

Walking the Halls for Over Three Decades

St. John Lutheran School, Rochester Michigan



By Roy G. Kaiser
Principal, 1961-1995

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PREFACE

Some years back I began writing my personal memoirs, “Only A Stone’s Throw.” As I pondered on the years of my life from early childhood on, I realized that over three-fourths of my 40-year career in ministry was spent at St. John. I have tried to share those St. John memories in this special edition of my memoirs.

This is not a history of St. John school and congregation. If so, it would include many more activities and names of members and parents who faithfully contributed to the success of the St. John program. Rather, I have tried to recall snippets of school-related activities and events of my personal experiences while being principal of St. John during the three-and-one-half decades from 1961 to 1995 that I had been privileged to serve.

If I were an editorial or human interest writer, there would be hundreds of stories I could have written. Since I am not, I have tried to share as many historical facts and situations as I remembered them. Even then, I know I have missed mentioning the names of members, parents, church officers, volunteers and possibly even some teachers (God forbid!) who have been a blessing to me and should have been included. My memory is fading at this point in life!

During these years I calculated that nearly 4000 students had entered our classrooms with over 1900 of them graduating. Nearly 100 full-time professional teachers and nearly as many part-time teachers, along with hundreds and hundreds of volunteers, provided these students with the knowledge that the Lord loved each one of them.

The following events and activities are not necessarily in sequential order, but I wrote them down as they came to memory. I have tried to place them in the decade in which they happened. I had been privileged to serve over 45% of the time of the 75-year history of St. John Lutheran School. As I pondered over these experiences, I was reminded over and over again of the many BLESSINGS that the Lord has showered on me. I am overwhelmed by His gracious love.

TO HIM BE THE GLORY!

Roy Kaiser
January 1, 2018

THE 1960S—MY FIRST DECADE—TIME OF GROWTH AND POSITIONING

It was a beautiful sunny morning in May 1961, when Eileen, Tim and I arrived at St. John. Mrs. Lockhart, the church secretary, immediately welcomed us and offered to babysit our eight-month-old son, Tim, while we met with Pastor Schlecht for a tour of the campus that was to be my “working home” for the next 34 years!

Eileen and I returned to our apartment on Stansbury Street in Detroit convinced that we had made the right decision in accepting the call the Lord had provided for us.

After six years of ministry - two years at the Lutheran School for the Deaf in Detroit and four years at Jehovah Lutheran School in Detroit¹ - and having just completed my Master’s degree in Education in 1960, I felt that with God’s help I could handle the responsibilities of principal of this 180-pupil school. There was no interview process in those days. My name was on the Michigan District’s call list but I didn’t know where it would go from there. Interviews and even phone calls were rarely made at that time. The congregation was given the candidates’ biographies and the voters made their selection from that information. I had heard that I was on the call list of St. John, but then heard that Truman Leuthauser, Principal at Holy Cross in Detroit (my neighbor congregation), had received the call. I was surprised that he declined the call and even more surprised when I received it! I believe that the Holy Spirit was in direct control of the situation!

Mr. Erv Bauer had successfully served St. John as teacher and principal for 15 years, from 1946-61. He had built the school from a one-teacher school to a six-teacher school. For health reasons, he wanted to change vocations at this time.

The new 1959 addition to the school of seven classrooms, a beautiful gymnasium, library, expanded offices and kitchen facilities were exciting features that really motivated me to want to serve in this place.

I was called as principal as well as eighth grade teacher. Prior to this time, as a “supply teacher,” I had taught 30 students in grades 6-8 in Chattanooga, as few as 7-10 students at the School for the Deaf, and as many as 42 students in a Grades 4 and 7 combination at Jehovah. The new challenge was 30 students in the eighth grade!

Over the years I have been responsible for multiples of St. John students, but I remember those first years the best—probably even most of the student’s names!

I also served as athletic director which meant coaching the boys’ basketball, flag football and softball teams. I enjoyed this extra-curricular activity very much but it was difficult to put my administrative responsibilities on hold each day while trying to coach a sports team. The teams performed extremely well that year. We won most of the championships. I received the credit but Erv had built the teams to this point. Sports were Erv’s real love.

¹ Jehovah congregation changed its name to Greenfield-Peace Lutheran in 1963.

Two coaching highlights come to mind. We had the privilege to play a pre-Pistons' game in Cobo Arena in March 1962. Our team played another Lutheran school from downriver area. What a thrill to be on the court before a Pistons' game! Tickets were only a dollar! The second highlight was beating Trinity, Utica for the championship by a score of 31 to 30! Utica had continued to be our closest rival during all my years at St. John. I believe this rivalry continues to this day!

I recall my biggest coaching "boo-boo" that year. I took the basketball team back to Jehovah to play my old team that I had coached in Detroit. My St. John team was a better team. St. John was about 20 points ahead going into the final quarter. I played my second string for most of the last five minutes. Lo and behold, the momentum shifted. By the time I got my first string back into the game, it was too late! We lost by two points! The St. John parents were not happy with me. It was a quiet ride home! We invited Jehovah for a rematch on our court a few weeks later. I didn't make the same mistake! I was forgiven.

In the fall of 1962, we asked Erv Bauer to consider the call the congregation sent him to come back as athletic director. This would mean he would have to leave his new position as a sales representative for the Nystrom map company, but he respectfully declined the call. Over the years, Erv continued to be very supportive of the school program. He regularly updated and provided new maps, globes and other media for our classrooms at bargain prices. In 2009, Erv was honored at the St. John Foundation Board of Governors' Dinner as a distinguished member of St. John.

John Boll, a Concordia College-Seward, Nebraska graduate was called as athletic director and accepted. How grateful I was for his presence. John was a dedicated and caring teacher and athletic director. The sport teams excelled under his leadership. In 1968 he accepted a call as athletic director of Lutheran High North in Chicago. We missed him not only as a faculty member, but also as a hunting partner. John loved the north woods!

The athletic program has continued to be an important component of our school's curriculum. Under the direction of the various athletic directors it has been expanded into physical fitness, health and extra-curricular programs.

I remember that first Board of Education meeting in August 1961. I shared the new student handbook with the members, informed them of our faculty meeting schedules, shared our teacher home visits summaries, shared the agenda for Lutheran Education Week and gave them the final enrollment figures which included:

Mrs. Mildred Hagen, Grade 1, 27 students
Mrs. Mildred Firestone, Grade 2, 29 students
Mrs. Carol Nelson, Grade 3, 30 students
Mr. Frank Walker, Grades 4 and 5, 36 students
Mr. Walter Papenberg, Grades 6 and 7, 36 students,
Mr. Roy Kaiser, Grade 8, 30 students
Total 188 students

The Board allowed me to purchase a Lutheran Education Association membership for each teacher; rain gear for the Safety Patrol; and mail boxes for the teachers.

I participated in approximately 400 more of these monthly meetings plus multitudes of meetings by the Board for special programs, events, and financial and administrative purposes. Not all were as easy as this one. I continued to appreciate the support and cooperation of each of the many Board members who gave willingly of their time and effort to make things happen for Christian education. There were times we had to “agree to disagree” but we all had the interest of doing the right thing for the children entrusted to our care.

Board agendas varied from supporting a \$10 Christmas gift to the volunteer school librarian to adding teachers and developing a full-blown expansion program.

As the time went on we developed the Board into a policy-based board with my role as being the one to carry out these policies. I was given much latitude in administrating the school policies.

It is interesting to note that during the ‘60s only men were elected as Board members. There were 14 of them that I was accountable to at that time.

Speaking of meetings, I also attended congregation meetings, weekly faculty meetings, PTL meetings, PTL Board meetings, Building Committee meetings, Foundation Board meetings, Church Council meetings, etc. etc. I believe the number would go into the thousands!! Sometimes I felt “meetinged out”.

It was a real joy to work with that first faculty. The commitment was awesome. Although we were faculty colleagues, I found it difficult to call Mrs. Hagen and Mrs. Firestone by their first names. They were both named Mildred. They were the senior faculty members and I highly respected their opinions.

Carol Nelson was our third grade teacher and was our vicar’s wife. We were sorry to have her leave after only one year. Frank Walker our middle grade teacher also served as youth director. Frank had joined the faculty a year before I arrived so he became my mentor. Frank’s energy and enthusiasm were greatly appreciated. He accepted a call to a Lutheran school in Fort Wayne in 1966.

The new technology in this era in the 1960s was the Cyclo-Teacher and a couple of black-and-white TV sets for selected classrooms. SRA Laboratory Reading kits were incorporated into the reading program for Grades 4-8. The Three Rs were the major components of this program, namely “Read-Recite-Review”. The overhead projector was the tool of the era. We had one for each classroom. We had one movie projector, which the student projection crew would transport to the various classrooms.

We were pleased to offer German as a foreign language addition through the efforts of Mrs. Elsie Quitmeyer. She continued to dedicate her services as a volunteer for many years. She also served full time from 1981-84. Elsie was a real blessing with a willing spirit to serve.

Those first years of my new role as principal and teacher were filled with excitement and challenge. Our school was honored to be chosen by the Rochester Village Council in 1962 to be exhibited on Mayor's Exchange Day. Only our school and one public school were selected. Everyone was on "good behavior" and the building was sparkling clean as the Council brought the visiting mayor from Negaunee, Michigan on our campus.

An elective band program was initiated. Mr. Nawrock, a public school music teacher, served as the instructor for both the beginning and advanced band. That first concert produced sweet as well as some sour notes but what a thrill to have our own band!

Music programs were many. We had a Cherub Choir, led by Miss Janette Pralle; a Junior Choir, led by Walt Papenberg; a third grade Choir, led by Miss Darlene Tech; a second grade "Angel" Choir, led by Miss Jean Hedrich (Geil) and a recorder band, led by Miss Karen Thomas. Later in 1968, Walt Papenberg developed a high school youth choir also.

The Parent Teacher League (PTL) became very active with monthly meetings and activities for students. We had excellent cooperation from parents. The annual sponsorship of a St. John School float in the annual Rochester Christmas parade was a highlight. Many hours were spent by many volunteers as well as students decorating the float. Stuffing napkins into chicken wire was a tedious undertaking! Numerous trophies were awarded our efforts over the years –great fun! The St. John Youth group also became involved in this project as well. My son, Tim, reminded me of stuffing napkins.

The enrollment continued to increase each year. We had 268 students in grades one through eight during the 1965-66 school year.

Beginning salaries for 1964-65 were \$3600 for a 10-month beginning teacher and \$4320 for a 12-month beginning teacher. My pay with a Master's degree and 10 years of experience including \$300 to serve as principal was \$7150.

One of the happenings that comes to mind over the years is the ever present need to rekey the building. As the trustees distributed more and more keys there would become a need to take inventory and rekey again and again!

Snow removal was not contracted out, but according to the Board of Education minutes of December 2, 1964: "Harvey King would place one of the King Brothers tractors in the parsonage garage and a person would be found to assume the responsibility of using it for snow removal on the church and school grounds."

I recall a very scary moment in May 1964. It was a Friday afternoon. We received notice on our emergency weather radio in the school office that a tornado was sighted in the Pontiac area and was moving our way. We immediately had the students go into their tornado drill

procedure. The two students who served as “lookouts” raced into the office and told me a funnel was approaching. That funnel cloud literally traveled directly overhead. It skipped along in Macomb County at several places until it finally did touch down in the New Baltimore area. It devastated areas along Lake St. Clair killing 11 persons and injuring over 100. The Lord’s angels had truly protected us on that day.

An exciting event of the 1960s was the establishment of Concordia College in Ann Arbor. Eileen and I were present at the dedication. We were proud to have this school in our backyard. Over the years numerous of our St. John students, including our son, Tim, graduated from this school. I had the opportunity to teach religion classes there in the 1980s. Numerous students of Concordia completed their student teaching at St. John and many served us as graduate teachers. Today Concordia University-Ann Arbor is an outstanding university along with nine other schools that make up the Concordia University system.

Word had gotten out in the community that I had been a certified teacher of the deaf. I was approached by a number of families, not members of St. John, and asked if I would give their deaf children some religion lessons during after-school times. I was pleased to do so. I continued to teach these youngsters for 4-5 years before I lost contact with the families. I pray that the Holy Spirit continues to be active in the lives of these young people. I was blessed to have this opportunity again to use these special education skills that I learned in training to be a special education teacher at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and the University of Pittsburgh.

An issue that surfaced during this first decade of my administration and probably will continue until the “end of time” was: “Are school families paying their fair share? Are they taking advantage of the congregation?” The Church Council requested a study in January 1965 regarding the raising of tuition. The study found that the average giving to church of the 105 families with children in school was \$412 over and above their tuition, while 349 congregation families with no children in school gave an average of \$195. I found these same percentages consistent over my three decades at St. John.

I found myself with a month’s sabbatical in February 1964 -- not necessarily a vacation! I came down with a case of mumps which required me to be bedridden for *four weeks!* I did get a phone placed in my bedroom so I could keep in touch with the school office. I was blessed to have a support staff at St. John that could go on without me!

I also remember a hospital stay of five days in Pontiac General Hospital in 1964. I was cutting my front lawn with my power lawn mower when a stone in the lawn from our gravel road caught me in my right eye. Thanks to Marge Meissner, who drove me to St. Joseph Hospital in Pontiac, while Eileen stayed home with our young children, Tim and Cyndy. Crittenton Hospital hadn’t been built yet. We were blessed to have Gary and Marge as neighbors during those early years.

Talking about support staff, my unsung hero was my wife, Eileen. I did not get school secretarial help for almost eight years. Without fanfare, Eileen handled much of my

secretarial work and bookkeeping on a volunteer basis. She was the shoemaker working quietly during the midnight hours. Her dedication was such that I couldn't even get her to accept a free lunch from the hot lunch program during the days she was in the office. She has continued to serve the church in many volunteer capacities, as a member of the Esther Circle, Christian Book Club, school library volunteer, and as a quilter. She also served as a Stephen Minister. In the 1980s she established the church library. Since that time, she has been instrumental in its development and expansion. Although she had tried to retire three times as volunteer librarian, in fact, even having a "retirement coffee" at one time, no one had taken up the offer to replace her--until 2017! Eileen was also honored in 2005 as the "Lutheran Woman of the Year" from St. John congregation.

It was also during this decade that my family expanded from Tim, who was eight months old when we came to St. John in 1961, to three others! Cyndy was born in 1962, Lori was born in 1965, and Joel was born in 1967. Eileen had a full-time job as homemaker. The Lord truly blessed me with a wonderful caring wife who was committed to serve the Lord in so many opportunities. She also took on many home responsibilities that allowed me to become more involved in congregation ministry.²

It was also during the '60s that we discovered that our two sons had an eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa. We were told that this disease would eventually cause blindness. There have been daily prayers since that time asking the Lord for healing. Today, in 2018, Tim and Joel are visually handicapped. Tim serves as the Executive Director of the National Institute for Holocaust Education at the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. and Joel serves as Associate Pastor and Pastor to the School of St. Lorenz Lutheran Church in Frankenmuth, Michigan.

We are reminded of what the Lord said about the blind man He healed in John chapter 9: "Through him, the works of God are displayed." We believe that is true for both Tim and Joel also, but we do pray daily for their sight to be restored.

Each teacher's call included an "extra" activity beside a *full teaching load*. There were no "prep" periods in the schedule for teachers at this time and classes ranged from 28-33 students. The following are examples:

Miss Hedrich (Mrs. Geil), Grade 1, Helping with youth and Sunday School teaching
Mrs. Firestone, Grade 2, Tuition bookkeeping and Sunday School teaching
Miss Tech, Grade 3, Girls' athletics and helping with youth
Mr. Boll, Grade 4, Athletic Director of church and school and boys' athletics
Mr. Papenberg, Grade 5, Director of Music of the congregation and school music program, and Hot Lunch Manager
Miss Grever, Grade 6, Helping with youth and Sunday School teaching
Mr. Riske, Grade 7, Director of Youth and Bible Class teacher

² I met Eileen at college in my senior year. After her graduation she taught at East Bethlehem Lutheran School in Detroit before we were married and then at Faith Lutheran School in Livonia, after we were married, before Tim was born.

Mr. Kaiser, Grade 8, Principal, Bible Class teacher and Sunday School teacher training instructor

The growth of the school didn't just happen. It took the combined efforts of faculty, staff, Board of Education, and the entire congregation to have it happen. One activity that the faculty engaged in was visiting the homes of not only their new students during the summer months, but also prospective students of congregation members. This resulted in increased interest and brought in more member children into the student body.

Home visits to children who were enrolled were much appreciated by both parents and students.

I recall how pleased we were in 1964 when Jean Hedrich was assigned to us as a primary teacher from Concordia College, River Forest, Illinois. Jean had had three years of teaching experience before she graduated. She was a native of Alberta, Canada and had that---accent! She was an experienced rookie!

John Boll and I met Jean at the bus station in Detroit. We were glad John brought his station wagon. The bus driver began unloading cardboard boxes of books, kitchen utensils, houseware items, furnishings, etc. We thought these items were for the many passengers who were also arriving—but to our surprise—Jean claimed all of them! The station wagon was jammed with items being tied on the roof! We knew then that Jean was planning to stay a long time; we did not expect her to bring all of Canada with her!

Today, she is Mrs. Jean Geil. She retired from teaching in 2000, serving 36 years in the teaching ministry of St. John, and I thought no one would surpass my 34 years at St. John! She continues in a role as a volunteer art teacher and Prayer Coordinator. Jean continues to be a blessing to all of us!

During the 1960s the governmental laws were implemented to include community services to our school. How great it was to begin to have such part time services as: speech correction classes, a visiting nurse, visiting teacher consultants and various other diagnostic services. Miss Jean Lilly, a Rochester Community Schools social worker was assigned to our school initially as one of those helpers. Jean remained with us for three decades. We were blessed to have this dedicated caring worker as part of our staff. She was in our building on a regular schedule each week. We also had Mrs. Helen Even serve us for two decades as the speech correction teacher. We also had a remedial reading teacher and school nurse serve us.

The highlight sport event in 1966 was the varsity basketball team playing for the championship in the Metro Detroit Lutheran School tournament. The final game was in Cobo Hall Arena against Redford Lutheran, prior to the Pistons' game. Mr. Boll had the boys psyched up for the game but when they saw the size of the court inside of the arena they froze. Both teams did. The half time score was eight to six. In the second half both teams came alive. We finally won 38 to 28 for the championship. The team compiled a 17 win and one loss record. They won the overall championship two years in a row.

In January, 1965 I shared a report with the Board of Education requesting consideration for future expansion and development to include a kindergarten as well as a junior high program that would include grade 9. Such a development would need six additional classrooms plus the two lower level rooms in Fellowship Hall. The request was favorably accepted.

At this same time plans were in the making for a new church edifice.

Since Rochester Community Schools were planning a second high school with grades 9-12 and there were beginning discussions of a Lutheran High School Association in the area, it was decided that a 9th grade program at St. John would be put on hold.

The expansion facilities would utilize the existing lower and upper level area plus two additional classrooms. With modification, there would be a gain of five classrooms for the school's growing enrollment. This was adopted. The initial plan was to erect six classrooms on the west end of the building. This plan was modified because of the cost. It was unfortunate that the congregation did not add additional new facilities at that time, since now all the available space was turned into classroom space and there was no additional space for youth, Sunday School office or other meeting rooms. Yet, at the time we were pleased to enjoy the expansion as stated and pleased that the congregation was in full support of the mission of the school.

Building programs are both a blessing and a curse. You cannot please everyone. Planning meetings take a tremendous amount of time and energy. The initial study committee was organized in January 1964. The Voter's Assembly adopted the final plan on June 20, 1966 by a vote of 64 to 8. The dedication of our beautiful church and classroom expansion was held on September 17, 1967.

There were some members who hoped that the new church could only be an expansion to the present nave. The architect stated that the new church would be an extension on the east side of the present structure, but it would be an entire new nave. Folks were happy that the current nave was preserved and designated for a chapel and meeting area.

During the building of the new church and renovation of classrooms, church services were held in the gym. This required cooperation from all church agencies so that set up and take down of arrangements did not interfere with classroom activities and use of the gym. It was a joyous day when the dedication of the new facilities happened. It was during this expansion process that a plan was initiated to request school parents to assist in giving some "work time" to the school each year. This procedure developed into a well-organized process which continued over the years.

It is fun to reminisce about some of those planning meetings. In developing the altar area, there was no decision as to what symbol should be above the altar, so a penciled "cross" was put on the blue print. Later the architect put up an 18-foot wooden cross without further discussing this with the committee. It was beautiful. It was well done and no one complained

that it wasn't in the blue prints! In the refurbishing of the church in 2000, the cross was further embellished with a painted design behind it and special lighting.

The altar was constructed of marble and had to have a special reinforced floor under it. After it was installed, some felt it lacked a "warm" appeal so a wood paneling was attached over the beautiful marble. There is a lot of beautiful marble covered up, but I must agree the wood trim gives the altar an inviting look.

The Board of Education meeting of September 1, 1965 was held mindful of the absence of Board member, Dean Evanson, who departed from life August 8, 1965. Of Dean it could be said that "he did not need to be reminded that the life he lived was a precious, impermanent gift of God, not to be wasted for a moment."

