excited to have a "partner" in education in Redwood). We sent a survey to many other churches with schools to find out the benefits and challenges of a school and compiled their answers. We even interviewed the Catholics to find out what happened to their school. All of the answers were compiled into a booklet that we took back to each home to share what we had found out. We had Eric Sievert from DMLC come and preach an education sermon. He did a great job at pointing out the benefits.³⁵

³³ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview

³⁴ Pastor Douglas Lange, email interview

³⁵ Pastor David Kehl, email interview

The new shepherds of the congregation gently and patiently guided the flock in the direction to begin the school. Their passion was evident yet it was always accompanied by an understanding spirit. They visited every member with grade school aged children. They continued to educate the congregation on the value of full-time Christian education. They lovingly addressed the concerns members had about the school. Finally, by the grace of God and through their efforts St. John was ready to reconsider beginning a LES.

In January of 1983 the voting members of St. John met and “a motion was made, seconded, and passed by a majority vote to start a Lutheran elementary school for grades kindergarten through eighth beginning in the fall.”³⁶ In February St. John called Mr. Gordon Vetter to serve as principal for the new school and to teach grades five through eight. Miss Jane Price received the call to teach grades one through four and Mrs. Janet Lund, a member of St. John, was called to serve as the part-time kindergarten teacher.

As all the necessary components for the new school were quickly falling into place the members of the congregation reacted in different ways. The new school became “a bone of contention” for several reasons.³⁷ Some members were still concerned about the financial side of the school. Others felt that a division would form between children who attended public school and those that attended SJLES. A few people “distanced themselves from our congregation ostensibly because of the school.”³⁸ Despite Satan’s attempts to undermine the new school, Pastor Kehl remembers the unique ways God used the school to draw people even closer to St. John, “A few threatened to quit the congregation if we started a school. Crazy thing – they became more active after the school started. Interesting enough – at the end of the first year of the school (after the costs of renovation, equipping, extra salaries, etc...) the church budget

³⁶ St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church’s One hundredth Anniversary booklet, p. 9

³⁷ David Madson, email interview

³⁸ David Madson, email interview

ended healthily in the black (seems like it was over \$20,000 to the good).”³⁹ God used the school to bring his people together and united them under one goal, namely to have the school ready by the fall of 1983.

How was St. John able to prepare for the upcoming school year in a short seven months? The current principal of SJLES, David Gartner shares, “The Holy Spirit led the voters to call the right person for the first principal in Gordon Vetter. He paved the way for all the years St. John has been in operation.”⁴⁰ Principal Vetter remembers the rush, “I’m still amazed that things were ready for that first day of school in August of 1983 – just six weeks after arriving.”⁴¹ Getting the school ready became the focus of the congregation as every helping hand was put to work. Pastor Kehl describes some aspects of the work,

Plenty of people helped to convert the building. We had to get a call out for two teachers (plus Kindergarten teacher). We had to convert the Sunday School/Release Time /education wing (22 small rooms, some divided by flexible walls) and turn it into three sizeable classrooms and two offices. We had to get books, desks, equipment etc. Leon Otto drove far up north to purchase and haul the playground down from a school that was getting rid of it. An old used bus was purchased to pick up the children in the country that were outside of the city bus route (I had to get my bus license and do the early morning run). There was great congregational participation.⁴²

An organized principal and a willing congregation by God’s grace were able to open the doors of the new school in the fall of 1983. The dream of many parents had finally come true as they watched their children arrive for the first day at St. John Evangelical Lutheran Elementary School.

Effects of a School on the Church and Community: Watching the young school grow in God’s grace

³⁹ Pastor David Kehl, email interview

⁴⁰ Principal David Gartner, email interview, November 2009

⁴¹ Letter from Gordon Vetter to Principal David Gartner, April 14, 2008.