Another sorrowful event was the death of Bruce King, who died because of a moped accident in his sophomore year in high school. Bruce was in my eighth grade class when I came to Rochester. He was a member of my first basketball team.

In 1966 the Rochester circuit sponsored a "Continuing Education for Christian Living" program for the 16 congregations. I had the opportunity to teach an eight-week evening course on Christian Family Communication. Sessions were held at Our Shepherd, Birmingham. Eileen's brother, Albert, was principal at Our Shepherd at that time and also taught one of the courses. It was a joy to have him and his wife, Evie, and children Tim and Christine close by.

Pastor Schlecht was blessed to have capable and dedicated vicars assigned to St. John during the 1960s. They were: Royce Leckband, Carroll Nelson, Herb Niermann, Don Abdon and Bob Kolb. I recall the Easter Sunday School pageant directed by Vicar Kolb in 1966 which involved a dramatic resurrection presentation. Today, Dr. Kolb is an emeritus Professor of Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He is noted as a renowned authority on historical Lutheranism and a scholar on the history of Luther.

In 1967 our congregation called Pastor Charles Schutt as an assistant pastor. This was the first time our congregation was served by two pastors instead of using vicars. Pastor Schutt served us faithfully for two years before taking a call to Sandusky, Michigan.

Walter Papenberg was truly a support person during the '60s as well as throughout all of his 29 years of service to St. John. I was blessed to have worked with him for 24 years. I relied on him to keep the hot lunch program stable. He served as hot lunch manager. Beside serving in a full-time teaching role, Walt was the music director of the congregation and in charge of the school music program until 1978. He then served as my assistant principal until his retirement in 1986. Walt was truly a servant individual known for his patience, kindness and unfailing good humor.

At his funeral on May 31, 2006, I shared this: "Walt loved his Lord. He loved students. He was a dedicated Christian teacher who was blessed by God. In turn, God blessed all of us through Walt's ministry."

Walt's father, Henry, moved to Rochester when Walt did. He served as our church custodian during the 1960s. He was known by St. John children, parents, and members as "Gramps." He was a wonderful role model.

We also appreciated the custodial services of Ed Barg for many years. He was ever present on "snow days" keeping things in order.

Ken Hillman served as our head custodian during these early decades of St. John history. We appreciated his willing efforts. It was not an easy job to be the jack-of-all-trades. He wore many hats.

It was a privilege to get to know Anna Kitchenmaster. You would find her in the church kitchen brewing coffee for every church event that she could possibly attend. She would greet you with a cup of coffee. St. John congregation was organized in her living room in 1920. Anna had become an icon of the congregation. She died in the Lord in 1982.

Alice Hillman, together with Trudy Papenberg and additional kitchen helpers, were dedicated employees making the most of the resources available. Volunteer mothers annually did summer canning of vegetables. Together with government surplus food, the hot lunch program remained in the black. Walt did report that in 1966 the Vietnam War effort was siphoning off more poultry and other meats, therefore causing us to raise the hot lunch price from 25 to 30 cents.

Alice and Trudy worked well together for many years. Alice became the longest full-time staff employee serving from 1954-1988. She did wonders with the hot lunch program.

When I arrived in Rochester, the area was still very rural. University Drive was a two-lane highway with tall oaks on each side of the roadway from our St. John fence line to Livernois Road. McGregor Farm, with hundreds of acres of land, was located directly north of the school on the other side of University Drive. Black and white Angus cows roamed the fields. We regularly saw pheasants in the tall grass. The steep hill directly west of the playground was also a part of the farm until Crittenton Hospital was erected upon it.

It was at that time that a problem arose. The problem that surfaced regularly on our Board of Education agenda was the controversy we had with Crittenton Hospital regarding water draining on our playground because of the construction of the hospital on McGregor's Hill. The high bank needed a drainage ditch. The one that had been dug was not able to handle the amount of water flowing off the hill. Our football/soccer field seemed to never dry out. Dick Schurrer, a former chairman of the congregation, worked hard over the years to resolve this issue. In 2007, an underground tile was laid, which we are hopeful will eliminate the problem—40 years later!

It is noteworthy to mention that 16% of the congregation budget of \$150,000 in 1966 was designated for Synod and District missions.

Oh, how times have changed! The following is a quote from the minutes of the Board of Education, August 3, 1966:

The subject of smoking in the school library was broached to the board and discussed in length. It seems the library committee is annoyed that a smoke odor lingers in the room the next morning after a church board meeting is held the night before and that ash trays must be removed.

Several considerations were advanced. Basically, this is a Trustee area of action; however, there is no rule against smoking in the library - in the classrooms - Yes! Staff and various committees meet in the library because of the ideal facilities, surroundings, etc. These people work hard and long to promote God's work here at St. John. Can people who give of their time so freely be asked to meet in the basement? The Board agrees with the library committee that a cigar odor is not the most pleasant thing in the morning, but asks, "Is the condition intolerable? The meeting adjourned with prayer at 11:15 p.m.

The Rochester Worship Hour on radio station WPON sponsored by St. John was an exciting ministry of the '60s. Broadcasting the 8:00 A.M. Sunday morning service was a way of reaching out to the community and sharing God's love. Mr. Carl Behrendt, a lay leader who served in many capacities at St. John, including president of the congregation, was a stalwart of this program serving as an announcer and broadcast coordinator for many years. Carl was honored posthumously, in 2009, at the St. John Foundation Board of Governors Dinner as a distinguished St. John member.

Under the coordination of Dr. Loren Siffring, the Adult Education Committee sponsored an extensive Bible Class selection on Sunday morning, referred to as a "Spiritual Smorgasbord". At times, there were 10 to 15 different offerings for members to choose from.

During this era I enjoyed working in church related organizations as well as my role at St. John. In 1964 I was elected to the Michigan District Church Extension Board. It was a learning experience to participate and see how new congregations could be funded through this "banking" organization of the church. Mr. Marv Heintz was an excellent manager of this district program. The district office was not located in Ann Arbor yet, so meetings were held at the Bavarian Inn in Frankenmuth. I looked forward to these monthly meetings, carpooling with Rev. Looker from St. Luke, Mount Clemens and Rev. Howard Alwardt from Our Shepherd, Birmingham. It was a satisfying experience to help congregations grow financially. I looked forward to Tiny Zehnder's chicken dinner at each of these meetings.

In the early '60s, I was privileged to serve as public relations chairman on the Rochester Youth Guidance Committee. Our goal was to help economically deprived families in our community. I was shocked to visit in some homes that were unfit to live in. I had no idea these conditions existed in the Rochester area. In 1967 I was elected as Secretary-Treasurer of the newly formed Department of Elementary School Principals (DLESP) of the Lutheran Education Association, a national Lutheran organization. Knowing this role would require me to attend quarterly meetings in Chicago and other locations, and the fact that I seriously decided to continue with my graduate program at Wayne State University, I decided not to seek re-election on the District Church Extension Board.

I was pleased that the St. John Board of Education looked favorably on my outside involvement. Over the years this attitude continued as I and other staff members took on various roles in the community and church at large. It was felt that these experiences would also help benefit our performances at St. John.

Over the years we have had excellent cooperation from the Rochester Community School system. One of the events that helped strengthen that relationship was allowing the school district to use two of our newly developed classrooms for the public school kindergarten program. This arrangement was for two years until we needed the rooms for our own expansion. Superintendent Doug Lund was a strong supporter of our program as well as were the superintendents who following him.

The volunteer stalwarts responsible for making our school library a functioning facility were Mrs. Van Voorhees and Mrs. Shirley Kiebusch, who donated their time and talents. I was very pleased that Mrs. Marion Schilke was willing to come at a moment's notice and serve as a substitute teacher. She was very cooperative and fit in nicely with the staff. She served us faithfully during the 1960s.

In 1967 our school enrollment in grades one through eight stood at 291 students with ten teachers, a gain of 16 students over the previous year.

It was becoming more difficult to teach full time as well as administer a school of nearly 300 students. Mrs. Lockhart, our church secretary, continued to provide assistance by taking phone calls and handling daily scheduling problems but it was hard for her to provide the assistance the school needed at this time, as well as continue her church responsibilities. Eileen continued to volunteer doing most of my clerical duties.

I was thrilled when the Board of Education contracted Mrs. Norma Heins, a congregation member and former teacher, a product of Concordia, River Forest, to assist me two afternoons a week by teaching my classes. This gave me some time for teacher evaluations and office work.

As said so many times in Lutheran circles, it seems we keep running into people we know. Norma and her husband, Jim Heins, were no strangers. I knew them since college days. Norma was a student at Concordia with me. Her home was in Utica. My home was 10 miles away in Macomb Township. Jim, who was dating Norma at the time, would drive to Chicago from his work in Royal Oak and bring a load of us back. I had bummed many rides back and forth with them. Jim would drive the 300 miles, pack us all in, and drive the 300 miles back the same day - what a guy! Norma taught 18 years at St. John in various grade and curricular activities. She truly was a "God sent" person.

Jim, being a master carpenter and craftsman, was always "on call" as a volunteer, to fix whatever needed fixing on the St. John campus.

A discussion item of the following made Board of Education meetings last until 11:00 p.m. Thankfully, we were able to streamline our policies soon after this. Note the issue from the minutes:

There was discussion on a motion to give students a candy bar at the annual Christmas party on December 22, at a cost of about \$65 from the Board funds as done last year. It was brought to the attention of the Board that the Sunday School children were giving to a mission church instead of getting anything themselves this Christmas, and that the school students might do well to emulate their example. After it was pointed out that the day school students give to missions their weekly Matins offerings and that Sunday School children, not going to the day school very likely also have their own public school parties, at which exchange gifts are made, the motion passed to give the candy bar!

When I came to St. John in 1961 I had recently completed my Master's degree from Wayne State University. I thoroughly enjoyed these graduate courses and wanted to continue post graduate work. Oakland University was founded in 1959 and was known as Michigan State University at Oakland (MSUO) at this time and it was beginning a graduate program. I was pleased that I could enroll and pick up a few hours of credit that I could then transfer back to Wayne State. Since Wayne State was less than 30 miles from home, I found it accessible to continue my education there.

I wasn't sure if I had the time or the ability to work for a doctorate, so I enrolled and was excepted in the Educational Specialist Degree (Ed. S.) program. By taking evening and Saturday classes including some summer school work, I completed this degree in December 1965 with a major in school administration.

During these years, curricular study was on the "top burner" in education. I was pleased that we could develop a course of study for St. John as a result of my educational experiences. Our Study Guide focused on a prescribed set of goals, objectives, and learning experiences for each grade level. It was the outcome of my thesis that I completed for the Ed.S degree.

In 1967 I was pleased to pass the entrance exam and be accepted in the doctoral program. The program had a time limit of seven years. Since I had a full-time position at St. John, it was necessary for me to fit in classes during evening hours, some Saturdays and mostly in summer sessions. Even then, I needed an extension of time and finally completed the course work, the oral and written exams, and final thesis for the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) degree in May 1978 -- 11 years later! Eileen was especially thankful, since she spent the final two months typing my thesis. Corrections were not acceptable. The page had to be redone if there was a typo. Imagine if we had owned a computer—then?

In 1968 our faculty became involved in Synod's five year "Patterns of Performance" (POP) program . This was a unique program of school evaluation and improvement. Each year a "pattern of operation" and different curricular area was studied and evaluated. Principal and teacher conferences and workshops were set up each year targeting the POP area of study. We met at times with curriculum committees from neighboring Lutheran schools. A follow up "Performing our Patterns" (POP) program was also carried out to evaluate the original process. This was an ongoing process for many years. I was asked by Dr. Mel

Kieschnick, our Michigan District Education Executive, to serve as one of the District coordinators and presenters during these years. I gained much insight for our St. John program from this experience.

Faculty meetings and curriculum meetings were held on alternate Mondays each month, usually from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. A faculty meeting consisted of a topic presented by a staff member or outside consultant, plus items of importance and decision making, such as: Sport Night procedures; Pre-Holy Week canvass; student council activities; achievement testing procedures; teacher evaluation scheduling; operetta planning, and routine items.

Faculty members were assigned to various areas of the curriculum in which they had expertise. Curriculum meetings were used to plan and develop curricular guides including goals, objectives, and learning outcomes for all the subject areas. Recommended changes and additions to the curriculum were shared at this time.

The faculty and staff were a dedicated and committed group who were willing to give “over and above” so that quality education could be provided. They felt good about the quality of education they were providing their students.

Morning PA announcements were highlights each day. We had the opportunity to share a prayer, update daily activities and give fatherly advice through the PA speakers located in each of the classrooms. The students looked forward to the “joke” of the day usually with a groan! “Did you know that Mrs. Firestone brought a mouse trap for her classroom but she forgot the cheese? So she cut out a picture of a piece of cheese and placed it on the trap. It worked! The next morning, there in the trap was a picture of a mouse!” OH, OH!

One of the fun activities I enjoyed participating in each year was the annual Circus Day field trip for all third graders in the Rochester Schools. This event was sponsored by the Rochester Chamber of Commerce. The circus was held at the state fairgrounds in Detroit. Our students were included in the 20-bus caravan. A long and tiring day but we never lost a student over the years!

In 1968 the sex education program was initiated. We were one of the first Lutheran schools in the state to begin the program. The core of the program was a series of textbooks from Concordia Publishing House that parents purchased and reviewed with their children prior to teachers discussing it in the classroom. Parent orientation was held prior to the instruction of the materials.

The initial reaction by the parents was very positive. A few parents voiced objection and shared their feelings with us. I was pleased how carefully the Board of Education handled the objections and helped parents understand the role a Christian school has in assisting parents in this important issue. The program continued as part of the prescribed curriculum during my years at St. John.

In June 1968, Mrs. Winnie Lockhart retired from her role as church secretary. How grateful we were to have had her services for many school activities also. In January 2010, the Lord

took her to be with Him in heaven. Her favorite saying was, "I'll have it done in a jiffy." Mrs. Norma Kahler was her replacement. Norma served as a faithful and competent secretary. She was always willing to "do the extra." As of September 2010, Norma also is enjoying the glories of the heavenly mansions. How blessed our congregation has been to have support personnel who truly care about promoting the ministry of the Lord at St. John.

Mrs. Mary Bantin was employed as a full-time school secretary in 1968. What a joyous occasion this was to have a school secretary, and what a blessing she was! Mary became a permanent fixture for the next 17 years. Mary was my right arm. She answered questions before they were asked, and completed assignments before given! She could answer the phone, eat her lunch, and wipe tears from the eyes of a crying first grader, all at the same time.

It was exciting to close the decade with the introduction of a kindergarten program. Mr. George Knorr, a longtime member of St. John and a local contractor, informed us that he would subsidize the cost of a half-day kindergarten program for up to five years. The Voter's Assembly approved the program for the 1969-70 school year. Mrs. Lucy Fry was called to serve the 22 youngsters enrolled. Lucy continued to serve as an outstanding kindergarten teacher until her retirement in 1995. The program grew to three sections of students in the 1990s. Lucy's love for children was evident. Parents looked forward in putting their children in her care. Lucy is now enjoying the majesties of heaven.

As Lutheran schools grew in the area, more and more teachers attended District Teachers' Conferences. St. John hosted the October South and East Teachers Conference in the Fall of 1969 with over 450 teachers attending. What a thrill for the staff to have this conference on our campus. This was one of the last conferences to be held in a congregation setting. Hotel sites and retreat centers around the state were chosen after that.

During those first years at St. John I was questioned many times about our school's standards. "Do you compare favorably with the public schools?" I spent time with the public school principals and members of the counseling and teaching staff, comparing curriculum, checking on the achievement of our graduates now in the public schools and working with the Rochester Community Schools on how we could improve our program. We had an excellent working relationship with them. Our school was highly thought of as a quality educational agency of the community.

I reminded our school parents that we were extremely happy in hearing favorable reports from Rochester Community Schools officials. I reminded them that the real joy comes not in knowing that the "Three Rs" are on par with the public schools but that the "Fourth R" – religion, is being taught in all its truth and purity also. Rev. Roland Behnke, Assistant Superintendent of Lutheran Schools in the Michigan District, shared this statement in his report after visiting our school: "St. John is one of the finest schools in the District. You can be proud of your accomplishments!" The faculty was!

We were pleased to have 70% of our congregation's eligible children enrolled in our school in 1967.

In 1968 I received a divine call from Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska (now called Concordia University-Nebraska) to be an Assistant Professor of Education and serve as an instructor in the Language Arts Department and teacher training program. It was a humbling experience to be considered for such a position. I flew out to Seward with an open mind, asking the Lord to guide my decision. Did I want a future in the academic world or in a congregational environment? I was greatly impressed with the position. On the late-night flight home, I recall flying over the lighted skyline of Chicago. During this quiet time, I felt strongly that my strengths and interest were in parish work. I arrived home happy and content to remain in Rochester, thanking the Lord for His guidance.

In 1968 John Boll, our athletic director, accepted a call to LHS-North in Chicago. Ray Loppnow who had just completed his MA degree, was called to replace him. Ray served as a middle school teacher and athletic director until he returned to his home community in Wisconsin in 1971. He had done an outstanding job, just like his predecessor.

Curt Riske was a middle school teacher and youth director from 1966-70. He was well loved by his students, and faculty as well. He accepted a call as principal to a Lutheran school in Austin, Texas. We regretted his leaving, but knew that the Lord had other plans for him.

Tom Brazinsky filled Curt's position and remained at St. John until 1979. Tom married Shirley Trimpe, who served as a middle grade teacher and worked with the girls' sport program from 1971-75. Tom truly enjoyed working with teenagers. In the years following, Tom entered the pastoral ministry and Shirley became a Lutheran school principal in Western Michigan. Tom retired in 2012. These were special people for which God had other plans.

Arlene Kolb, a graduate of Concordia College, River Forest, Illinois, joined our staff in 1969 as a fourth grade teacher. She also served as the assistant music director. Besides organ work, she was instrumental in further developing the Jubilate Choir, the Cantata Choir, as well as the handbell program of the school and congregation. We were blessed by her music ministry. In 1979, Arlene accepted the position as music director of Faith Lutheran Church in Troy, Michigan. She retired in 2016. At Arlene's retirement celebration, I reminded her that after she left St. John, the trustees had to again raise the chalkboards in her old classroom. They had been lowered for her because of her short stature.

In June 1969, we also regretted to have Mrs. Mildred Hagen retire. She faithfully served for 19 years in the primary grades. Mildred began her teaching at St. John in 1950. She was one of the early pioneers. St. John had taken ownership of the mission school in 1943. Mildred joined the staff seven years later. What a blessing to have had such dedicated and qualified teachers on our staff in the 1960s.

In 1969 we implemented our departmentalization program for Grades 5-8. We followed the plan of the Rochester schools. The "old wing" of the school which was renovated in 1967, was now used to house this department of 140 students.

I can't pass up the opportunity to share my one and only buck deer story. It was 1969 and my son Tim, who was nine years old, and I were hunting on the Lockharts' land in Mancelona, Michigan. I shot a seven-point buck. I was so excited when I brought it home that I wanted to show it to all the students at school. I put it in the large floor food locker in the school kitchen, and encouraged students to walk by and see my trophy. I relished the "vain glory!"

I think Mrs. Hillman and the kitchen staff must have been on sick leave that day, or they would never have allowed me to do this! I was pleased no one called the Health Department.

The 1960s was an enjoyable, challenging period in the history of our school. Staff relationships were excellent. I was blessed to have a fine working relationship with Pastor Schlecht. He and I gave a presentation at the 1969 Fall District Teachers' Conference sharing the importance of cooperation between pastor and principal. I served in ministry with him for nine years. He had come to St. John a year before I did. He accepted the position of President of the Michigan District at the end of the decade and moved to the District office in Ann Arbor. In 1986 Pastor Schlecht completed his service with the District and moved back to Rochester. He served our congregation, assisting Pastors Burow and Theiss with shut-in-calls and part time preaching until 1994. The St. John Foundation Board of Governors honored Pastor Schlecht for his service at the 2008 Foundation Dinner. The Lord called him home in April 2010 at the age of 89. His service to the Church was exemplary.

The 1965-69 five-year projection suggested that we would have 330-335 students enrolled at this time. The decade closed with 330 students enrolled. We were on target! The Lord had showered us with His blessings!

The following teachers served on my staff during the 1960s. As you will note some were on the staff before I arrived in 1961 and remained into the next decades also. How blessed to have these dedicated folks as part of the St. John mission.

Mildred Hagen 1950-69	Mildred Firestone 1959-70
Frank Walker 1960-66	Carol Nelson 1961-62
Walter Papenberg 1957-86	John Boll 1962-68
Ruth Wuerffel 1964-66	Jean (Hedrich) (Sundell) Geil 1964-2000
Caroline Boll 1965-66	Curtis Riske 1966-70
Donna Grever 1966-67	Norma Heins 1966-84
Darlene Tech 1966-71	Janette Pralle 1966-69
Karen (Thomas) Pohlman 1967-71	Ray Loppnow 1968-71
Paula Eckert 1968-69	Elizabeth Mahnke 1968-69
Tom Brazinsky 1969-79	Arlene Kolb 1969-79
Tammy Mahder 1969-71	Lucy Fry 1969-95

As I review the names of these teachers, I have many fond memories of their dedicated service and cooperation not only to me but especially to St. John and their Lord and Savior.

THE 1970S--- TIME OF INTER-PARISH AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

We looked forward to the challenges of the 1970s. The first major challenge was to include neighboring congregations in our expanding school program. The satellite program was to become a reality.

During the late 1960s a number of congregations in our district circuit were in dialogue as to the forming of an association of satellite schools associated with St. John. We were pleased that St. Stephen congregation was open to this concept and took the first step in this unique arrangement.

In 1970, the Rev. Dale Evanson, a graduate of St. John and then pastor of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Drayton Plains (now called Waterford), requested that St. John congregation assist his congregation in establishing a day school. This congregation is about 12 miles west of St. John.

The plan was intriguing. We had an empty classroom at the time. St. Stephen would purchase a new GMC school bus and bring 30 pupils from their congregation to our school each day. The students would be integrated in our grade 1-8 program. St. Stephen would provide for the expenses of a certified teacher and pay for the maintaining of one classroom. They would also have an advisory member on our Board of Education. It was a year-by-year renewable program. We marveled that this congregation would be willing to go to this length, not knowing from year to year whether the arrangement would continue. This congregation really stepped out in faith. What an exciting program for both St. Stephen and St. John. This unique relationship lasted for 16 years!

Mrs. Lucille Richley, a certified teacher and member of St. Stephen, was willing to take a one-year contract to get the program going. She taught a split 3 and 4 grade class on our staff. St. Stephen then called Keith Brutlag as their minister of education and teacher of grade 7 on our staff. Keith was an excellent choice for the initiation of this ongoing program. In 1972 Keith left to continue his studies to become an ordained minister. St. Stephen then called Jim Keat as his replacement. Jim continued teaching on our staff and served as the St. Stephen minister of education.

In 1975, the program expanded on to the St. Stephen campus. Jim Keat became the teacher of that special group of third and fourth graders. A building program was completed at St. Stephen to accommodate the third and fourth grade classes that would be coming into their building. The building program consisted of three classrooms and a multi-purpose room and kitchen.

Between 28-30 students in grades 3 and 4 were selected who were taught in an ungraded individualized program. This was one third of the available third and fourth graders. Criteria for selection included teacher recommendation, pupil testing, pupil learning style, and parent acceptance and permission. Pupils were selected from all levels of achievement ability-low-average-high. It was a heterogeneous grouping of students. Students would remain in the satellite program for a two-year period. Each day, St. Stephen brought a bus

load of 30 students to be integrated into our Grade 1-8 program and we sent back 28 students in the third and fourth grade program. This program made possible a total quality Christian education program for the members of St. Stephen as well as giving a new dimension to St. John—facilities for developing innovative type learning programs.

In 1977, the program expanded into two classrooms of Grade 3-5 students. St. Stephen added Susan Heinze as a teacher. Both Jim and Susan were excellent teachers for this specialized program. So that these students would not miss out on such activities as chapel, band, choir and assemblies, one day a week the students remained at St. John and utilized the temporary Media Center in the church basement as their home room.

I tried to visit these classrooms at least twice a week, more as a support person than as a supervisor. I enjoyed the trips to St. Stephen over the 11 years that we had students on their campus. It definitely added to my work load to be out of the St. John building for these visits, but having this challenging program was a joy to experience. St. Stephen members were so very grateful that we were willing to work with them.

Jim Keat left in 1979 to continue his studies also for the pastoral ministry. St. Stephen called Larry Grupe to serve as the director of the satellite program and coordinator and administrator of the St. Stephen building. Larry remained in this position throughout the continuation of the program and later as the first principal of St. Stephen Lutheran School. Larry and his wife Liz were an excellent fit for this innovative program. We were blessed to have the right people at the right time for developing this satellite concept.

Teachers that taught in this satellite program over the years in association with St. John were: Kay Irwin, Liz Grupe, Marian Grothaus, Kathy Leach, Mary Heideman, David Dunsmore, Sharon Bruns, and Linda Banik. Bonnie Bailey started the St. Stephen Kindergarten program in 1980.

At first parents were reluctant to have their children bussed into a different environment, but the success of the program produced a positive feeling of acceptance. Student feelings were best described as enthusiastic, exciting, motivating, positive and challenging. The program was so well accepted that 23 of the original 28 students spent three years in the satellite program instead of the two-year limit as originally planned. My youngest son, Joel, was one of these students.

Our congregations became closely associated as a result of the satellite association. After our members contributed toward the purchase of media equipment for St. Stephen's Sunday School, David Nacy, the superintendent wrote: "We at St. Stephen's thank God for giving us people like you and pray that He continues to bless all of your efforts and accomplishments."

Our satellite program became known as a "trademark" of our school. We were highlighted in the "Innovations Notebook" for the Lutheran Schools of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The full cooperation of Pastor Evanson from St. Stephen and Pastors Irsch and Burow from St. John, were ingredients that helped to make this program so successful.

In 1983, St. Stephen congregation purchased McVittee public school building from the Waterford School District for \$375,000. The school had the capacity for 400 students. It was about a half mile from their present site—what a deal! We began a three-year phase out program with St. Stephen. The satellite program officially ended in 1986 and St. Stephen began their own K-8 school program. We were blessed to know that we had been a part in establishing a new Lutheran school in the area.

Two cut stained glass plaques commemorating these 16 years were made by Larry and Liz Grupe. St. Stephen was given one and the other was displayed in the St. John Media Center. We were grateful to Pastor Evanson for composing a school song for St. John. “St. John a Son of Thunder, Beloved of the Lord” was sung by St. John students for many years.

It is to be noted that without the vision and commitment of the Boards of Education during the 1970s and ‘80s, this unique program would never have been developed. Chairpersons during this time were Dick Albrecht, Dr. Ed Henderschott, Dr. Andy Pitonyak, Paul Weyer, Ron McClure and Dave Horstman.

At the final Celebration Dinner, Dick Albrecht, who was Chairman of the St. John Board of Education, and Ron Reinke, who was Chairman of the St. Stephen Board of Education in 1970, were honored for this cooperative venture of faith. Also honored was Mrs. Mary Blodgett, who was the St. Stephen bus driver for 14 years of the 16-year association between the two congregations. She had a perfect safety record.

During the joint congregation venture, a total of 122 member children of St. Stephen attended classes in the St. John building or the satellite classrooms. Sixty-seven of these students graduated from St. John. A total of 192 students from St. John attended classes in the satellite classrooms between 1975 and 1986. An additional 69 St. Stephen students were involved in the satellite rooms for a total of 261 students.

The operation of inter-parish or consolidated schools is not new to the Lutheran Church. What was new was the uniqueness of the organizational model that was designed and implemented for the St. John-St. Stephen inter-parish program. This satellite concept provided the “best of both worlds,” so to speak. Both congregations were able to reap the benefits of a totally accredited school program, develop individual facilities, expand enrollment, and participate in an alternative educational program.

Inter-parish school cooperation became a major topic of the ‘70s. The St. Stephen program was a catalyst that sparked interest in other congregations in the Rochester and Pontiac circuits. We formed a North Oakland Satellite School Committee. I took leadership of this group and tried to work with these 12-15 congregations on ways in which “hub” schools and satellite schools could be developed. It was great to get the support and encouragement from our District Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mel Kieschnick. Monthly meetings were held, presentations were given to circuit pastors, as well as to the Pontiac and Rochester circuit congregations. We continued these meetings through 1975. As a result, a number of congregations began to send students to some of our “hub” schools like Our Shepherd, Birmingham, St. Matthew, Walled Lake and St. John.

We had pupils enrolled from Cross of Christ, Bloomfield Hills; Trinity, Clarkson; Crown of Life, Rochester; Shepherd of the Hills, Rochester; St. Augustine, Troy and Faith, Troy.

In order to encourage our neighboring congregations to develop satellite programs in the near future, our congregation passed a resolution in September 1979 that St. John would “provide immediate assistance by charging only member tuition to those families of Crown of Life and Shepherd of the Hills of Rochester that are accepted in the program as space permits and that these families enrolled, be encouraged to pay the additional (actual) cost and fees to their own congregation for a future school satellite program to be developed in their own parish.” This resolution was adopted for a two-year period and then extended for a few more years. These congregations were extremely appreciative of our good will but never moved in the direction of a satellite school. Shepherd of the Hills congregation was discontinued in the late 1980s. The Gethsemane satellite program was adopted in 1980. The highlights of this program are shared in the 1980s decade.

Our inter-parish school relationship with Living Word Congregation was developed in the 1990s. The highlights of this program are shared in the 1990s decade.

One of the enrollment policies that I firmly supported over the years was that children of families not having a church home who were receptive to the St. John program would receive priority over children of Lutheran families from neighboring Lutheran churches. It is my belief that the mission of the school is to provide a Christ-centered education for its own members first and then as an evangelistic outreach to the community. The school must be used as a missionary endeavor.

Our tuition/enrollment policy stated in part: “The congregation looks upon the expense of non-member children in the school as a great opportunity for mission work as well as a great opportunity to witness for Christ rather than an undesirable burden. Our main aim is to save souls, not necessarily to win these students as members of our church. We wish to provide a Christian education to those non-member families who seek a Christian training as their main priority.”

The 1967 building program caused some financial reductions in the following years. In 1971-72 it was necessary to operate three split-grade classrooms as well as nine single-grade rooms. A waiting list of students was necessary as we worked through this financial situation. During this time, the Board of Education required a minimum annual contribution to the congregation by each family based on the number of children they had in school. This was in addition to the member tuition at the time. I’m not sure that there was a balance between Law and Gospel at this time of crisis as we dealt with families!

I recall a tense Board of Education meeting being held at this time when recommendations were discussed to cut back portions of the educational program and not hire a new teacher, yet the demand was there! It was a joy to hear in this meeting the secretary of the Board read a letter from a non-member family, stating:

Our children, Mary and Margaret, are in their first year at St. John and every day we are thankful for the privilege of their attendance. Can you ever know the joy we as parents felt when we read in the school handbook, “The teachers will love all children entrusted in their care and endeavor to train, to guide, to lead and to properly discipline them so that they will receive the best possible education—children will consider their teachers as gifts of God.” The joy is even greater to know that these are not just words, these are the experiences we have seen and known at St. John.

I recall in this time period, when a Board of Education member stated that he would be willing to remove his children from St. John and homeschool them if necessary, so that there would be room for some “non-member family” to enroll their children to receive a Christian education. Letters and comments over the years, like the one above, have helped to solidify the congregation’s thinking that full-time Christian education should be a major emphasis of St. John.

Ron Irsch was assigned to our congregation on a delayed vicarage assignment. After his vicarage year we called him as an assistant pastor. In 1970, after Pastor Schlecht moved to the District office, the congregation called Ron as our senior pastor. I enjoyed many years working with him. Ron was a former teacher, music director and administrator before he studied for the pastoral ministry. He was a freshman at Concordia College, River Forest, when I was a senior. Ron and Betty and their family were well received at St. John. Pastor Irsch helped to build and nurture our congregation and school for 16 years. He was open to new ideas and had a vision for expanding the St. John ministry.

Vicar Frank Camann assisted Pastor Irsch during the 1971-72 school year. Frank was another former teacher, a fellow classmate of mine at Concordia. He received a permanent pastoral call to a congregation in Wisconsin. It was enjoyable to serve in ministry with him and Ron during that year.

In 1972 the congregation called Rev. Paul Burow from Mississauga, Ontario as an associate pastor. Paul’s wife, Peggy, taught in our nursery school for four years. She truly was a blessing to us. Paul’s sense of humor together with Ron’s work ethics were ingredients that welded the faculty and staff into a wonderful working relationship. I appreciated the cooperation and support that they both gave me. They had a real love for Christian education and especially the day school program. They were very supportive of the 1985-86 school expansion program.

Pastor Burow was a real champion for Camp Pioneer in Angola, N.Y. He had served as the dean for many confirmation retreats at the camp. He enticed me to serve as a Bible study leader one summer. It was great fun. My family also enjoyed the retreat setting. Paul was accused of having the sole function of ringing the dinner bell located in the main courtyard! Ironically, today, Paul’s son-in-law, Chip, is the camp director of Camp Arcadia in western Michigan which is a strong competitor of Camp Pioneer. Paul has switched his allegiance also!

We regretted to have Mildred Firestone retire as our second grade teacher in 1970. She had served 11 years. She began teaching two years before I had arrived. Mildred had a friendly smile for each of her students daily.

We were blessed to have Elaine Pauli replace Mildred. Elaine had begun her teaching career in Detroit in 1951. She taught second grade at St. John until her retirement in 1998. She assisted in the primary music program and conducted the Chancel Choir throughout her years of service. In her retirement she continues to use her musical ability, serving part time in area churches.³ At her retirement, I shared that I always enjoyed watching her technique of using her hands as the “music ladder” when she directed her choir students. They responded well! I think Marilyn Miller, who taught third grade and assisted Elaine, used the same method.

The school band program was expanded in the ‘70s to include a Beginners’ Band and an Advanced Band. Mr. Flandermeyer and Mr. Kraatz, instructors from Lutheran High North, were contracted to conduct these programs.

Dr. Max Mallon, a local dentist and member of St. John, came annually and checked the dental work of our students in the primary grades. Dr. Tom Shoemaker, a pediatrician and member of St. John, annually provided free physical exams for all members of our sport teams. We were indebted to these professionals for their valuable contributions, as well as numerous others, who donated time and effort.

“Parochiaid” surfaced in the ‘60s and required attention in the ‘70s. Over the years, our church body together with other Christian churches have questioned why federal and state aid was not available for our parochial schools. In 1965 and again in 1969, the Synod in convention encouraged districts and congregations to “actually promote and where possible, help to shape legislation that could make state and federal monies available to our schools”. The program surfaced in Michigan as “Parochiaid” in 1969. We were thrilled that State Aid, Chapter 2 of Senate Bill 1082 passed in 1970-71. But it was short lived for only one year. Proposal C, which denied aid, was passed a year later. The congregation received \$13,000 for this one year. Each professional staff person was given \$200 and other workers \$50 each. The remainder of the funds were placed in the congregational treasury. Eileen and I purchased a barbeque grill with our money. Bonuses are not that common in church work!

In 1977-78 “Michigan Citizens for Changes in Financing Education” tried to pass a voucher for parents to use for the school of their choice. It was referred to as “Proposal H.” We helped promote that proposal at St. John but it was defeated state wide.

It is my hope that legislation will some day pass, that will acknowledge the fact that private and parochial schools deserve the same recognition as public schools, and should be supported by the tax money of the parents whose children are enrolled. A system of free choice should be initiated. I do believe we are getting closer to that decision. It is interesting

³ During the past four years, (2014-17) Elaine has assisted me on my monthly visits to the Sunrise Retirement Center, by playing hymns for our devotional time.

to note that as Lutherans struggled with some of the government policies and regulations, so did those in other denominations. In 1972 the MANS (Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools) program was established by the educational leaders of the Lutheran, Catholic, and Christian Reformed churches in Michigan. This group became an advocate for vouchers, transportation and other issues that were denied non-public schools. One of its first successes was in getting the Auxiliary Services Act passed, which to this day, provides health, remedial and psychological services to non-public schools. MANS conferences for administrators as well as conferences for all teachers were held on a regular basis. As many as 8 to 10,000 teachers convene at these conferences.

Our school had been highly involved in this program. Over the years a number of our teachers had given presentations at these conferences. I had served on various MANS committees and had given presentations also.

MANS also developed an excellent accreditation process that together with our Lutheran NLSA program was highly applauded by the State Board of Education. St. John continues to be a fully accredited school and welcomed as a quality education program in Rochester.

In 1971 our Voter's Assembly meetings were changed for the better. Woman suffrage was voted on and passed by a slim margin. We now realize how important it is to allow both men and women to voice their opinions and make decisions for the good of the church.

Times have changed! Our school handbook included this statement on pupil-teacher relationships in the 1970 edition. It was stated in part: "the school maintains the right to use corporal (physical) punishment when deemed necessary. Parents will be notified immediately as to the reason for this action." Additional paragraphs followed, further explaining the procedure. It is to be noted that the Rochester Community Schools policy in 1970 stated in part: "In rare instances where repeated and disturbing misbehavior, some form of physical punishment may ultimately become necessary." These were times in history when teachers were considered as "extended parents in the school" and parents put full trust in their judgment. Teachers had an awesome responsibility to love, respect and properly discipline each child that was entrusted to their care, and see each child as a precious child of the Lord.

One of the highlights in the educational field in the '70s was the introduction of two programs called Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) and Teacher Effectiveness training (TET). We had the opportunity to have our entire staff attend a summer seminar and learn these techniques. I believe we definitely became more effective discipline-oriented teachers as a result of this training.

Helping parents discipline their children was an important concept of the '70s. "Who owns the discipline problem? And how do you deal with it?" "I Messages," and "Logical Consequences" were key ingredients of the program. I don't recall any of this practical information being taught in child psychology or educational psychology courses in college. At least, I never had them!

After this initial introduction to PET and TET, I heard of numerous programs and publications coming on the market. I recall reviewing a program in the late '70s called Systemic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP). Lo and behold! The author was Dr. Don Dinkmeyer, my former child psychology professor at Concordia and my assistant football coach for three years! I remember him putting me through some strenuous exercise drills. He had become a distinguished authority in child psychology. I knew coaching wasn't his forte—we never had a winning record during my years at Concordia.

I began using Dinkmeyer's program. It was published by SRA, a well-accredited publishing company. Over the next 15 years I used this program as a basic for parent seminars I conducted both at St. John and neighboring parishes. Some years I offered courses in evening sessions and at other times I incorporated the material into Bible study courses on Sunday mornings. In the 1980s we expanded these courses to include STEP-Teens also, which was designed for parents of teenagers. Randy Einem, my assistant principal, also became involved in these presentations. It is interesting to note that this process has not become outdated. As recent as 2014, I saw seminars being advertised offering the STEP program.

I also have reviewed updated parenting programs that are on the market today. They follow the same format, only the vocabulary has been updated with twenty-first century vernacular. At the Lutheran Education Association Convention in Cincinnati in 2011, I sat through a major presentation entitled, "Say Yes to No." The core of the presentation was from the Parenting Effective Training program of the 1970s. The STEP program was a very practical approach and disciplined procedure in helping parents train their children. I think I even became a better parent in raising my own children. Maybe I should ask them?

I was pleased that parenting programs were highly valued and taught by St. John staff members. It is interesting to note that the 1970 Gallup International poll found that American people believed that discipline was the biggest problem facing schools. The next most serious problems were integration, bussing, financial support, good teachers, improved school buildings, and finally, student drug abuse. Times have changed!

Knowing that drug abuse was becoming an issue even at the elementary level, our athletic director, Ray Loppnow, initiated a drug abuse program for our school and shared it with the community. We were elated when the Rochester Jaycees awarded Ray the "Faith and God" Award for promoting religious values in the community. He was further cited for his active participation in alerting the Rochester community to the evils of drugs through his numerous lectures and presentations. It was becoming evident that such areas as sex and drug education that once were the sole responsibility of parents were now becoming an additional responsibility of the school. We were grateful that we could include the Christian values in this teaching.

In 1971 a new religion curriculum for all grade levels was published by Concordia Publishing House and recommended for schools to adopt. It was called Mission-Life. I served on a committee to introduce these materials through teacher workshops in the Michigan District. The curriculum challenged teachers to use many forms of media to share the Bible stories and lessons with the children. Our teachers were excited to promote the program.

Beginning in the 1970s, Concordia College in Seward, Nebraska asked our school to participate in its student teacher training program. Student teachers were sent to us for a 10-12-week period. We placed them in our classrooms under the supervision of our classroom teachers. Qualified staff members were encouraged to participate. Over the years, as the program grew, we had as many as 10 student teachers on campus at a time from Concordia-Nebraska, Concordia-Chicago and Concordia –Ann Arbor, and also Oakland University in Rochester.

One of the first student teachers assigned to us was Lucy Moerer. Lucy was assigned to my classroom. I truly enjoyed working with her. Not only was she a good teacher but she provided me with time out of the classroom to catch up on administrative duties! We called Lucy to our teaching staff two years later. She served us faithfully until her retirement in 2007.

It appeared that St. John was a good fit for Lucy for over 30 years! She and Liz Nelson were the satellite teachers in the Gethsemane program in the 1980s and 90s. At her retirement dinner, I shared the thought that she was like “an old shoe,” very comfortable and inviting to have near! You didn’t want any other! A few eye brows were raised when I said “old shoe,” until they heard my whole message.

I began the 1972 school year as a non-teaching principal! I had taught Grade 8 from 1961-71 and then a Grade 4-5 combination with Mrs. Heins in 1971-72. I did enjoy the time now to spend on administration, since our enrollment was nearing 400 students. I did substitute teach now and then—I enjoyed teaching! I did have trouble when I had to sub for a music class or choir rehearsal. I had learned the 4 by 4 meter but that was all!

An important facet of the educational program had been missing in our program—providing learning for preschool youngsters. I recall some opposition as some members felt that small children should be home with their mothers. It was evident that more mothers were now in the work force and therefore needed a “safe” place for their children. We saw the need to provide this service—what better place than in a Christian environment!