⁴² Pastor David Kehl, email interview

What was the primary focus for the new school? Was the school started for in-reach purposes or outreach? Would it cater to the needs of the congregation or the needs of the community or both? Because the school's main supporters in the beginning were members of the congregation, it began with a natural focus on in-reach. Pastor Kehl recalls, "I would have to say the primary purpose at the time was in-reach but there was open desire for outreach."⁴³ The Zicks remember, "The emphasis to enroll students was within our congregation and other sister churches."⁴⁴

Steps were taken to carry out the in-reach focus of the school. Principal Vetter recalls the work behind promoting the school, "I continued to contact parents who did not send their children. I visited parents of upcoming kindergarten students if they did not have older children at St John's."⁴⁵ Pastors and teachers continued to do home visits. Christian education was often the main topic of sermons and Bible classes.⁴⁶ An overall emphasis was placed on the value of full-time Christian education.

A few years later the congregation began to work toward its goal of using the school as an outreach tool. In 1988 the Evangelism Committee set out to explore new ways to connect with the community. They advertised at fair booths and took part in the community parade. God blessed these efforts as the school continued to grow. Through these efforts the congregation also observed that there "became an apparent need for a pre-kindergarten program to meet the needs of families and as an outreach tool to the community."⁴⁷ The Zicks remember the influence St. John's pre-school had on the community, "Once the pre-school kindergarten programs began,

⁴³ Pastor David Kehl, email interview

⁴⁴ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview

⁴⁵ Gordon Vetter, email interview, November 2009

⁴⁶ David Madson, email interview

⁴⁷ St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church's One hundredth Anniversary booklet, p. 10

more non-members of the community have enrolled their children and it has been very positive.”⁴⁸

While the leaders of the school continued searching for new ways to promote Christian education one thing became evident to the church and the community, the school was surviving. After the Catholic school closed, many doubted the vitality of the young LES. Would the school struggle to find more students after the upper classes started graduating? The demographics of the congregation were ideal at the time to support the new school. Many of the original families who strongly supported the school had “numerous children spanning a significant number of years.”⁴⁹ As Principal Gartner looks back over the years of the school he saw no major downturn in the number of students even though the surrounding churches now send fewer children. He observes, “We have been growing or remaining around the same numbers. One thing that has declined is that we do not get as many students from other WELS congregations. At one time we had 17 children from one other WELS congregation. Now that church sends 2. They just don’t have the young children in their church.”⁵⁰ Pastor Kehl comments,

It seems like the school left an immediate positive impression with the church members through the wonderful mix of teachers and their gifts – Gordon Vetter (administrative excellence), Jane Price (music, drama), Janet Lund (great work with little ones). It outgrew the educational space and expanded to portables. Now it is working on the new facility on new property at the edge of town.

The school was off to a magnificent start and the congregation was already experiencing the blessings of the growing LES.

Any lingering doubts about whether the school would last disappeared over the 1993-94 school year. The school underwent an accreditation process. Principal Vetter remembers the impression it made on the church and community. He recalls, “The accreditation of St John’s by

⁴⁸ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview

⁴⁹ David Madson, email interview

⁵⁰ David Gartner, email interview

the MN Nonpublic Accrediting Association was a strong message to the congregation and community that St John was not a “fly-by-night” school. It was providing a unique service to dedicated Christian parents.”⁵¹ The school’s reputation in the community had significantly grown in the first decade. Principal Vetter knew they had come a long way since that first year. During a conversation with Redwood Falls’ public school superintendent he heard that “individuals were taking bets at Lois’s Café as to whether St. John would make it to the end of the first year.”⁵² After a decade of success and the school’s accreditation no more bets were being made. Principal Vetter and the other teachers laid a solid foundation for the school’s success during the years leading up to the accreditation process.

Throughout the following decade God continued to bless the school with excellent teachers whose work further contributed to the growth of SJELS. This excellence can be seen in teachers like Jane Price. Principal Gartner wrote,

I would like to use this time to remember one of our former teachers who was very instrumental in the beginning of this school and who was very important to my wife and myself as new teachers, and the other staff because she pushed us in everything we did. Miss Jane Price is with her Lord and Savior and we can all look forward to the day when we will be rejoined in all glory. [...] We couldn’t be where we are today without fabulous teachers along the way. We started St. John with 60 students and 3 teachers. Now we have 6 teachers and 106 students.⁵³

Principal Gartner attributes the school’s success to the teachers and pastors which God graciously gave to the congregation.