On February 1, 1971 we opened the St. John Nursery Center for youngsters ages three to five. Mrs. Diane Sell was offered the leadership. Diane was a perfect fit for this program. She possessed a wonderful caring nature. She served faithfully until her retirement in 2000. Diane built the program into a successful operation. It became the number one feeder for our K-8 program. We opened with 25 students. Mrs. Jan Cherne and Mrs. Peggy Burow were excellent assistants to Diane.

A few years later, the name was changed to St. John Preschool. Curriculum offerings have been added since those early days. Certification and accreditation have made this program into an excellent addition to our school. What a blessing this program has been. Our faculty continued to work in close cooperation with the Rochester School system. We tried to attend many of the teacher workshops and seminars that they offered. Our students were invited to various neighboring public schools, such as McGregor and North Hill, to attend operettas and educational functions. We in turn invited them to St. John.

I recall two innovative programs that we adopted from this association with Rochester Schools. The first was a volunteer parent program called “Bucket Brigade.” Parents assisted teachers in providing one-on-one tutoring to youngsters in such areas as math and reading one to two hours a week. Volunteers carried all their supplies and resources in a large plastic bucket! It was unique.

The second was a program called “Cognitive Mapping.” The thrust of the program was to develop an educational prescription for each student based on his/her strengths as shown in his/her cognitive style map. Our teachers attended a number of extensive workshops sponsored by Rochester Community Schools. Teachers were trained how to provide individualized instruction that matched the learning style of each student. Testing was designed to identify the learning style. We later used some of these techniques in developing the individualized program for the St. Stephen satellite program.

One of the seminars we attended was on Indo-Chinese culture--how to work with refugee students. It proved very helpful since we had four Cambodian students in school at the time from families our congregation had sponsored. These were refugees from the Vietnam War.

In October 1973, Assistant Superintendent Harry Jones from the Rochester Community Schools requested to meet with our Board of Education to discuss the five-year goals of the Rochester schools. He asked for us to react to his report and how it could fit together with our goals for the future. This kind of relationship was enlightening and exciting. We continued in this warm association during my years at St. John.

In the Spring of 1974, I received a divine call to serve as an Assistant Professor of Education at my *alma mater*, Concordia College, River Forest, Illinois. As I sought the Lord’s guidance, I felt as I had when I received the call to Concordia College in Nebraska in the 1960s, that the exciting and challenging ministry of the parish was still “where it was at” for me. Although I declined the call, I received it a second time, which I also declined again. I was honored to have been considered.

In the summers of 1975 and 1976 I was asked to teach a graduate course in curriculum development for teachers on the Concordia College campus at River Forest. I said “Yes” to having this part time experience. Eileen’s mother and grandmother were still living together in Chicago at this time, so I was able to bring the whole family to their home while I stayed on the Concordia campus. We did this for two summers. I was pleased to have this opportunity to teach part time at the graduate level.

I also enjoyed serving as the Supervising Consultant for the student teachers that Concordia, River Forest assigned to our school and other Lutheran schools in the Detroit area. I served in this capacity during the ‘70s and ‘80s.

In 1974, the Dinosaur Hill Nature Preserve was established for the students of the Rochester community. We were pleased that teacher Lucy Moerer could serve on that formulating committee. Our students took annual field trips and nature walks in this unique preserve.

We have been very fortunate over the years to have had public school bussing for our students. Some states prohibit their communities from providing this service. The Rochester School system has always been very cooperative to work with us. In response we have tried to adjust our schedules and programs so that they paralleled the Rochester program. We have had students on as many as 35 bus routes over the years. For a number of years we tried to do our own “in house” communication regarding the bus program. I would call the bus garage at 5:00 a.m. to check if busses were running on a particular snowy morning and then I would begin the parent “fan out” phone calls after I made a decision to close school or not. Rochester Schools suggested that we work through them. They made all the decisions and made the announcements via TV. We followed their directions. What a relief that was! I recall being in the bus garage on an opening day of school one year—it was bedlam. I truly appreciated the working of the bus manager. We regularly had to remind our parents when they complained of an inconvenience, that Rochester was providing this service freely. How blessed we have been—over my many years, none of our students were ever involved in a serious bus accident. We thanked the Lord!

In 1979, Rochester Schools provided more special education help for our students. A learning disability teacher was assigned to our school on a four-day-a-week schedule. We also were provided with an “on call” teacher consultant for the Emotionally Impaired (EI) youngsters.

On the morning of March 29, 1974, we found 201 students on the absent list! What happened? The sick calls were coming in. We notified the health department. They came out immediately and closed the school down as they began an investigation of the cause. The first thought was that there was some form of food poisoning, but it was found that 43% of the students hadn’t eaten lunch the day before. The food sample was negative. We were allowed back in school the next day. The final seven-page health department report came about 10 days later. It found no known cause for the illness. It is still a mystery to this day. Alice Hillman, our head cook, was relieved!

I recall a frightening experience one afternoon, near closing time. I heard a loud breaking of glass. I ran to the gym and saw the front end of a car protruding through the glass doors of the gym entrance. A parent who had come to pick up children, hit the gas pedal instead of the brake. Students had just left the gym for the showers, and classes were not dismissed yet, so no one was on the walkway where the car entered the gym. We did have a shocked and embarrassed parent. We thanked the Lord for His protecting angels.

The Parent Teacher League (PTL) was a strong supporting organization during all my years at St. John. I was extremely pleased with its mission of education and service. Educational programs were presented that were of great interest to the parents. Besides outside speakers, the faculty took interest in presenting topics. The following presentations by teachers were presented in 1973:

- Developing Study Habits
- Parents and Teachers as Partners
- Responsibilities of Children

“Know Your Child” parent nights were also held. The PTL took strong leadership also in numerous fund-raising projects that benefitted the school each year. Paper drives, magazine drives, pledge drives, etc. roller skating and ice skating parties, hayrides, and couples retreats were held annually. Parents willingly donated their time and dollars for the development of our school program.

Volunteers were welcomed in our school program. We were blessed to have hundreds of willing participants over the years. In 1970 the faculty established a special Fidelis Award for outstanding volunteer service to the school.

This Fidelis Award was given for dedicated volunteer service to the school program in general. Fidelis Awards were given to:

- 1970-Elsie Quitmeyer - for her 9 years of teaching German
- 1971-Mary Kaunert - for serving as school librarian
- 1972-Fred Carbonero - for volunteer services
- 1973-Marilyn Albright - for her many years of teaching the home economics program.
- 1974-Julie Keat - for full time volunteering to mentor students
- 1975-Barb Maas - for handling the school tuition/office work (she continued this service for many years to come.)
- 1975-Al Russ - for athletics /P.E and AV.
- 1976-Mr. and Mrs. Jack Jentzen - for heading up fund raising projects
- 1977-Carol Lewsley - for supervising the Media Center
- 1978-Sherrill Fox - for school printing and publications, including yearbooks.
- 1979-Trudy Shoemaker - for tutorial student help every school day for the entire year.

In 1978, a second award was established to honor the volunteers who serviced in the Media Center. We saw this facility as the hub of our educational program. It was not only a place to check out books but a learning center for individual as well as group study. Resources such as picture files, document files, filmstrips, and other media materials were available here. This award was called the New Worlds Award. Recipients for the 70s were:

- 1978-Marilyn Kohnert - dedicated service in setting up the program
- 1979-Irene Knight - committed helper

We were able to do our own publishing during the mid-1970s. We set up a photo lab and print room in the basement area. Thanks to volunteers Sherrill Fox and Al Bohn, we were able to publish the school yearbook for several years.

The physical education program was greatly enhanced under the direction of Bruce Gremel. Bruce served as athletic director from 1973-1991. Physical fitness classes were begun for adults and congregational members as well as the students. Gym nights were initiated for older adults. Health education became an important issue.

Athletic programs were enlarged to include opportunities for more student to participate. A and B teams were set up for most sports. It was not unusual to have 350-400 spectators at a varsity basketball game. In 1972 we were thrilled to install permanent bleachers in our gym,

thanks to funds raised by the PTL and special gift donations. Annual Athletic Award Nights were developed where scores of students were recognized for their athletic achievements. Beside the Field Day activities by students selected to represent the school in a metropolitan meet, students on campus also held their own School Field Day in which all the students could participate. Involving *all* students in some form of physical activity was our goal. Many students took advantage of the Summer School Athletic Camps that were developed on campus. Athletics had been an ongoing trade mark of St. John.

I enjoyed helping Kathy Richert coach the girls' softball team to a six-win, two-loss record in the mid-1970s. Karl Mueller and I also coached the boys' fifth and sixth grade basketball team for a couple of seasons. It was good to get out of the office! I do remember coaching when my youngest son Joel, was on the basketball team. It was the only "teaching" that I ever had opportunity to do with my own children, beside an elective course.

The following incident of the 1970s will never be forgotten as long as faculty members from that era are around to "heckle" me! An annual event was the eighth grade graduation trip to Bob-Lo Island and then to the Detroit Tiger game that night. I had a new eight-passenger Pontiac station wagon so I ended up chauffeuring my wife and the teachers. Students were assigned to other volunteer parents. Wanting to save a few bucks for parking I decided to park on the street in a residential neighborhood near Tiger Stadium. A group of boys were playing ball in the street. As I parked, one of the boys said, "Can I watch your car, mister?" I said, "No, thanks, It'll be OK." It was a long walk to the ball park. The game went into extra innings. We lost—in more ways than one—it was now near midnight—as we came closer to my car, we noticed it looked out of balance—as we came closer we saw, WHY? The two front wheels were missing! The wheel nuts were neatly lying on the ground next to the rims. Folks were still sitting on their porches at that time. A resident saw our dilemma and quickly went to his garage and brought out two wheels and tires. They were the wrong fit! (I always wondered where he had gotten these?)

Tom Brazinsky, one of the eighth grade teachers, hurried back to the stadium and flagged down one of our drivers who had a station wagon like mine. Using my spare and the spare from the other car, we were on the road again in less than 40 minutes. It is interesting to note that the wheel nuts were left for me to use again! I've paid the parking lot price ever since!

We were sorry to have Mike and Susan Fuchs leave in 1974, after serving us for four years. Mike was called to be principal of a Texas congregation. He had served us faithfully as a middle grade teacher and director of the part-time agencies.

We were pleased to add Cary Richert to our staff in 1974, as a middle grade teacher and also as director of the part-time agencies. He also assisted in the athletic program as needed. Cary served seven years and then took a call to be a Lutheran school principal. He later entered the pastoral ministry. He retired as Associate Pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, in Birmingham, Michigan, in 2017. His wife, Kathy, was a faithful volunteer, always available to help. The church at large has been blessed by this family.

In September 1974, we opened school with 428 students in grades K-8 and 46 students in the nursery program. We had 15 full-time teachers, one half-time teacher plus volunteers for the 10 elective programs, plus numerous teacher aides.

The need for more facilities again surfaced. The church basement had been left unfinished after it was built. The concept of a media center - an area that provided resources such as picture files, filmstrips, records, motion picture clips, etc. which could be housed and utilized by students, beside the regular library facilities, was promoted by teacher Faith Ebert. The second level south classroom was designed and fitted to provide these needs. This pilot program was very successful.

The church basement area was now turned into a temporary Media Center type classroom and art room. This space was utilized until the 1985 building program provided us with more classroom space and an enlarged Media Center on the main level, which then became the “hub” of the school. Concepts of these temporary facilities were later incorporated into the building program. The faculty was excited about utilizing these new facilities.

Miss Yuehrs was thrilled with the reading loft which was constructed for her third grade classroom. Can an innovation such as this help to improve the reading and study skills of students? We believe it had value. Over the next two years, reading lofts were built in other classrooms and the Media Center.

In 1979 carpeting was laid in three classrooms—a first in the building! Every teacher wanted to teach in one of these “noise-free” rooms.

Do Lutheran Schools make a difference? It seems this question surfaces every few years. We were pleased to cite the findings of a research study published by Synod’s Board for Parish Education which highlighted the following points.

People who attended Lutheran schools:

- evidence greater clarity on the way of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus alone.
- clearly have more Biblical knowledge
- report a much fuller devotional life
- are more active in witnessing to others about Jesus.
- have a balanced doctrine (neither liberal nor ultra-conservative)
- have a reasonable respect for authority

We were happy to share these findings with the congregation encouraging parents to utilize our Christian day school as a support program to their parental responsibilities.

The ‘70s saw the beginning of the Art ‘N’ Apples fall festival in downtown Rochester. Today, hundreds of exhibitors and thousands of patrons are involved. During these initial years, children’s art was emphasized. Our school, in conjunction with several other area schools, sponsored a religious art division at the fair. Our art teacher, Ginny (Ashman) Latra, helped coordinate this activity. We received excellent publicity through this event.

Sunday morning Bible classes were popular. We held from eight to 10 different selections each Sunday morning. Evening weekday classes such as a 15-week “Life with God” program were well attended.

In December 1979, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Rochester Worship Hour. This was our weekly 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning service that was broadcast on WPON radio.

A highlight of the winter months during this era was an annual educational seminar sponsored by church insurance grants and individual donations. An example, was the two-day program in January 1975 led by Dr. Walter Stuenkel, then-president of Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Dr. Stuenkel led both morning Bible studies on the “Nature and Problems of the Christian Family”; evening sessions on “The Nature, Mission and Resources of the Church,” as well as a businessman’s breakfast, held at Machus Plaza for the Rochester business community on the topic, “The Christian Ethics and the World of Business.” We were pleased with the turnout of community people.

I recall that Dr. Paul Zimmerman, known for his expertise on the topic of evolution, and who had served as President of three of our Synodical colleges including Concordia, Ann Arbor, was one of our annual speakers as well. Dr. Jean Garton, known for her pro-life views, and Dr. Reinhold Marxhausen, a distinguished professor of art and media from Concordia, Seward, Nebraska participated in seminars in the ‘70s also. These seminars were well attended not only by St. John members but also by the Rochester community. They were an excellent means of witnessing to the community.

For many years the students presented two major religious presentations a year and one or two drama/opera presentations. One age group would present the Christmas Eve service, another age group would present either a Reformation service or a Palm Sunday service and the other age groups presented the secular events. These were well received by the parents and congregational members. After a time the Sunday School children alternated with the day school for the Christmas Eve service. The Sunday before was the alternate date.

The faculty developed a special gifts list of items not provided in the school budget. This list was sent to parents and congregational members encouraging them to select items that could be under written for the school program. This was our first attempt at school marketing. It had proven to be a successful venture over the years.

In the ‘70s the electives program was expanded. By 1977 we offered 16 electives. French, sewing and typing were some of the classes added. How blessed we were to have qualified individuals volunteer to teach these classes that the students looked forward to each week. It is interesting to note that one homemaking class of 12 students had an enrollment of 10 boys! Marilyn Albrecht, who served as the instructor, was thrilled! I have to mention the air rifle shooting class, which I had the fun of teaching for many years. We purchased a dozen air rifles and targets and set them up against the high embankment at our playground fence line. I had both boys and girls enroll for this class. I doubt that many of these students are hunters today but hopefully they have developed a respect for firearms and how to use them

safely. I wonder if parents would allow their children to enroll in such an elective today in the 21st century?

Science fairs were held yearly in the 1960s. They were very successful, but the faculty felt that there were other areas of the curriculum that could be exhibited also, so the fair was broadened to include collections, literature, art, science and hobbies, and was called a CLASH Fair. The variety of exhibits brought new interests into the event and made it more exciting.

The McDonald's on South Hill invited our primary grades to decorate their store windows for the various holiday seasons. The kids were not hesitant to paint religious themes for the Christmas and Easter holidays—another way to witness! This invitation lasted a number of years.

Parent-Teacher conferences are a vital part of communication with parents. St. John parents have continued to appreciate these over the years. Usually the conferences were held in the fall and again in the spring. I don't recall a time in my three-and-a-half decades that the percentage of parents attending was under 95 percent!

Michigan public schools were initiated into statewide assessment testing in this era. This testing continues to this day. Private and parochial schools were not required to test, but had the option to participate. During my tenure at St. John we annually participated in these tests. We felt it was important that our students were at the performance level of the public schools in the community. In fact, we hoped to achieve even better scores. Over the years we did that on many occasions. Reading, mathematics, science, and social studies were the main areas assessed. We worked closely with the Rochester schools in these areas of the curriculum. When weaknesses occurred, we worked together to improve the results. We worked closely in textbook selection also. We promoted our school as a school that provided quality education, similar to that of our community schools but on top of that we included a Christian based program. We were noted for this achievement.

During this decade, besides the regular times when the principal evaluated staff, a special annual Board of Education and staff communication time was set up. This procedure provided the Board with a yearly update of each faculty member's performance, goals for the future, and provided an opportunity to discuss problems and concerns directly affiliated with the Board members themselves. We saw this as a positive avenue to keep open communication between all involved.

We also provided times for teacher to visit teacher. Teachers were able to share teaching procedures during class time with their peers. These times were scheduled throughout the school year. I had the opportunity to serve as "sub" teacher in the classroom on many occasions while the teacher was visiting. It was my way of staying in touch with the students.

The "Officer Bill" program was initiated at this time. Bill Gray was a Rochester police officer who was instrumental in putting together safety programs for the Rochester schools. The

program expanded over the years to include drug abuse and other health issues. The kids especially enjoyed the talking “robot.” Bill later became the fire chief of the Rochester Fire Department. He was a welcomed visitor in our building. I believe “Officer Sue” became our next safety officer.

Over the years, the faculty enjoyed the activities of the various student councils. Many times we had to say “no” to the requests such as “gum chewing days” and “longer recesses” but were thrilled when we received a request such as this one, in 1972, for a gym time on Saturdays from 1-3 p.m. The 25 cents admission would be designated for our mission offering of the month! I believe that Mark Smith was the student council president at this time. Mark later became chairman of our daughter congregation, Living Word. The annual Student Government Week, with election posters mirroring the halls and confetti covering the gym floor, during the election, was enjoyed by all except the custodians! I believe that the faculty also revised the dress code during this year, to allow students to wear pant suits to school! What an achievement!

The 1973 Synodical Convention of the LCMS held in New Orleans was a critical time for our entire church body. I served as a teacher delegate from Michigan. I was appointed to serve on Committee #7 which dealt with educational issues. It was a challenging and interesting experience. This convention dealt with the doctrinal controversy that surfaced at this time. After the convention, a segment of the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis faculty walked out and formed the “Seminex” program and later affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

St. John congregation passed the following resolution in its March 1975 Voter’s Assembly:

WHEREAS—we feel it would be helpful if congregations expressed their opinions on the controversial issues in order to give a sense of direction to those in leadership positions; therefore be it resolved--That we go on record as supporting the historical, doctrinal position of the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod which is based on the inspired, authoritative and inerrant Word of God and faithfully expressed in the Lutheran Confessions as well as Synodically-adopted doctrinal resolutions.

Special parent sessions were initiated in 1975 for all new parents who were not members of the Lutheran church. These four evening sessions were designed to provide information on the Lutheran doctrine and practices. Parents appreciated these sessions and many had been brought into the church through these initial sessions. During my tenure, the pastors and I usually led these evening sessions. What a thrill to see a family come to know the Lord as a result of our school and church initiative!

In February 1974 our neighbor’s garage on Helen Street caught fire. What made this important to all of us was that the PTL used this garage to store our paper collected for our periodical paper drives. The garage burned, killing the owner’s Golden Retriever. The students felt awful. The Student Council held a special collection. \$268 was collected by the students. The PTL contributed \$100 also to help defray costs. We were proud of the students as they presented this check to our neighbor. We saw Christian love in action!

After Easter break in 1975, students coming back to school were busy helping to “police” the paper scattered throughout the playground area. During the night of the “great snowfall” our scrap paper semi-trailer caught fire. Rochester fireman spent two hours pouring water on the paper before the trailer could be emptied and the smoldering paper extinguished. It was felt that the fire was caused by lightning. The all metal trailer was not damaged, but what a mess! You would think the PTL would give up on paper drives after this, but they didn’t.

1975 was a time for reflection—the halfway mark of another decade.

- Am I accomplishing everything that I am able?
- Am I working up to my capacity?
- Am I using my talents to serve the Lord?

The faculty goals included the following:

Lord,

Sensitize us to the needs of the whole parish

Help *Encourage* those school families without a church home to participate in our congregational religious life.

Strengthen our personal and public worship life.

Increase our love and concern for all of the members of the body of Christ.

His blessings were evident in the lives of the congregation and the faculty—Praise the Lord!

We restructured the Board of Education during the ‘70s to better serve the needs of the congregation in providing Christian education for all members. The Board consisted of a Day School committee, a Part-Time Agency Committee, an Adult Education Committee, an Athletic Committee and a Youth Committee. I served as an advisory member on the Day School Committee. Called teachers with expertise in the other areas served as advisory members on these committees. The structure many sound unwieldy to operate but it did work and it did provide services for all aspects of the congregation. Modifications were made over the years but we operated with this basic model through the mid-1990s.

The Board of Education felt it was very important that teachers become involved and attend educational conferences and workshops whenever possible. We tried to attend many of the Rochester School functions. We also initiated a Teacher Visitation Day each year where teachers spent the day visiting in two different schools, observing in the classrooms. The schools we visited were very accommodating. We went to public as well as private and parochial schools throughout the Detroit metropolitan area. In many cases, these schools also sent teachers to observe in our school. GE –Individualized Guided Education was an innovation at this time. We took one day and visited seven Catholic schools in the Detroit area that were involved in this process.

Sometimes we tire and wonder if our teaching is making any inroads. The following excerpt from the eighth grade graduation speech by valedictorian Paul Hoehner⁴, in 1975, makes it all worthwhile:

Sometimes we get the idea that we don't need God - we can do it ourselves. He just doesn't understand. Yet God set the principles in which our electronic age functions. In a very real sense He made the neat sports car you've been eyeing, the far-out clothes, the jet to Acapulco, just as unquestionably as He created the trees and animals. . . . It will be us who will have the responsibility of molding these current world problems into a future solution; remember you're not alone. Christ's world was no different. Into this sordid world He came, not as an emperor, but as a low-born person to give us His truth. As you study His Word then reach out to others with His fantastic message of Love!

I could put together a book of these addresses over the years. Each one shared God's message of love.

I have kept a number of files, almost a book, full of letters from students, as well as notes, messages and letters from parents, teachers and congregation members. What memories! The children's letters are the best:

"I like you for a Prisabel, God bless you-Amen!"

"Thank you for doing a lot of things that we didn't know you were doing."

"Thank you for letting us go to Florida, but not for all the homework I took along."

"I like you. Please put me in second grade. I like this school."

An article in the Rochester newspaper on St. John, asked the second graders, "Who had the hardest job-your principal or the president?" Randi said, "The president 'cause he has to get up earlier. My principal has a maid to do his work—I guess."

Parent letters can be summed up in these two examples:

"Thank you, every one of you, for all the loving work you do for our children. The examples you set, the teaching and organizational work you do, and most of all, the love of Christ that shines through you, are precious to us beyond words."

"You folks are unique. You are head and shoulders above any school we have ever known, in your love, understanding, ability, kindness, and patience. You don't just preach your faith—you live it. You are magnificent examples of Christ's teachings."

The following comment from a parent, is one that I cherish and thank the Lord for allowing me to serve in His ministry:

⁴ Dr. Hoehner, later in life, has become a Senior Clinical Associate in the John Hopkins University School of Medicine.

“Roy, you are so blessed. You’ll only know in heaven how many lives you have changed as a result of your ministry.”

All praise and glory go to the Holy Spirit!

Mission Fairs were a highlight of the ‘70s. In 1977 we had a week-long congregation event with special speakers each evening and classroom displays by the students. Japan, Liberia, and other world missions were discussed. Neighboring congregations were invited to hear these presentations by missionaries and Synodical officials.

The Bicentennial Freedom Fair was held in the Spring of 1976 to commemorate our country’s 200th birthday. We held an operetta, play, classroom presentations, and other activities all in one day—what a celebration! I remember Tom Brazinsky’s eighth grade classroom especially, because it was decorated as Abe Lincoln’s cabin with a wood stove and all the trimmings. The students weren’t very happy with me when I stopped them from building a fire in the stove. I think their room won first prize!

In the fall, we had a special Bicentennial Reformation Service for the congregation. Besides including our school news in the monthly church publication, the “Rochester Messenger,” in 1975 we began a weekly school edition called the “Eagle Express” which was distributed to school families each Friday. This publication became an excellent means of keeping parents updated. Some years, faculty members were assigned specific programs or academic areas to write about and then shared these articles in the newsletter. In recent years, this publication had been expanded to the web site also.

Our faculty had developed a close relationship with the Education Department at Oakland University since many of the staff were pursuing their Master’s on campus. Dr. Hahn, a distinguished Professor, became a regular consultant to our school. In 1977, he sponsored a special reading clinic in our building for Oakland University graduate students working in the area of reading. Forty St. John students from grades 2-8 were selected to meet in tutorial individual sessions with 40 reading teachers. These students received eight weeks of instruction including testing and evaluation free. We greatly benefited from this special program. The following year, the program was continued by Dr. Craemer.

Some years later, when Dr. Hahn retired from Oakland University, he donated a selection of his personal library to our school which was incorporated into our faculty library. We had developed an extensive library at this time of educational resource materials. We provided funding for faculty members to subscribe to magazines and purchase books in the areas of the curriculum that were in their expertise.⁵

⁵ I have enjoyed my neighbors over the 50 years that we have lived on Maplehill Road. Many families have come and gone. I believe that at this writing, Eileen and I are the oldest and longest living family on the street. About 15 years ago a young family moved in across the street from us—the John Hahns. We have been very cordial with them. We have discussed politics, religion and family issues but it wasn’t until 2012, that John mentioned that his father had been a professor at Oakland University ----the light went on! We were both surprised of this information. John was pleased to know of my high regard I had for his father, Dr. Hahn from Oakland University.

In 1977 we were asked by the Michigan District along with nine other schools to pilot an accreditation project that was being developed for our Lutheran School system. The project was very comprehensive. It covered all facets of the educational program including administration, curriculum, personnel, facilities, staffing, relationships, evaluation, testing and other areas. I appreciated the interest and involvement by the faculty and Board of Education for this project. It took over a year to complete. A visitation team was sent in to evaluate our program. We passed with flying colors!

The Accreditation program was finalized and Synod took ownership of it. It was called the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA). How happy we were to have been one of the first to complete it—we thought! “No, not again!” Yes, we now had to formally go through the process to receive our National accreditation. How I dreaded to share this information with the faculty on a Monday morning! It was definitely easier the second time around but I reminded Dr. Kell who was the Michigan District Superintendent at the time, that he should wear body armor when he came to visit our school!

The NLSA process was a seven-year program with yearly requirements and updates. At the end of this time, an extensive evaluation takes place for re-accreditation. I am pleased that we have continued in this program and have never allowed our accreditation to expire. The State of Michigan, together with the majority of other state education agencies, highly regarded this accreditation by the Lutheran schools. In later years and even in my retirement, I had the privilege to serve as a member of the NLSA Review Committee that promoted this accreditation and then visited and evaluated schools. I served as either a team member or captain on the review of over 20 schools in Michigan. During this decade, I also had the opportunity to serve on various Michigan District committees, including chairperson of the Teachers Conference and later of the Principal’s Conference.

In 1977, after serving as a teacher and as the director of music for the congregation for 20 years, Wally Papenberg was pleased to “retire” his music work yet wanting to continue in his many school roles. We were pleased to have Wally accept the position of assistant principal. He was the first of the three assistant principals that I worked with.

Walt Gresens was called as the new music director as well as a classroom teacher. Wally had done a super job of putting together a comprehensive music program. Walt Gresens now had the opportunity to enhance this program. His amazing talents in music were special blessings. The PTL had been very successful in the various fund raisers they had promoted over the years, but in 1979 they tried a new and different approach—a service auction. Karl and Nancy Mueller brought this idea to St. John and with the help of Hans and Davi Stein, chaired the event. Dinners, excursions, fishing and hunting trips, were auctioned off. Even my daughter Cyndy got into the act. She auctioned off “sponsoring birthday parties for kids including magic acts!” She did a number of these.

The first auction netted \$7200. Wow! A second auction was held in 1983 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the school. The Muellers again chaired the event with the assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Vonderheid, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Schwark and Mr. and Mrs. Bob Claus. We made over \$11,000 on this one. Eileen and I felt a need to contribute to this one so we

auctioned off a Sunday champagne brunch on our patio. We were surprised to have four couples pay “big bucks” to attend. We were nervous as to what to serve. I am not a connoisseur of fine wines, but I had this special bottle of champagne that was given to me some years before and I thought this was the time to use it since this was a “champagne” brunch! As I popped the cork, I knew something was wrong—not even a fizz. One sip and our guests politely asked for water! I guess I had kept the bottle too long! Eileen substituted with tomato juice! Embarrassed, yes! But the auction money was in hand and went for a good cause!

The downside of these events was that I invited Dr. John Hertzog, Superintendent of the High School Association, to attend one of these auctions. He was impressed—a couple of years later we relented and the High School Association took on this program. They have had tremendous success over the years. We don’t hold any grudges. In fact, since 2000 the PTL has again biannually held these auctions with much success. In 2010 Eileen and I were asked to be honorary chairpersons of the event. We were honored to accept.

Prior to 1977, we had no preparation time built into the school day for the faculty. After that date, the Board of Education provided one “free” period per week for classroom teachers. Directors who were teachers with church and school responsibilities, such as youth, music and athletics, were given approximately a half day a week for these added responsibilities. I believe we were one of the first Lutheran schools in the area giving teacher’s prep time! A lot has happened since!

As our school enrollment continued to increase, we found that the actual cost coming from the congregational budget decreased since added monies were coming in from tuition. In 1964 the actual cost of the school took 44% of the budget. In 1979 it only took 31% of the budget.

In 1979 we had 479 students in grades K-8. There was no gain from the previous year yet there was a transfer of 92 students! We had 52 graduates and 40 moving to other locations, and 92 new students enrolled. There was a changeover of 184 bodies! We were living in a transient society! We had a waiting list of 84 students. We had 72 percent of the eligible congregation children in school. We were pleased to note that 11 families had transferred into the congregation because of the school and five additional families were confirmed in the faith. The nursery program had an enrollment of 60 students. The student body was made up of 59% from St. John, 12% from St. Stephen, 15% from other Christian churches, 10% were Church prospects, and 4% from sister congregations.

Our eighth grade graduates were now attending 11 different high schools with 60% attending Lutheran High School-North. In 1979, 92 St. John graduates were attending Lutheran High North. I was privileged to serve on the Lutheran High School Association Board of Directors during this decade. Eileen and I spent many hours of our “free time” in activities, projects, and sporting events, at Lutheran High North. All four of our children attended North during these years. I have fond memories of playing in a “donkey basketball” game at North. At half time, I went into the locker room totally exhausted from trying to “pull” the donkey around the court. I sat out the second half!

In the early '70s I was privileged to serve a two-year term as the treasurer of the Lutheran Education Association (LEA). This organization is the national group for all Lutheran schools throughout the country. The offices are in Chicago. In 1977, at the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Convention in Dallas, I was further privileged to be elected to the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary in Fort Wayne. It was a four-year term. It was interesting to work on projects and procedures on the Synodical level. These bi-monthly meetings gave me insights into the workings of our Synod. There were many similarities in working with this board. Many of these procedures we experienced at St. John.

The policy of the congregation was that the directors were employed on a 12-month salary and the teachers on a 10-month salary. Called women teachers were eligible to be directors also.

The following teachers assumed directorship roles during the end of this decade:

Walt Papenberg - Director of Adult Education
Cary Richert - Director of Part-Time Agencies
Bruce Gremel - Director of Athletics
Walt Gresens - Director of Music
John Shaffer - Director of Youth

Another decade had come to closure. God's blessings were evident in the St. John community!

The following new teachers served on my staff during the 1970s. This list does not include those who began service in the 1960s.

Keith Brutlag 1971-72	Lucille Richley 1970-71
Mike Fuchs 1970-74	Ginny Bartsch 1971
Marilyn Miller 1970-72	Gene Anderson 1971-73
Elaine Pauli 1970-98	Shirley (Trimpe) Brazinsky 1971-75
Ruth Geiger 1971-73	Susan Fuchs 1973-74
Jim Keat 1972-79	Cary Richert 1974-81
Faith Ebert 1972-73	Lucy Moerer 1974-2007
Peggy Burow 1972-76	Jeanne Schuler 1974-78
Diane Sell 1972- 2000	Linda Doebler 1975-1998
Ginny (Ashman) Latra 1972-77	Judy Ohlson 1976-78
Debbie (Yuehrs) Bozman 1972-76, 1987-89	Sue Heinze 1977-80
Bruce Gremel 1973-91	Lorrie (Boerger) Heins 1977-85
Jan Cherne 1977-97	John Shaffer 1978-2016
Walt Gressens 1978-95	Larry Grupe 1979-1986
Liz Grupe 1979-82	Laurie Harrison 1979-84
Karen Olson 1977-81	

We are grateful that the Lord placed these caring and committed teachers on the St. John staff during this decade.

THE CHALLENGING 1980S---TIME FOR STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING THE MINISTRY

Another decade began with another set of challenges and blessings. We were extremely pleased how well the St. Stephen satellite program was functioning. We now looked at ways in which we could assist other congregations in the area to take advantage of our school program and provide an opportunity for us to explore innovative ways of serving children. It was exciting to see the interest of Gethsemane congregation members and their willingness to work with us. We developed a plan that would stimulate the growth and expansion of Christian education at Gethsemane as well as provide for the development of special academic skills at various age levels for the St. John students through a specialized program in the Gethsemane building.

Gethsemane Lutheran Church, located on Auburn Road about six miles from St. John, had a two-room parochial school from 1945 through the 1950s. In fact, our St. John school was a mission school that had its beginning in their building in 1942. St. John took ownership of the school in 1943. This congregation had a communicant membership of approximately 340 at that time. In 1994, Gethsemane celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. I had the privilege to have the commemorative sermon for this event. I noted with interest that Jehovah congregation in Detroit had donated its white frame church which was moved in 1941 to the Gethsemane site to be its initial building. I had served at Jehovah congregation. I now had a close relationship with all three of these congregations!

The Gethsemane school had closed in the late 1950s, so the building had stood vacant for many years. Lutheran High North opened their initial year there in 1972. The facilities consisted of a large two classroom brick and block structure with ample playground and a paved parking lot. The building was now completely refurbished and developed into a “laboratory center” for St. John Grades 6-8. Both congregations adopted the plan unanimously and it was initiated in September 1980. Each school day one of the Grade 6 to Grade 8 classes took turns and spent approximately four hours on the Gethsemane campus. Science and Health were the subject areas covered during this extended period of time.

Gethsemane was permitted to enroll 30 students in the various grades at St. John. A proportionate number of St. John students utilized the facilities at Gethsemane thereby creating a net increase of one classroom of students for our school program.

Tim Grothaus, a 1980 graduate from Concordia, Seward, Nebraska, accepted Gethsemane’s call to serve as their director of Christian education and as our science teacher who would be the instructor for the Science Laboratory Center program. Scheduling was worked out so that ample time was available for home room activities, choir, band, electives and physical education in the St. John building. The financial arrangement was similar to that with St. Stephen. Each congregation assumed its own costs. Tuition was the same amount for all congregation members. I tried to spend a few hours each week observing the activities on the Gethsemane campus.

We were blessed to have Rochester Community Schools assume the responsibility of bussing students from our school to the Gethsemane campus and return each day. This was a special gift that we received for 16 years! How blessed can you be!

As our school expanded, curricular changes were made. In 1984, St. John called Tim Grothaus to be our eighth grade teacher and director of communications.⁶ The Gethsemane campus was now used to house selected classrooms of Grades 2, 3, 3/4 and 4/5 over the next two years since space was not available on the St. John campus. In 1986 and in the years following, the Gethsemane campus was used to house our two third grade classes. Linda Dunklau, called by Gethsemane, and Lucy Moerer, a St. John teacher, now became the two satellite teachers. Ann Westphal also served as a part-time teacher. Students were again bussed to the Gethsemane campus each morning and returned to St. John to catch home bound busses.

We were excited about developing an accelerated math and reading program for these grades. Mrs. Nancy Kuehm, a certified teacher was hired as a teacher aide, plus volunteer mothers to assist in this program. Cluster grouping and individualization were highlighted. Our teachers were excited about this program. Linda said, “The off-campus third grade program has become a nurturing year and a time when responsibility is learned and practiced and academic growth is high.”

Changes again became necessary. In 1989, Linda was called to the St. John staff as a junior high teacher. Gethsemane now called Mrs. Liz Nelson as her replacement. Liz and Lucy continued in this program until the program was completed in 1997, at which time the Living Word campus was developed.

Without the cooperation and vision of the teachers listed above and the support of Gethsemane members such as Al Grund, Ken and Sharon Brusseau, Eileen Herr, Larry Haff, Chuck Ahlgren, Pastors Christiansen, Burgess and Schlueter, and our St. John Board of Education, especially noting the initiative of Peter Grund and Dale McGorman, this program would never have been such a successful venture. A quote from the 1952 Gethsemane Church *Gazette* stated, “The task of Christian Education is to prepare our children to meet the problems of life storms, wisely and unafraid. If we do not train our children within the shadow of the Word, they will not be able to bear the burden and heat of tomorrow. If we do it in our time, they will “rise up and call us blessed” in the day of judgment, Therefore, we do not hesitate to ask our people’s prayers and gifts that the cause of Christian Education may be advanced.”

We were pleased to provide this education once again for this congregation in the 1980s and ‘90s. It is interesting to note the longevity of both programs- the St. Stephen program from 1970-86 and the Gethsemane program from 1980-97.

⁶ Tim Grothaus was instrumental in developing the computer program over the years. He continues to serve as a middle school teacher and is the AV specialist in 2018. He is the longest serving teacher on the staff. What a blessing he has been to St. John.

The educational goals of the faculty for the 1980s included the following commitments:

- Commitment to aid children toward a more acceptable self-concept—enhancing their attitude of caring, sharing and loving.
- A renewed commitment to make worship and praise meaningful and applicable to life for students, parents and teachers.
- A commitment to increase the awareness of parents in the educational process of their children.

These goals were regularly review during this decade as we tried to make them happen.

Rochester Community Schools conducted a survey of non-public school families in 1980. The survey found a marked increase of students attending a non-public school. Approximately one child in every ten attended a non-public school. St. John parents returned 192 surveys. They cited the following as reasons for having their children in our school: Religious education; school environment; academic program; school discipline; and student behavior.

The following anonymous quote by a parent was appreciated:

When we decided to send our son to St. John because of religious training, we actually solved many of the other problems presented. When the love of Christ is foremost in the mind of the child and his teacher and also parents, then discipline, social problems, and the school environment will be such as God has decreed. With Christ at the center of all activities, the child gains the proper perspective of himself and the world.

Other interesting happenings of the '80s included:

A fortieth anniversary celebration of the school, called “Extravaganza Night,” was held in April 1983 with over 800 parents and friends attending the many exhibits, presentations, and activities.

In August of 1983 an alumni reunion of all St. John graduates (1944-1983) was held. The committee under the direction of Jean Miller contacted 700 alumni. Over 200 attended the special dinner.⁷

Fifth graders participated in the “Battle of the Books” sponsored by Avon Township Public Library. Students were questioned on a series of books which were then donated to our school library. All of the Rochester schools participated in this activity.

Students participated in the Young Authors Conference designed to honor young authors in Grades 4-6. It was sponsored by Oakland University.

⁷ It is interesting to note what alumni are interested in when they return to the campus, especially those who have moved away from the area. They look for pictures, plaques, and trophies that pertained to their era. For example, my daughter Cyndy, a graduate of 1976-- who currently lives in Boston, when she comes home, checks the athletic bulletin board to see if her record time in a track relay has been beaten. For 40 years it had remained. It was beaten in 2017! I hate to tell her.

The annual PTL Creative Writing Contest involving Grades K-8 was highly successful.

Students were encouraged to attend summer school programs in the areas of math, reading, computer literacy, and sports skills and fitness being offered by the Rochester Community Schools.

The Fine Arts Festivals of the 1980s were exceptional. They included the Beginners and Advanced bands, the Junior and Cantate choirs, the Bell Ringers, instrumental and vocal soloists, and art work by all grades.

The eighth grade graduation banquet became a major event through the '60s to the '90s. A formal dinner sponsored by the PTL and served by the seventh grade parents for graduates, parents and grandparents was held in the gym prior to the graduation service in church. It was a lasting memory for the graduates!

The Evangelism Committee was added to the school curriculum. Its goal was to sensitize the students to share Jesus with others. Students in Grades 1-8 participated. They made routine visits to area nursing homes sharing hope to those confined. Teacher Jean Geil took a real interest in keeping this committee active for many years.

We remember the tragic fire in February 1983 that completely destroyed the Robert Claus family home. School families immediately responded as we set up a "We Care" offering during our Wednesday chapel service. No one was injured—thank the Lord! Bob and his family were great supporters of the school program and faculty members providing many monetary gifts at appropriate times. I recall Bob had given me a pair of new shoes that he had recently purchased and thought I would enjoy. Ironically, the day after the fire I returned those shoes to Bob to wear because all his possessions were destroyed.

The profits from the annual magazine sales drive during the 1980s was used primarily to build the technology program of the school. The first purchases were for individualized math computers for solving computational skills for the middle grades. These computers had 70 mathematics skill programs built in! Lori (Boerger) Heins, our art instructor, was thrilled to also purchase a mechanized potter's wheel from these sales. A kiln had been purchased previously.

Our Grade 6-8 students became involved in a pilot reading program called "Reading for Comprehension". As a result of piloting this research program, our school became the recipient of all of the resources that were involved at no cost to the school.

In addition to the elective program, the Suzuki violin program was offered during after school hours. Mrs. Kris Leczel directed this program for many years. She also organized an orchestra program. Both were well received and highly successful. Walt Gresens, our middle grade teacher and music director, was pleased to see the completion of the third manual on the church organ that was initially installed in the new church building in 1967. The transept and nave windows of the church were also replaced with stained glass. A wish finally coming to completion. Special gift funding completed these projects.