As Principal Gartner looks into the future he knows many challenges still lie ahead. The once booming Sunday school attendance has suffered since the school began. Busy schedules and the feeling that weekday school is enough add to this problem. Principal Gartner also

⁵¹ Gordon Vetter, email interview

⁵² Gordon Vetter, email interview

⁵³ Program for the twenty-fifth year anniversary, Principal Gartner, April 20, 2008

realizes that many members of St. John still send their children to the public school. Currently only 65% of the eligible students from the congregation send their kids to SJELS.⁵⁴

Not only has in-reach presented a challenge, Principal Gartner also admits that outreach to a small community is often difficult. While this can be frustrating the St. John's pre-kindergarten program continues to bring new families in contact with the school and church. The school makes use of radio broadcasts, newspaper ads and on occasion shows up in the local newspaper articles. The school also started a Mother's Group "for moms to learn about a number of parenting issues."⁵⁵ These efforts do not go unnoticed by the community. The Zicks observe, "A greater emphasis to reach new families with pre-school age children was very successful and allowed the school to grow and has been very well received by the greater Redwood Falls community as several children are from non-member families."⁵⁶

The community recognizes the excellence of the students who graduate from SJELS. David Madson notes, "I think the congregation's status has been positively influenced. Many people have seen the quality kids/students that have come from St. John's School for the past 26 years, and are recognizing the connections between these kids and their grade school educations."⁵⁷ As students leave SJLES, they take with them the Christian values and beliefs which have been planted in their hearts. Graduates know the value of their education; graduates like Bill Schramm who writes,

What a tremendous blessing! It is very apparent to me, that I would not be where I am right now on a personal, professional or spiritual basis without the training, instruction and prayers that I received from people at St. John's. Keep up the good work as you continue to serve the Lord through the ministry at St. John's.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ David Gartner, email interview

⁵⁵ David Gartner, email interview

⁵⁶ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview

⁵⁷ David Madson, email interview

⁵⁸ Letter from Bill Schramm to Principal Gartner, April 14, 2008.

God's hand can be seen throughout history as he laid the foundation for St. John Evangelical Lutheran School. As the members look forward to the completion of the new school, they realize God's hand is still with them and is working for them. With the new building the "future looks even more positive and offers unlimited potential for growth."⁵⁹ Pastors, teachers and members of St. John believe this is true because they know their God has unlimited power.

*One in the Light, One in the Light, in the Light,
We are reaching out to you to bring to you all the love of God.
Nurturing the faith He gives so you can live in the peace of God.
We're equipped to serve the Lord by the power of His Word.
Rise up with joy this day
And set your heart aright.
Be thankful for the open door
That leads us to the Light. The Light!
The Light at St. John Lutheran School
Is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Life,
The Savior of the world.⁶⁰*

⁵⁹ Gary and Linda Zick, email interview

⁶⁰ Doris Guggisberg's "One Light" stanza 4

Bibliography

Bill Schramm, personal letter to Principal David Gartner, personal files of David Gartner, April 14, 2008.

David Madson, email interview, November, 2009.

Doris Guggisberg. One in the Light, 2008. Verse tune: Adaptation of Cantica Laudis, Mason and Webb, Boston 1850

Gary and Linda Zick, email interview, November, 2009.

Gordon Vetter, email interview, November 2009

Gordon Vetter, personal letter to Principal David Gartner, personal files of David Gartner, April 14, 2008.

Pastor David Kehl, email interview, November, 2009.

Pastor Douglas Lange, email interview, November, 2009.

Principal David Gartner, email interview, November 2009

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church's One hundredth Anniversary Booklet, 1998.

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church's Seventy-fifth Anniversary Booklet, 1973.

St. John Evangelical Lutheran School's 25th Anniversary Program, Principal Gartner, April 20, 2008