With the addition of Walt Gresens to the faculty as music director, more time was able to be given to the church's music program. The music program now included the following choirs and directors:

Senior Choir, Male Chorus, and Junior Choir, directed by Walt Gresens
Renaissance Ringers, directed by Tim Bode
Jubilate Ringers, directed by Jean Miller
Junior Choir and Advanced Band, directed by Walt Gresens
Cantate Choir, directed by Bev Koch
Chancel Choir, directed by Elaine Pauli

In 1980, Bev Koch replaced Arlene Kolb as fourth grade teacher and assistant to the music director. Once again, the congregation was blessed to have an excellent replacement. Bev became involved in leading various choirs of all ages over the years. She is an accomplished organist and has assisted in the church music program through the present time. She served as an assistant principal after my retirement, and today serves as the director of communications.

In the summer of 1984, Tim and Marian Grothaus painted a wall-sized mural in the gym. Isaiah 40:30-31 was the theme for the mural. They spent 80 hours designing and painting this beautiful mural. The gym wall was beautified by this painting. They also painted the beautiful mural in the main school hall.

In November 1984, Larry and Liz Grupe, who were now administering the satellite program on the St. Stephen campus, were involved in a serious auto accident as they left a Sunday evening Church Convocation meeting at St. John. Broken ribs, bruises, and migraine headaches kept them out of the classrooms for over a month. St. John congregation was very supportive in helping the Grupes recover. We thanked the Lord that their lives were spared.

In May 1985, we regretfully accepted Mary Bantin's resignation as our school secretary. As stated earlier, Mary was my "right arm" and served faithfully for 17 years. She had many gifts including those of carrying out her secretarial functions as well as dealing with students and parents. She had been a tremendous blessing to all of us at St. John.

In September 1985, Kathy Wendland was hired. Kathy and husband Dan had their three daughters enrolled at St. John. Kathy had a degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin. The Lord truly blessed us with an excellent replacement. Kathy had a real love for children and desire to serve God in all aspects of her life. Kathy served St. John until after my retirement. She and her husband Dan, are now living in Colorado.⁸

⁸ I remember the day when I heard that my son Joel and his wife Pam, had just lost their still born baby daughter. Kathy came into my office and knelt by my desk and prayed that the Lord would bring comfort and peace to all of us. She had remembered that Eileen and I had lost our first-born daughter at birth also.

As I think back of my years at St. John, I need to be ever grateful for these two very special persons who provided me with excellent service and commitment in making St. John the exemplary school that it became. Their support was exceptional. Many of my decisions were made with their sound advice.

In 1981, we started our first elective in computers for Grades 6-8. We had one micro-computer. We also borrowed an Atari computer that the students could use. In the summer of 1982 we gave Texas Instruments Corporation permission to hold computer training classes in our building They rewarded us with two new micro-computers! Technology was beginning!

We were able to purchase our first video equipment including a camera, cassette recorder and TV monitor in 1981. Basketball games, operettas, and the Kindergarten Round-Up were taped for posterity! Tim Grothaus loved these new toys! He became the expert in all of our technology innovations. His love for technology has continued into the twenty-first century.

In August 1983, the entire faculty was involved in a 55-hour computer orientation program. Each teacher had to write a program that could be used in a curricular area. Two Concordia University professors led this workshop on our campus. This was a very exhausting experience. Teachers wondered if they would have to write everything that they wanted to teach? We have come a long way since then!

At the time we had seven Apple IIe computers and four Texas Instruments computers. We had 100 pieces of software available in a variety of subject areas. We made computers accessible to all classrooms including our Gethsemane Science Lab program as well as our learning disability program.

Eileen and I were especially blessed in 1980 when the congregation celebrated my 25th anniversary in the teaching ministry. A surprise to us was a 12-day trip to Europe, including a visit to the Passion Play in Oberammergau, Germany. We also visited Czechoslovakia and East Berlin. These areas were still under Communist rule. The trip “opened new worlds” to us. This was Eileen’s first plane ride.⁹

⁹ The congregation had adopted the policy to celebrate 25 years, as well as retirement in church work, with a congregation offering. In 1970, Dick Schurrer, the congregation Chairperson, his wife, Barb, Eileen and I, had sat on our living room floor planning a surprise European trip for Pastor and Ruth Schlecht, for their 25th anniversary. I never thought the day would come for me! As a result of our experience, Eileen and I began making plans for future trips. Finally in 1989, together with Ted and Marlene Geheb (Ted was Principal of Our Shepherd in Birmingham), we led a tour to the Scandinavian countries. We “caught the bug” and continued scheduling tours periodically through 2007.

During our vacation time in the summer months, we visited and led tours through most of the European countries, some of them many times. We also toured Alaska, Russia, China, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt and Israel.

In retirement we spent a year as volunteer missionaries in Bangkok, Thailand. We visited Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, and the Philippines during this time.

In 1980, we had no idea that we would have the opportunity to see so much of God’s world!

In 1981, my son Joel graduated from St. John. He was the last of my four children to graduate from the eighth grade. Tim had started in 1967, so for 14 years, there was a Kaiser student at St. John. Yet, I never taught any of them, except in an electives class. There were some hectic times when Eileen and I tried to attend athletic, drama, PT meetings, special events, etc. at St. John, St. Stephen and Lutheran High North all on the same night! We did enjoy every minute.

What price do kids have to pay when they are PK (preacher's kids) or TK (teacher's kids)? I know that they have to spend many hours at home without their parents. I mentioned in my opening chapter that I spent hundreds of meetings away from home, as well as my graduate work, during my years at St. John. Three to four nights a week plus Bible teaching on Sunday morning was the norm. I asked my kids what was a problem for them being TK kids? They "politically correctly" said they had no problem!

Lori did mention that they weren't happy to have to be called to do work such as assembling parent handbooks and curriculum guides during the summer months. She also mentioned that having to wait each morning in the Early Room, since I brought them to school before the busses arrived, was no fun. Cheerleading kept her busy.

Cyndy remembers coming into school and smelling the fresh bread that Mrs. Hillman was baking in the morning. Tosti Dogs were her favorites. Athletic sports keep her very busy. Joel remembers the large amounts of time waiting around school for me to take him home. He also remembers regularly spending time organizing the supply shelves in the office area. He was busy in sports also.

Tim remembers watching the 1968 Tigers in the World Series on our school's one big screen 21-inch color TV in the late room while waiting for me to bring him home. (Our home TV was a 15 inch, black and white set.) He recalls the many dramas he participated in, such as *Henry Hudson* and *Rip Van Winkle*. These kept him busy. He recalls coming into my office unannounced, getting his weekly 10 cents for ice cream.

We continued to have a close relationship with the Rochester Community Schools. In 1982, I wrote an editorial for our school newsletter encouraging our parents to support the increased millage proposal. I stated that it was a realistic increase and a responsible approach to good stewardship. We benefit from bus transportation and special services teachers. What is good for the Rochester schools is also good for St. John.

In 1988, I again wrote an article in support of a bond issues for a new middle school to be built in 1990. I stated that Dr. Schultz was working hard to produce youngsters with high academic achievements and strong moral values and that we being a part of such a quality school district were then also challenged to pursue excellence.

I enjoyed the positive relationship with the Rochester Community Schools' personnel over my three-and-a-half decades of service. I got to know all the elementary and middle school principals as well as the many superintendents, including Baldwin, Lund, Escott, Crandell, Jones and Schultz. I was asked to have the invocation at the farewell dinner for Dr. Telford,

an Assistant Superintendent. In 1984, we invited Dr. Schultz to visit our school and review our curriculum program. He graciously accepted and spent two days visiting each classroom and shared brief evaluations with each teacher. He came away impressed with our highly committed staff as well as our quality academic curriculum.

At times we had a number of our teachers serve on various curriculum committees in the Rochester school system. We many times adopted textbooks recommended by these committees. Pastor Burow served as an advisor on the Rochester school committee that dealt with health and sex education. We were pleased that he could share his Christian views on this committee.

I don't recall opposing any of the millage proposals during my 34-year tenure. I believe the majority of these were passed by the community.

In the late 1980s, the Rochester Community Schools' bus program made special exceptions for our students. Instead of having our students ride busses that required them to transfer to other busses traveling to St. John, the program provided our school and Holy Family Catholic School with 16 dedicated busses that picked up our students and came directly to our building. What a blessing this was! What a further blessing it is, when I look back and realize that none of the hundreds of busses that our students rode in during my three-and-a-half decades were ever involved in any serious accidents. Thank you, Lord!

A curriculum emphasis in the '80s was on learning disabilities and solving the problem of functional illiteracy as well as providing instruction for the gifted students. Such programs as mentioned previous were emphasized at this time, for example, "Battle of the Books"; "America and Me"; "PTL Creative Writing Contest"; "Metro Spelling Bee"; "Reading Olympics"; "Young Authors" and others. Elsie Quitmeyer and Laurie Harrison were two teachers who especially helped to promoted these programs.

Trudy Shoemaker, who had been a full-time volunteer for many years was hired part-time as the coordinator of the Learning Abilities Program (LAP). Together with many volunteers, we were able to provide remedial instruction in reading and mathematics to a large number of students. Linda Dunklau, our sixth grade teacher, also took on the role of coordinator of the gifted and talented program.

Our Academic Challenge Team won the traveling trophy at Lutheran High North West for the second consecutive year in 1989. Our academic teams in the Academic Bowl at Lutheran High Northwest competing against 17 other Lutheran schools won all five top team trophies in math, spelling, reading, religion and art in 1989.

An annual unique eighth grade experience was one where students presented themselves as famous American figures who had made a significant impact on American history. The students dressed as these figures and greeted students in other classes, telling them of their significance in history.

In 1988 we developed a Rainbow Support Group for students in grades K-8 who were living in single parent families or families who were going through painful transitions. We were fortunate to have Debbie Bozman, who had served on our staff in the '70s, return part-time together with Nancy Kuehm to facilitate this program. Deb had recently completed her Master's in counseling. Nancy served us in many different assisted teaching roles over the years. She was a real blessing.

We experienced a first during the '80s when we placed a male teacher, Joe Werner, in first grade. Joe was an excellent teacher at this level. He taught for three years and served as the director of youth for the congregation. Students and parents alike were pleased to have this male influence in the elementary grades.

One of the fun nights each year was the annual roller-skating party sponsored by the PTL for all students and their families at a local rink. The students were surprised to see me glide around the rink without too many collisions or falls. I had learned to skate as a kid using "strap on" skates. I really enjoyed this special night.

The annual three-day Environmental Outdoor Education program for fifth graders continued to be very successful. Teachers John Shaffer and Jim Rolf together with many volunteer parents had developed this activity into an enjoyable learning experience. It was a sight to behold when 60 kids trudged back into the building carrying their duffle bags and camping equipment. All of them including the parents, were in need of a shower!

I referred to faculty meeting agendas in the previous sections but one topic that was ever present was the school dress code. We were pleased that the Board of Education allowed the faculty to set this code without interference, but it did become a nightmare at times. It seems that it was more of a concern in the '80s and '90s than in the earlier years. The faculty set up a dress code committee which was kept busy keeping up with the changing fads—properly laced shoes, tattered, frayed or stained clothing, "T" shirts with inappropriate lettering, long baggy shorts, etc. etc. Our goal was to have the parents monitor the child's appearance prior to coming to school and make the hard decisions at home. This didn't always happen and as a result the faculty had to use more Law than Gospel at times!

In 1981, a special learning experience was created by Rochester Community Schools that included our school also. All third grade classes annually spend two school days in the Stony Creek one-room school located in the historic four-cornered village of Stony Creek. This 1848 school building was one of 12 one room schools in the Rochester area during the 19th century. Children and teachers look forward to this special event each year. They dressed in 19th Century clothing and adopted the school climate of the 1800s. They played games and followed a curriculum of the time period. They even used the McGuffey Readers. We are pleased that this program continues. I annually enjoyed visiting and sharing my own one-room experiences with the students. Although I didn't experience all of these conditions I did experience the wood stove! Linda Dunklau, Liz Nelson and Lucy Moerer, over the years, also dressed as teachers of the 1800s.

Another special educational program set up by Rochester Community Schools, which included us, was the “Famous Authors” program. It was initiated in 1984 and continues yet today. A select number of current children’s book authors of national prominence come to Rochester each year and tour each elementary and middle school sharing their experiences and the book they have written with the appropriate age level students. Our students have found this visit by the authors highly motivating.

Our elective program for the middle grades was unique for the late 1980s. “Winterim 87” is an example. Besides having religion and some core courses each day, intensive electives were held each day for a two-week period. Students could select from the following, calligraphy, computer programming, model building, dancing, racquetball, cross-country skiing, photography, etc. Rehearsals for the operetta were also held. The operetta was the culminating experience of the Winterim experience.

One of the most unique learning and fun experiences we developed in 1989 was the Dessert Theatre. I brought back this idea from one of the public schools in Ohio where I was privileged to serve as a consultant for the National Exemplary School Program. We encouraged all students in grades 2 and 3 to write a story that could be dramatized. These stories were given to the Drama Club at Lutheran High Northwest. The Club selected ten stories that they wished to present on stage at Lutheran High North west for all of the students involved and their parents. No one knew which of the student’s stories would be dramatized until the night of the presentation. It was an exciting evening. We packed the gym year after year. This event also was an excellent PR event. The families had the opportunity to become better acquainted with the Lutheran High School. A very positive relationship was developed.

We again experienced some sorrowful experiences in this decade. Heidi Barckholtz, a third grade student in our satellite St. Stephen program, died in a hayride accident in 1980. Also, Leigh Timmerman, a 1982 graduate of St. John, died of leukemia in 1984, as well as Ben Hightower a 1985 graduate, who died in a car accident in 1988. At times like these, it is difficult to bring comfort to the family members. Assuring them of a blessed reunion in heaven is the joy that awaits them, was the best message we could bring!

In 1987 a third grader, Jodi Leung, was critically injured at home while playing with a pellet gun. It took years of rehabilitation before her head injury was completely healed. Many prayers were lifted to the Lord for her.

One of the joys of ministry is to see the love that students can share for each other. I recall the smiles on Robbie Griffith’s face in the ‘80s and Matt Motzney’s face in the ‘90s as their fellow students would help them go up and down steps and travel in the hallways. Classmates helped both boys to participate in as many activities as possible. Rob was born with spina bifida and Matt had muscular dystrophy.

Once or twice a year, it was good to “get away from it all”. Those were the times when Wally Papenberg would take a number of the male teachers, who were hunters and fishermen to the north woods. He had a travel trailer that accommodated us all. In the fall we scheduled a

weekend of bow hunting and in the spring a weekend fishing on the Muskegon river. John Boll and Ray Loppnow in the '60s, Cary Richert and Bruce Gremel in the '70s and '80s and Julian Petzold and Bruce Gremel in the '90s were the lucky ones. Erv Bauer made most of these trips also. He had been a classmate of Wally in college. We never brought home any deer or fish—but we had fun.

Being a teacher is a special blessing at Christmas time. It is enjoyable to watch as excitement builds up in the children's lives as they look forward to the activities. They look forward to receiving gifts but they also enjoy giving gifts, especially to their teachers. I have many items around the house that were handmade, crafted by the students, some with the help of parents, but never the less, made especially for me.

Sometimes the students would go together and purchase one gift or give a gift certificate. One Christmas I was given a certificate to purchase a muzzle loader rifle kit. I was excited. The problem was, I waited until February to purchase it. The store in downtown Rochester went bankrupt right after Christmas. I lost my money! I didn't have the heart to tell the students what happened. I did purchase the rifle kit at another sports store with my "own" money.

I have many Christmas memories:

- The students were especially excited when the outdoor nativity set was purchased for the church lawn in the '80s. They had paid for this set through their Christmas card sales. Over the years a number of the figures had been stolen, some even returned again. One year the police found the baby Jesus on the lawn of the Jewish temple in Pontiac. It was amazing to see the set on the lawn in 2017. The figures were refurbished and glazed a white marble color---beautiful!
- I remember the school Christmas party when my daughter Cyndy came from Illinois and brought Gretchen, my first grandchild to the party. Gretchen was the hit of the party.
- I remember that one year a snow storm closed school on the day of the school classroom Christmas parties. The classrooms with their decorations and presents were held over until January. The students were happy to get back to school after their Christmas vacation that year.
- I remember the year when I shared teaching Grade 4 and 5 with Mrs. Heins. I had told the students to only give their gifts to her and not me. A fourth grader handed me a gift and said, "My Mom got a discount when she bought two. So this is for you also!" One could write many memories from each Christmas. There is one memory that transcends all—the BIRTH OF THE CHRIST CHILD. I pray that this wonderful message will always take priority at Christmas.

Sometimes the role of being principal was not easy. I remember the last day of school before Christmas break. The classes were having their parties when a father came into the office to see me. He had a nicely wrapped Christmas gift for his son in third grade. He was going through divorce proceedings at the time and was restricted from seeing his son. He asked me to give this Christmas gift to his son for him. That was not easy to do. As the student

opened the gift in my office, I assured him that his dad loved him very much and reminded him that Jesus loved him too. It was hard to be a foster dad.

Over the years it was evident that at times we would need to have split classes in order to accommodate the students involved. Some parents had difficulty in accepting this situation. The research on this topic is exhaustive. We at St. John always sided in with the positive effects of this arrangement. I was pleased that I always had a staff that accepted this challenge and assured the parents that the “good” outweighed the “bad” in this kind of a situation. Teachers stressed the fact that half of the class could be studying or listening while they taught the other half. Working together and interfacing was a good experience. Children could learn more from their classmates who were different from them, than similar.¹⁰

The use of volunteers was a real blessing. We had between 100 -150 parents serving in one capacity or another each year. In the early ‘80s, teacher Laurie Harrison served as volunteer coordinator on the staff. In later years, teacher Jan Brautnick served in this role. A volunteer appreciation luncheon was held at the end of each year to show the support of the staff for this excellent help.

The Grandparents Days were expanded to include all senior citizens from the congregation as well as special seniors from the Danish Village retirement center. We were pleased with the response from the participants.

I recall that the Scout program for both boys and girls was well organized and extremely popular all through my years at St. John. I admired the dedication and leadership of the Scoutmasters. Trudy Shoemaker mentored my daughter, Cyndy. Barb Schurrer mentored my daughter, Lori, and Bob Hobson mentored my son, Joel. I was very excited when Joel’s model car won the Pinewood Derby race.

The Fidelis Award, which was given by the faculty, for volunteer service to the school in general, was awarded to the following in the 1980s:

- 1980 Kathy Richert
- 1981 Jean Miller
- 1982 Peter Grund
- 1983 Mary Jorgensen
- 1984 Sue Van De Moorell- teacher assistant
- 1985 Don Misch and Dr. John Ohlsson --Chairman/Coordinators of the Expansion program
- 1988 Gail Walker
- 1989 Ruth Finch

¹⁰ I could speak from experience, since I had attended a one-room school with Grades 1 through 8 for eight years---with my Dad being the teacher!

The New Worlds Award , which was given for volunteer service in the Media Center, was awarded to the following in the 1980s :

- 1980 Eileen Kaiser
- 1981 Janet Hopkins
- 1982 Gwen Shippy
- 1983 Joan Soroka and Cherie Graham
- 1984 Diane Krueger and Debbie Geisler
- 1985 Marilyn Goodin
- 1988 Kathy Jensen
- 1989 Sally Wagner

In the early '80s the congregation was blessed to add the position of Director of Evangelism to the staff. Tim Bode served as the initial interim and then was called to the position in 1985. It was through Tim's efforts that the congregation realized that we needed to expand our mission to the Rochester community. For a number of years Tim encouraged school students to share the Gospel message in their neighborhoods. We had students hand out over 3500 flyers publicizing our Lenten and Easter activities each year. This need for expansion later led to the establishment of Living Word congregation.

The "In Christ's Name-We Grow" building and expansion program culminated in 1986. The initial expansion committee was formed in 1982, followed by a fund-raising program which included personal visits to every member's home including our non-member school families, encouraging them to make a faith promise commitment. Investments were also encouraged to be put in the Michigan District Church Extension Fund from which the congregation could then borrow monies from at a low interest rate. Over \$350,000 was invested by individual members.

We were blessed with the following additions: The art room on the lower level and the science room on the upper level were expanded. A new music room was added. Additional classrooms were added. There were storage and locker room additions also. The library was enlarged into a new media center. The offices and teacher work rooms were expanded. Conference rooms and teacher aide consultation rooms were added. The congregational facilities for ladies' groups and youth were also expanded and improved. We now had 13 classrooms, a music room, gymnasium, and media center in the new wing of the school and four classrooms and an art room and science room in the old wing of the school. I recall the Trustees, under Don Susewitt's direction, doing "yeoman's work" to complete the final preparations for the dedication in 1986.

I enjoyed an extended private office that included a "cubby hole" area to do office work away from public exposure.

Dr. Ralph Bohlman, the president of the LCMS, was our speaker at the dedication of our new facilities. I remember with pride, showing him the expanded media center with the individual study centers that had audio and visual units attached. This was state of the art technology before the computer age!

We appreciated the added custodial help in the persons of Marv and Serena Stieve. They were determined to keep the building spotless.

The 1980s were a time that we seriously considered upgrading our attention to the spiritual need of parent and adults. The PTL as well as the Adult Education committee took a lead in providing programs, seminars, and presentations to address this cause. For a number of years we held adult school of religion classes one night a week over the winter months. These were held for member as well as non-member parents and congregational members. These were taught by staff as well as congregation members. Such classes as: Communication in the Christian Home, Divorce Recovery, Dialogue Evangelism, Death and Dying, Religion and Politics, The Islam religion and others were highlighted. I enjoyed teaching in this environment also.

Retreats were popular in the '70s and '80s. Men's, women's, and couples' were held regularly. I looked forward to the PTL couple retreats as well as the men's retreats that would be held over a two-or-three-day weekend. The Columbiere Center in Clarkston was a favorite place. Its location in a secluded hill top wilderness area that was so restful that you hated to return to your busy schedule. We also held many faculty retreats in this location as well as other places in the metro-Detroit area.

Monthly PTL meetings accentuated educational programs instead of being a business meeting. Classroom topics were held in each classroom prior to the regular main presentation in a group setting. We found that parents appreciated these meetings. Attendance was at an all-time high. The traveling "Charlie Church Mouse" award for the most parents attending, was a goal for each classroom. Miss Koch, Grade 4, Mrs. Geil, Grade 1, and Mrs. Fry, Grade K, always had over 70% of their parents attending!

The St. John Lutheran School and Church Foundation was established in 1987. Its origin resulted from Karl Mueller and other far-sighted members who saw the importance of a foundation and how it could become an integral part of the future of St. John. The founding governors were Karl as chairman, together with Don Misch, John Ohlsson, Richard Light and Norma Heins. I served as an advisory member until my retirement in 1995. Later, from 2003 until 2009, I served as an elected member of the Board of Governors. Establishing a foundation was no easy matter. Some felt that the monies invested could be used as a second bank account for making the congregation budget shortfall, instead of for the areas of ministry in which the money was initially invested, not realizing that these were restricted funds. It took many years of development until a policy manual was finally completed that spelled out the role of the governors.

The initial offerings came from the estates of several members, together with over \$300,000 from matching grants from Lutheran Brotherhood to our school. We felt it best to invest these gift monies to the school in this ongoing endowment program. I am pleased that we have past the million-and-a-half-dollar mark in the foundation. Eighty percent of the interest is averaged over three years and awarded annually to the 14 designated funds.

Members are encouraged to consider including the foundation in their wills as a way of sharing their inheritance with the Lord in their death. Some members have included the foundation as another “child” in their wills and have designated the distribution of their inheritance accordingly.

Eileen and I were honored in 1991 to have a designated fund of the foundation labeled the Dr. Kaiser Enrichment Fund, in recognition of our 30 years of service to St. John school and congregation. Additional monies were added to the fund at the time of my retirement by the PTL and also other individuals. Interest monies from this fund are to be used for special educational programs for parents and congregational members, as well as for faculty workshops and seminars.

The foundation has been responsible for purchasing three homes and property adjacent to the campus that have been incorporated into our current campus property. I am extremely pleased that this foundation is now well established at St. John. It has the potential of providing quality programs and services for decades to come.

In May 2012, Eileen and I were honored as the recipients of the foundation’s Governor’s Award, together with John Kruse, who received the same award posthumously.

In the early 1980s, we put together an evaluation questionnaire for parents to fill out on our teaching personnel. We asked for comments regarding our curriculum as well as strengths and weaknesses of staff. Our faculty was not accustomed to this kind of evaluation and was nervous at first as to the outcome. We found out that we had nothing to fear. We were energized by the results. The evaluation became an annual yearly event. Over the years we welcomed the accolades as well as the criticism from these questionnaires. We learned much from these comments and I believe helped us become exceptional teachers.

The seventh and eighth grade boys’ basketball team and sixth through eighth grade boys’ and girls’ track teams began competition with the Rochester middle school teams as well as participation in the Lutheran School League. This enhanced our school’s exposure to the community. Our sports program served as a laboratory of Christian Living as students, staff and parents teamed together. In 1987, over 300 students and 50 parent volunteers participated in Field Day activities.

The physical education/health curriculum carried over to our after-school physical activities. Between 60-70 percent of the students in Grades 5-8 were involved in after school physical activities. Intramural activities were given after school attention along with our inter-scholastic sport teams. Over 80 percent of the students were involved in after school physical activities at some point throughout the school year.

The Friday night boys’ basketball games became exciting events. The gym would be packed. There would be standing room only. Besides the thrilling games and cheerleading performances, teacher Lori Heins had the Starlites, a girls’ dance team, perform with colored flashlights.

I recall many teachers beside the athletic directors volunteered to be involved in the physical fitness and sports programs. I can think of Jim Rolf, Tim Walz, Lynette Keunning and Beth Kimmel giving extra time. Forgive my memory!

We were thrilled that through the World Book Read-a-Thon and matching gifts, 14 sets of World Book encyclopedias were given to the school so that every classroom now had updated resource material. This was before the computer age of the twenty-first century!

Our testing program continued to show that our students were performing well. During the '80s the achievement of all grades operated at approximately one year and one month above the norm for that grade level. The average gain per class was one year and five months over a one-year period. The middle school grades scored over two years above the norm for their grade.

During the '80s we were able to work a special Teacher Visitation Day into our yearly schedule. Teachers contacted schools of choice, both public and private, and received permission to spend part or a full day visiting in areas of the curriculum that were of special interest to them. The teachers greatly appreciated this experience. Some years we visited in as many as 20 different schools in one day! It was at Reuther Middle School where middle school teacher Linda Doeblner was intrigued with the new reading lab that the Learning Consultants, Inc. had recently installed. After several contacts with this corporation, they provided us with the same reading program at no cost to us! These visitation days paid off literally!

Finances were always an ongoing concern. Will there ever be enough to do what you would like to do? I appreciated the many members who served on the finance boards over the years. At times they had to struggle and make cut backs so that programs could continue. We were blessed with officers who cared about faculty and staff. They had the mission of the congregation upfront.

I appreciated the structure of the congregation permitting the Board of Education to develop a school budget for all needed faculty conference and educational needs, school supplies, books, A-V equipment, athletic equipment and substitute teacher needs. These funds were withdrawn from the annual tuition of member and non-member families including book rental fees and kept in a Board of Education account.

Teacher salaries and major building maintenance were taken out of the congregation general fund. The Board of Education budget was much appreciated by the faculty because it placed a priority on the needs of the school. Essential needs and equipment of teachers were very seldom cut or eliminated because of lack of funding. The Board of Education budget allowed us to continue to send our teachers to conferences and workshops and purchase needed supplies even in financially lean years. Over the years this support of the school faculty and staff and school program by the congregation, helped to develop the school climate and quality program that was recognized by our community as well as the church at large.

In 1986 we experienced pastoral changes. Rev. Ron Irsch resigned as senior pastor and Rev. Paul Burow accepted the call to succeed him. I had been blessed to work with these two committed spiritual leaders for over 15 years. They had worked well together and with the Lord's direction had established a growing congregation of Christian leaders. They had a strong love for the Christian day school. Again, God blessed us with another excellent replacement. Rev. Steve Theiss accepted our call as associate pastor. He also was a supporter and leader for all facets of Christian education for children and youth. He continued to serve St. John after my retirement in 1995.

In 1987 we were pleased to have Lutheran High Northwest relocate from the Farmington area to Rochester Hills - only a few miles from St. John. How fortunate can you be to have two Lutheran High schools available for your students? Over time we have found that that more of our graduates are attending LHSNW than LHSN because of its closer location.

During this decade, I was privileged to serve in other programs outside of the congregation also. In the community I served on the initial board of the Rochester Crisis Pregnancy Center. How blessed we are to see how this service has expanded to include a greater part of Oakland County today and is called the Crossroads Pregnancy Center. I also served on the Rochester Schools Credit Union. It was a newly formed banking service in which most of our teachers and staff participated in also.

I also enjoyed membership in the International Optimist Club. This group met for a bi-weekly breakfast in a local restaurant. I was able to attend, yet get to school before the first bell rang. The goals of the program were to provide services for the youth of the community. I served as chairperson of the scholarship committee. A number of our students were awarded scholarships over the years to further their education. One activity of the Optimists that I thoroughly enjoyed was the "ringing of the bell" for the Salvation Army on the Saturdays in December. We had locations in front of Target and other downtown stores. We wore the Optimist apron so that folks knew we were not paid employees. Folks walking by gave generously because of that. St. John members "looked twice" when they saw me!

On the Synodical level I also had the privilege to serve as a national trainer on a program of Synod called "Project Serve." This program was undertaken to help school administrators acquire planning and management skills. From 1980 through 1985 I shared presentations at principal and teacher conferences in ten Synodical districts. I know I learned much more than I possibly shared!

The position I thoroughly enjoyed and found quite challenging, was that on the Board for Higher Education of the LCMS. I was elected to two terms from 1981 to 1992. This board was the supervising board over the LCMS 's 10 colleges and two seminaries. Bi-monthly meetings were held on the various campuses throughout the country during the various weekends. I collected a lot of frequent flyer miles during those years.

In the summers of 1985 and 1988, I had another opportunity to teach a graduate curriculum research course on the campus of Concordia University in River Forest. In the summer of 1987 I taught a graduate curriculum construction course on the campus of Lutheran High

School East in Detroit. It was an extension course for Michigan teachers, sponsored by Concordia University, River Forest. I found these classes challenging and rewarding to teach.

In 1988 I was elected to serve as president-elect of the Lutheran Education Association (LEA) for two years and then became president for the next two years. The LEA is a professional organization for Lutheran educators in the LCMS. It had a membership of over 4,000 educators at the time. Tri-annual conventions were held in various locations with as many as 2500 educators attending. I recall having one of our St. John members, who worked for General Motors Corporation, get permission to provide our faculty with three large vans to take our entire faculty to the LEA Convention in Milwaukee. What fun that was!

The 1980s also turned out to be a “recognition” decade.

In 1981, Eileen and I were honored when Concordia University-Nebraska gave me the Master Teacher award. I was greatly surprised since my *alma mater* was Concordia-Chicago, and an arch rival of Nebraska! I also was privileged to give the commencement address at this graduation ceremony.

In 1984, I was awarded the first Alumnus of the Year award by my *alma mater*, Concordia, River Forest (now called Concordia University-Chicago). Also in 1984, I received the National Distinguished Principal award from the U.S. Office of Education. Eileen and I had an enjoyable experience in Washington, D.C.

St. John was awarded two special honors. In 1984, we were recognized as one of 24 public and private schools in Michigan for an “Exemplary School Health Program.” Accolades go to Bruce Gremel for developing and administering this program.

In 1986, St. John was recognized as a National Distinguished Elementary School by the U.S. Office of Education. This was the first time this award was given. 270 public and 60 private schools throughout the U.S. were selected. Today this award is called a “Blue Ribbon” award. Walt and Trudy Papenberg, John and Barb Shaffer and Eileen and I flew to Washington. I was privileged to photograph President Ronald Reagan in the Rose Garden at the awards ceremony.

During my professional ministry I wrestled many times with this question—Lord, where do you want me to serve so that my specific talents are used to your glory? I had turned down calls at the college level a number of times because I was led to feel my abilities were best served in the congregation. I had declined requests to have my name in nomination for various administrative positions in the church at large from principalships to college and Synodical positions. Now, in 1988, I again received a divine call to serve as Associate Professor of Education and Director of the Student Teacher Program at Concordia

University, Ann Arbor.¹¹ I enjoyed this experience again, but my heart was still in the parish. I still felt challenged at my work at St. John. I declined the Ann Arbor call.

The Lord challenged me again, in fact two times. I was sent a call to be principal at St. John Lutheran School in Seward, Nebraska. This school was the Teacher Laboratory School affiliated with Concordia College, Seward (Now- Concordia-Nebraska). During this time frame of the '80s, I also received a call from St. Lorenz Lutheran School in Frankenmuth, Michigan, to serve as principal.¹² Both schools were approximately the same size as St. John. I did not have an excuse anymore of wanting to remain in parish work. These opportunities were in parish work but in other locations.

As Eileen and I sought the Lord for guidance, we continued to see the challenges in Rochester--the continuing growth of the community, the support of the congregation for Christian education, and the future expansion of the facilities as well as the programs. Each decade at St. John seemed like we had moved to a different location, because it provided new and different challenges which continued to make our ministry at this place exciting. I declined these calls and thanked the Lord for helping me make these decisions. I now knew that I would be completing my final years in the 1990s, in the full-time teaching ministry, at *St. John*.

I had put together a "Plan on ICE" (Involvement in Christian Education) for the Board of Education. It was designed to set a vision for the 1980s. Highlights of this plan included:

- Improving facilities
- Expanding facilities
- Working closely with Oakland University-as a teaching/learning lab especially in the area of reading.
- Expanding our acreage on Alice Street.
- Providing for the needs of the individual student
- Enhancing the resources and importance of the Media Center.
- Providing a professional specialist for the Media Center.
- Provide more helps, PTL workshops, seminars for parents
- Improve curricular areas-especially technology, mathematics and science.
- Provide more guidance and counseling opportunities
- Developing the satellite concept with Gethsemane congregation
- Provide third source funding through a St. John Foundation.
- Increase the percentage of congregation children in school from 70 to 80 percent.

¹¹ When the University became a four-year college in the late 1970s, I had been asked to teach an education course entitled "Teaching the Christian Faith" to four-year teacher education majors. I taught this class one night a week over the years from 1980-84, and again in 1987.

¹² My father was born in Frankenmuth in 1898 and attended St. Lorenz Lutheran School. He became a Lutheran teacher and served 40 years as Principal of St. Peter Lutheran School in Macomb, Michigan. My son, Joel, currently serves as an associate pastor at St. Lorenz congregation---a small Lutheran world!

In looking back, at the end of the 1980s, all of these goals were addressed by the faculty, Board of Education and congregation, and achieved either fully or to a satisfactory level. Another blessing by the Lord!

The following new teachers served on my staff during the 1980s.
(This list does not include teachers who began service in the 1960s or 1970s.)
++ Designates teachers that continued service after I retired

++Tim Grothaus 1980	Sandy Unger 1984-85
Randy Einem 1986-89	Kay Irwin 1980-81
++Barb Shaffer 1984-	++ Nancy Kuehm 1987-
++Beverly Koch 1980-	++ Jim Rolf 1984-
++ Jon Pfund 1987-	Cheryl (Hahn) Rolf 1981-86
Dianne Dwyer 1985-88	Lynette (Arft) Kuenning 1987-92
Elsie Quitmeyer 1981-84	++ Anne Westphal 1985-
++ Beth (Marasus) Kimmel 1988-	Linda Preede 1983-84
++ Diane Krueger 1985-	++ Cindy Brown 1989-
++Jan Braunick 1984-	Linda Luecke 1984-86
++ Tim Walz 1989-	Joe Werner 1984-87
Dan Ranthum 1986-87	++ Liz Nelson 1989-
++ Linda Dunklau 1984-	Mary Weinhold 1986-87
Marian Grothaus 1984-85	

We were blessed to have these devoted professionals serve our school and congregation during this exciting decade. Their expertise was God's gift to St. John.

EXEMPLARY SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM IN MICHIGAN

In 1984, our school was recognized as having an exemplary school health program. Good health and physical fitness have been a part of the school curriculum since the school's beginning, but with the arrival of Bruce Gremel as teacher, coach and athletic director in 1973, a special emphasis was placed on developing a holistic health curriculum not only for the students but for the faculty, parents and congregational members.

In 1983 Bruce wrote a proposal which was accepted by Wheatridge Foundation for grant money for a three-year project to develop health and wellness curriculum materials for Lutheran schools. Bruce was given half time to work on these materials. He then made presentations and presented seminars and workshops around the country promoting holistic health. Part-time teachers covered his classes. We were able to hire Debbie Bozman as a part-time counselor also. She held "Magic Circle" classes for Grades K-6 and "Inner Change" classes for Grades 7-8.

Bruce developed a CHD (Coronary Heart Disease Risk Factors and how to Control them) curriculum. As a result of this holistic curriculum, cognitive instruction was provided for all grades regarding nutrition, exercise, and good health, weight control and effects of self-abuse behavior.

A Health and Healing committee was added to the Board of Education at this time. After a few years this committee was developed into a Board for Christian Care Ministries.

Physical Education classes were offered every day for Grades K-5. An after school intramural athletic program was initiated for students beside the inter-scholastic sports program. A motor development program was developed for Grades K-3. The hot lunch program included a daily salad bar. Alice Hillman, our head cook, was very cooperative in providing nutritional lunches. A Fun Walk-Run program as well as a blood profile screening program and milestone program was begun. The milestone program in which students in all grades engaged in cardiovascular activity, became highly competitive and enjoyed by the students. I recall Mr. Gresens' seventh grade class celebrated after they won with 2,587 miles recorded!

Walk -a-Thons and other physical activity events were encouraged. Our entire student body participated in a Walk-a-Thon for raising money for the expansion facilities of Lutheran High North. Students in Grades 4-8 together with students from Holy Family Catholic School, participated in the "Jump Rope for Heart" for the American Heart Association. A wellness program was also adopted for the adults which included weekly fitness classes, blood pressure screenings, stop smoking seminars, health profile classes and Bible class offerings dealing with physical, emotional and spiritual health. Numerous PTL programs were dedicated to providing parents with information relating to holistic health. Seminars on Developing A Healthy Lifestyle were held. We were indebted to Dr. Tom Shoemaker who provided free physical exams for all students going out for sports in Grades 5-8.

Bruce worked closely with Dr. Stransky, a physiologist from Oakland University who provided us with resources, special presentations and personnel to enhance our holistic program.

In March 1983, our teaching staff conducted a Health and Healing Workshop for 130 Lutheran teachers sharing materials and demonstrating ideas to promote holistic health. This workshop was part of the Michigan District LCMS project. Our school was funded by a Wheatridge Foundation grant to develop and share educational materials for this curriculum.

In October 1984, the Michigan School Health Association informed us that St. John was one of 24 public and private schools they selected as having Exemplary School Health programs. Bruce shared these words with the congregation:

We are happy to be included in this honor. The outstanding effort our teachers have made to become informed and trained to teach our health classes have greatly contributed to this recognition along with the faithful mother volunteer aides. Our children again are the ones who benefit from our Developing A Healthy Lifestyle curriculum. The emphasis on exercise, nutrition, weight control and self-abuse behavior are timely issues for us and especially for our children as they prepare to meet the challenges of the future. To be recognized by our state helps us realize that the time and energy everyone is spending to address these physical issues is a vital part of our children's education. We pray that our efforts in this important area will always reflect God's Word in Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship.

Our Health program was highlighted in the recommendations of the committee that recommended our school for the National Exemplary School award in 1986.

Bruce took a lot of kidding over the years ("Hide the sugar donuts, Bruce is coming!") - but he continued to promote holistic health through his many years at St. John. He was one of the first pioneers to encourage a healthy lifestyle. He was 30 years ahead of his time!

RECOGNIZED AS A NATIONAL DISTINGUISHED PRINCIPAL

I had no idea what was happening. I recall I had been in the Lutheran International Center in St. Louis for a Board for Higher Education meeting in early spring, when Dr. Carl Moser, who was the Associate Director of Schools for the LCMS, called me into his office and asked me to write a brief bio of my background and activities at St. John. He said there was a special program being developed by the government and he was proposing some Lutheran principals to be involved with it. In June 1984, I was notified that I was nominated for an award - what award?

Three months later, on a Saturday morning, I received a phone call from Channel 7 in Detroit, congratulating me and asking further questions about the award. What award? In that afternoon's mail I received a letter from the U.S. Office of Education in Washington congratulating me on being selected as one of four private school principals and 50 public school (one from each state) principals to receive the National Distinguished Principal Award from the U.S. Office of Education and the National Department of Elementary School Principals. The *Oakland Press* and the *Detroit News* had similar announcements. It was the first time this award was given. The award was designed to focus on "principals of schools in which a commitment to excellence is clearly in evidence; in which programs are designed to meet academic and social needs of all students; and in which community ties with parents and local business organizations have been firmly established."

The write-up on me included comments that I had been principal of St. John for 23 years during which time the school had grown from 180 to over 500 students. It stated my numerous roles in educational programs and service on boards and committees and highlighted the satellite program with St. Stephen and Gethsemane congregations. (Since this initial offering of the award, the Lutheran Education Association (LEA), annually selects a Lutheran Distinguished Principal. This person is placed in nomination in the National Distinguished Principal Award program. Quite often, that person is selected for national recognition. It is great to see that recognition given to our Lutheran schools throughout the nation.)

How do you react to an honor you feel you don't deserve? How could this happen? Why was I selected when I know of many principals who I feel are doing outstanding work and could easily have been chosen for this honor? It was difficult to go through the next weeks of publicity and feel worthy of this award.

The award ceremony was set for October 12, 1984 in Washington, DC. Over the next few weeks articles appeared in various news releases:

Oakland Press — "St. John Principal Taking Honor in Stride"

Detroit News - "Rochester Principal Among the Best"

Rochester Clarion - "Kaiser Selected as National Distinguished Elementary Principal"

Michigan Lutheran - "Principal Kaiser is One of U.S. 'Distinguished'"

Tri-County Lutheran - "Rochester School Principal 'Outstanding'"

On October 5, our local Aid Association for Lutherans branch, under the direction of President Allan Grund, held an open house for Eileen and me at the Community House in Rochester. Monies were raised to cover our expenses not covered by the awards program.

Besides St. John school families and congregation members attending, Eileen and I were surprised at the many community officials who stopped by to congratulate us, such as the Rochester City Council, Mayor Barrett, State Representative Gordon Sparks, Rochester and Oakland County newspaper writers, the superintendent and many principals of the Rochester Community Schools. How humbled we were to receive this recognition. I also received numerous letters of congratulations from Lutheran principals, public school administrators, and Catholic and Christian Reformed educators who were members of the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools. I also received a special tribute plaque from the Rochester City Council and the State of Michigan. The only other principal from Michigan to receive this award was Alfred Price from the Bedford Public Schools in Lambertville, Michigan.

When Eileen packed my tuxedo and her long formal in our luggage I began to feel the excitement of this special trip to D.C. But it wasn't until I entered the press conference room on site, saw Secretary Bell, 14 TV camera crews and a host of reporters, observers and 53 other "scared" principals, that I realized this weekend was something special—one that I would long remember!

U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell commanded respect by his every action. Though a man of slight build and an always present smile, he projected an image of authority, respected by peers for his leadership ability.

The interview process was an education by itself. Channel 7 interviewed me regarding my feelings about many educational issues. The interview lasted eight minutes. I understand that none of the interview was shown locally. Would you say that the World Series was possibly more important? Channel 50 was more kind to me. Of the seven-to-eight-minute interview, about 15 seconds was given to air time.

The disappointment of not meeting with the president was real. The question foremost discussed by the principals was, "How are we going to tell our students that we did not see President Reagan?" The principal from Kentucky had a major problem. He didn't know what to do with the pocketful of jelly beans he had brought for the chief executive!

While the president was campaigning by rail in Ohio in this election year, we held our reception in the Mansfield Room of the Capitol. Apologies were offered by the White House aides, as well as Secretary Bell for the president's absence. The highlight of the weekend was the formal banquet and award ceremony. This was attended by the entire U.S. Office of Education Department, as well as representatives from the State and Defense departments since four of the principals served in overseas schools in Ceylon, the Philippines, Spain and West Germany and these schools are under the direction of the latter two departments.

One couldn't help but choke up a little while receiving the bronze bell and award certificate from Secretary Bell in the presence of this distinguished group of educators and statesmen. I had the privilege and opportunity to thank the National Association of Principals director, Dr. Sava and Secretary Bell for recognizing the parochial and private schools of our nation through this ceremony. There were four of us who represented over 22,000 non-public schools in our nation and abroad.

Sister Stella Enright from St. Paul the Apostle School, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and myself, were the only parochial school educators. We were warmly welcomed and acknowledged by all for the contributions parochial schools have given to America.

I accepted the award not for myself but for all my Christian colleagues who rightfully deserve it; who, because of their commitment and dedication, provide an alternative system of Christian education that compliments and supports the public educational system.

Upon returning to St. John on Monday, I spent the morning talking to a concerned parent, cleaned up the hallway after a sick student had an accident, accepted a birthday treat from a third grader and spent time revising the school budget. I asked myself, "Is this what a principal should be doing?" The answer came quickly - "YOU BET!"

It appears President Reagan got the message that the principals were disappointed. He sent an "original signed" photograph by registered mail to the pupils of St. John. This photograph was displayed in the hall way for a number of years. It has recently ended up in the archives storage closet. I had sent a letter to President Reagan thanking him for the picture and also support for his initiatives to restore the fundamental moral and legal principles upon which our nation is founded. I received a return note from Anne Higgins, Special Assistant to the President, in which she stated, "Without God, the president believes, our nation cannot and will not endure. As he has said, it is time for the world to know that our intellectual and spiritual values are rooted in the Source of all strength, a belief in a Supreme Being, and a Law higher than our own. If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under."¹³

¹³ I was fortunate two years later, when our school received the National Exemplary School Award, to see President Reagan in person and take his photograph in the Rose Garden of the White House. This photo also is somewhere in the archives closet.

In 1985 I was appointed to serve on the U.S. Office of Education Selection Committee which reviewed the nominees for national selection of Outstanding Principals for the coming year. I spent three days in Washington in May with a committee of nine other educational individuals working through an agenda of final selection. It was a very enlightening experience.

NATIONAL SCHOOL RECOGNITION - 1986

It was 1985. The faculty had completed the pilot Lutheran School Accreditation program in 1977 and again formally in 1984 so they had become accustomed to evaluate and be evaluated. So, when I mentioned that a new national recognition was being offered to schools that met certain criteria by the U.S. Office of Education for both public and private schools, they said, “why not!” This was the first time this special exemplary school award was being offered.

The faculty began preparations in September 1985 and the final 30 -page report was sent to Washington, D.C. in January 1986. A committee of educators was assigned to review our report and visit our school. Sister Rosemary Smith, RSM from Grand Rapids and Ross Stueber from Our Savior, Lutheran School in Lansing served as co-chairpersons. A site visit was made in May 1986.

The report was very extensive requiring answers involving philosophy, curriculum, evaluation, quality of instruction, leadership, special programs, school climate, community relations, student achievement, plus a host of other related areas. We were extremely pleased when we heard the site committee had recommended us for this prestigious award. Now we had to wait for the final approval from the Program Steering Committee in Washington, D.C.

The faculty, staff, parents, students and congregation members were ecstatic when we were selected as a National Distinguished Elementary School, one of only 60 private/parochial schools and 270 public schools. There were 17,000 elementary schools eligible for this recognition in the nation. Those chosen included seven Lutheran schools. The six other Lutheran schools included two in Indiana, two in Wisconsin, one in Nebraska and St. Lorenz, in Frankenmuth.

The Director of the Council for American Private Education, stated, “this program did not attempt the impossible-to determine the best elementary school. However, through the selection process, the program committee confirmed that your school is a distinctive school and one with qualities worthy of emulation.”

The report of our St. John school program cited the following categories which were highlighted:

- The school’s philosophy merges with its operational philosophy
- The atmosphere is excellent to exemplary
- The school is definitely Christ-centered
- The quality of instruction is outstanding
- The school meets the intellectual needs of the students in a variety of ways.
- The school provides an exemplary model for measuring and communicating student progress and growth.

- The commitment to service both in the school and in the community were outstanding.
- Professional growth is strongly encouraged and positively responded to by the faculty.
- Moral and spiritual development of the students is strongly encouraged.
- The principal is an exemplary manager, possesses exemplary interpersonal skills, and is a visionary.
- The assistant principal is a revered and trusted member of the team. (This refers to Wally Papenberg.)
- The Board of Education is of high quality.
- The school gives evidence of sound financial management.
- The parent involvement is exemplary.
- the Health and Healing program, administered by Bruce Gremel, has been identified as a model program across the nation.
- The satellite school program established in the past decade is a model of reaching out to the community. This program included St. Stephen congregation in Waterford and Gethsemane congregation in Rochester Hills.
- The music program is outstanding in scope and quality.
- The two-million-dollar building project is providing for exemplary facilities for the foreseeable future.

The report concluded with these words: St. John is an exemplary school because of its on-going mission to be a quality educational community.

The faculty chose Walt Papenberg, my assistant principal, and his wife, Trudy, and John Shaffer, our fifth grade teacher, and his wife, Barb, to accompany Eileen and me to Washington, D.C. for the formal school recognition program.

We were wined and dined during the second weekend of September 1986. Activities included talks and panels from distinguished members of congress and White House representatives. During the formal dinner celebration, I was awarded a large school recognition banner, by Secretary of Education, William Bennett, which at a later time we hung proudly in our school gymnasium for many years. The seven Lutheran schools were also honored in Washington, at a special dinner provided by AAL (Aid Association for Lutherans) during one of the evenings.

The highlight of the events was a trip to the White House. All of us were invited to have refreshments on the White House lawn but then only I, together with the other principals, was permitted to enter the Rose Garden. President Reagan addressed the group for about 30 minutes. I was able to take several photos of him during his address but I didn't get to shake his hand. This is an experience that I will never forget—since I believe that President Reagan will go down in history as one of our great leaders! A few weeks later, an originally signed photograph of President Reagan, was sent to our school in recognition of our award.

When we returned home, we had further celebrations. A reception at the Rochester Community House was held for the congregation as well as community and Rochester Community Schools officials. We were pleased to see the positive reaction by the community. Numerous articles were published in the Rochester as well as the Oakland newspapers. The national and Michigan Lutheran publications also recognized our school accomplishments. We received congratulatory letters from Lutheran as well as public leaders and educational institutions.

We were pleased to know that U.S. Senator Donald Riegle Jr. from Michigan included a congratulatory message in the *Congressional Record of Senate and House Proceedings* (page S13732) of September 25, 1986 citing the seven public and five private schools of Michigan, (including St. John) which received this special award. He wrote, "These schools are leading the way in preparing today's young people for the world of the future. They are providing their students with the skills and knowledge they need to take advantage of the opportunities available in America, and in turn, to keep our Nation strong and free."

We were excited about celebrating this award with our sister congregation in Frankenmuth, which also received it. A special recognition dinner was held at Zehnder's Hotel in Frankenmuth, on November 22, 1986 recognizing both the staffs of St. John and St. Lorenz. Seventy-two persons attended from St. John. Dr. Don Kell, our Michigan District Lutheran Education Executive, served as Master of Ceremonies.

During all of my years at St. John, I was blessed to have dedicated faculty members and staff who were willing to strive for excellence. This award was evidence of that commitment.

Postscript:

In February 1988, I was invited to become an on-site visitor for schools applying for the National Exemplary School recognition in 1988. This was the second time this award was being offered to elementary schools. I spent three days in a training session in Washington, D.C.

There were 600 schools that applied for this recognition but only 287 were selected. I was a site visitor for a public school in Delaware, Ohio, two public schools in Cincinnati, Ohio and St. Paul Lutheran School in Napoleon, Ohio. On my two-day visit to each school I was partnered with various educators from around the country.

The 35-page report that we wrote for each school required an extensive verification of all aspects of the school's educational program as presented in the application form. I was pleased that all four schools were selected for National recognition. I recall one anxious moment in the visit to Indian Hill Village School in Cincinnati. We had three visitors for this school. We had a closing banquet which was attended by the superintendent, principal, and all faculty and friends of the school. The first day of the visit, one of my partners had an emergency and returned home to Kentucky. The night of the banquet my second partner from Memphis became ill leaving me the "lone" visitor to face an anxious audience - wondering what our decision would be! I was glad that I had only positive comments to share.

These visits were truly highlights in my administrative career. The entire scenario was an awesome experience.

A SPECIAL EIGHTH-GRADE GRADUATION ASSIGNMENT

A teacher is constantly looking for ways to challenge and motivate youngsters to prepare for the future. During the graduation week of their eighth-grade year, I gave each of my students an assignment. They were to write a letter to themselves of their future life, entitled, “Ten Years From Now.” They could share what their St. John training played in their life - high school and college experience - their vocation- marriage, etc. I collected the letters and promised the students I wouldn’t read them until the time I sent them back to them—10 years from now.

Well, this has turned out to be quite a challenging assignment for me. I have to admit I slipped up on keeping my word of returning the letters in 10 years. Generally, as I thought of it, and as I would see a former student who reminded me of my promise, I would dig into the file box and return the letter. Some were returned in 10 years and some in 20 years, some in 30 years! I still have about one third of all the letters that I collected from the students over my 34 years at St. John. Not having all of their addresses, we have lost contact with these students. About 10 years ago, I appreciated Bempie Misch and Nancy Kuehn, who spent many hours researching addresses and helped return many of the letters. It is interesting the reaction of former students when they get their letters back. Some are embarrassed; some can’t believe they wrote this! Others quite pleased as they reminisce.

There have been about 10 occasions when I have given the letter to the family, after hearing that the student had passed away. All of these times were joyous, as the family members read comforting words in the letter as to how much God meant to the individual. The assignment was well worth it.

Kristin Horstman was a 1988 graduate. She died in a car accident in 1991. Kristen had written in her letter, “I know someday, I’ll see all of my friends in heaven. I know I’ll get there because I won’t let myself lose faith!”

Fresh in my memory is the letter I returned to the Motzney family in December 2017. Matt was a special young man. He spent four years at St. John in the 1990s. He had muscular dystrophy. Although in a wheelchair, he participated in as many activities as he possibly could. He made you feel envious of his disposition, wondering how he could be so happy when he had such a serious health issue. He lived eight years longer than expected with this illness.

Matt wrote in part, “I was taught that faith in God is important and that He helps me overcome the down side of life. St. John helped me find what’s important in life. Remember—God helps when you are having trouble.”

There are numerous examples I could share, but the following is another example and a classic.

This article was written in the *Detroit News*:

Michigan Senate Majority Leader, Michael Bishop, R-Rochester, tells of the time in 8th grade when his school principal had everyone in the class write themselves a letter 10 years in the future.

That was 25 years ago. Michael just received his letter.

The letter from young Michael to the future Michael began with the salutation: “Dear Senator.”

“You could knock me over with a feather,” Bishop said, “I wrote myself a note saying, ‘I hope you’re enjoying the Senate, please give your wife and kids a hug for me.’ It was borderline eerie.”

Mike’s father was a State representative at the time Mike wrote the letter. He said he idolized his father and probably imagined following in his footsteps.

Mike was married and had 3 children when he opened the letter. He said, “Dr. Kaiser promised to mail the letter back in 10 years. It ended up more than 20, but he was a man of his word.”

In 2014, Mike was elected as a Michigan Representative to the U.S. Congress. I am wondering where he will be in the next 10 years?

I am so grateful that the Lord has used the faculty of St. John to provide the Christ-centered educational environment that has allowed students to reach their ambitious and challenging goals. The Lord be praised!

THE 1990S - A TIME TO MOVE FORWARD

We saw this era as one to move forward, as well as celebrate God's blessings. In the early 1990s we started a million-dollar drive entitled "Yes, Lord, We Will" which was intended for updating the building, including a new boiler, enlarging the parking area, air conditioning the church sanctuary, purchasing additional land on Alice Street and making preparations to plant a new congregation. It was an ambitious program but heartily endorsed by the congregation. By April 1992, we had reached 83% of the goal.

We were very disappointed when Randy Einem, who had served as my assistant principal since 1986, accepted a call as principal to a congregation in Fort Wayne. Randy was truly a 'God sent' person who had become an excellent leader and administrator. We were thrilled to learn that in 2011, Randy, who now served as the principal of St. John Lutheran School in Orange, California, a school of over 500 students, was selected as the Lutheran Principal of the Year, and then selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Exemplary Principal.

The Lord did not keep us waiting long. Bill Hinz, who was serving as a Lutheran principal in Itasca, Illinois accepted our call. I appreciated Bill's dedication to his work. As our enrollment continued to grow, Bill was responsible for much of the operations of the building and teacher evaluation. We were pleased when Bill completed his Doctorate in Education from Loyola University in Chicago in May 1992. Bill was called as principal to replace me when I retired.

During this decade the congregation became serious about expanding our congregational ministry. Initial preparations had been begun in 1988 and a school task force was organized in 1989 followed by a Congregational Development Planning Council in 1991. In 1992 the congregation formed various "cottage" groups to provide fellowship as well as to be open to new families coming into the area. In 1993 a Mission Renewal Study was undertaken by the congregation with Rev. Mike Ruhl from the Michigan District office as the consultant. The exit report recommended developing an off-site campus with Living Word congregation.

We were excited that Pastor Kassen, whom St. John congregation had called as Missionary-at-Large to survey the area, had moved forward with establishing a mission congregation. Services were being held in Hart Middle School.

In September 1991, the mission became established as Living Word congregation. The Michigan District accepted Living Word as an official congregation in December 1992. By February, 1992, the average church attendance for this new mission was 88 participants. I was extremely pleased to see the willingness and cooperative spirit between the new mission and our St. John members. Pastors Burow and Theiss encouraged St. John families to join this daughter congregation and participate in this challenging ministry. Mark Smith, our former member and St. John school graduate, became the first chairperson of Living Word.

Living Word congregation was a strong supporter of full-time Christian education. In the fall of 1991 they provided funding for the salary of one teacher, so students from the mission could attend St. John at a member rate. In September 1992, Beth Kimmel, one of our eighth grade teachers, was called by Living Word to serve as coordinator of educational ministries at Living Word and also as a teacher in our associated school ministry. This association continued through the early 1990s.

In January 1993, Living Word purchased 20 acres of land five miles north of Rochester on Rochester Road. Pastor Kassen was now called as pastor.

A Future and Expansion Task Force was developed in 1992 to study the future needs of St. John and its relationship to our new mission, Living Word congregation. Five input meetings were held with over 85% of school parents attending. The outcome of these meetings was that we consider an association with Living Word by supporting a building program on their proposed campus. This would consist of 13 classrooms which would house our combined kindergarten through third grade program. Grades 4-8, including Living Word students in those grades would be housed on the St. John campus.

We were very pleased when the voter's assemblies of both congregations adopted this proposal. A joint campaign, "Sharing to Build--Building to Share" was initiated in the fall of 1994. The St. John voters passed the resolution 88 to 16! We had just completed the "Yes Lord, We Will" campaign and now endorsed another one--the Lord was challenging us! The Meyers, Meissners, Hohnstadts, Crissmans, Nehras and Hoegemeyers, were committee members.

Randy Wirth and Duane Kell were co-directors of this inter-congregational campaign. I recall that in the fall of 1995, when Eileen and I left for the year of volunteer mission work in Thailand, I visited Duane at his home the day before we left. He had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. We knew that the next time we would see each other would be in heaven--it was a joyous farewell! Since that time, his son Matt, a former student at St. John, and Duane's wife, Susan, who was a very active member and Bible class teacher, have reunited with Duane in heaven also. The Lord had blessed our congregation through this family.

A celebration worship service was held in the Palace of Auburn Hills on November 27, 1994 which brought together our entire congregation, together with the Living Word congregation. Approximately 2000 people celebrated this event! "Celebrating Our Unity in Christ" was the theme.

The combined goal of the campaign was \$2.1 million. The entire project was estimated at approximately \$5 million including \$500,000 for renovations at St. John. A ministerial agreement was developed for general maintenance and teacher assistance, to be reviewed annually. Additional funds were to be borrowed from the Michigan District Church Extension Fund.¹⁴

¹⁴ Along with this proposal to the St. John voters was a recommendation that we consider an expansion program on the St. John campus that would include additional office space, meeting rooms, a community

A joint building committee for the Living Word expansion was formed with Mark Walkenhorst, Henry Meyer, Audrey Ruggiero, Ruth Collins, Craig Weirauch and Glenn Joseph. This venture was an exciting experience to see two congregations working together in promoting Christian education in the Rochester community, even though there were many hurdles to climb before the program was completed in and in operation in 1997. One of the immediate hurdles was that there was no sewer tap or water on the 20-acre property. It was estimated that it would cost a million dollars to install a high-tech septic system. Plans were underway to develop this special sanitary program. The entire venture was on hold until this could be developed. Questions were asked if there was not another solution? There was—we received permission from the builder of the housing project directly west of the Living Word campus to extend the water and sewer lines serving the new homes to the Living Word property. Our problem was solved—thank you, Lord!

I recall several town hall meetings with the Oakland Township Board where objections were raised on almost every proposal we raised. I remember having to develop a tentative calendar and daily schedule, hour by hour, for the new school, showing when the traffic would be heaviest and how nightly parent meetings might influence the traffic flow. I saw this as a “stall” tactic at the time. Initially there was a negative response to our proposed congregation coming to this relatively rural area. Once the building was dedicated and the school was in operation, there was a positive acceptance by the community, and then, pride in its existence.

After publicity was out on our expansion program with Living Word congregation, I received a visit from the chairman of the Board of Education from St. Andrew’s Catholic Church in Rochester. Lo and behold! The chairman was a former sixth grade student I had at Jehovah in Detroit! I shared with him our cooperative expansion plan. He felt this plan could work in the St. Andrew situation also. Today, Holy Family Catholic School is an association of a number of congregations with two campuses. The main campus has Grades 4-8 and the satellite has Grades K-3. Over 1000 students are enrolled! We are pleased that this arrangement is working very well for these congregations.

center, and other auxiliary facilities to meet our future needs. The voters seriously considered this to be the next priority after the St. John- Living Word program was in operation. No specific details were discussed at this time.

This proposed expansion program on the St. John campus was studied as early as 1992 by the directors of the current ministries at St. John. They felt that the six classrooms vacated, when the primary grades would be housed at Living Word, would be soon filled again with added enrollment and that new facilities needed to be built.

It was unfortunate that seven of our 10 professional staff retired or accepted other assignments over the next two and three years. The congregation never realized the full understanding of this expansion plan.

After the Living Word expansion program was in operation, the St. John expansion began shortly. The renovations changed the current old wing classrooms, offices, etc. into useable meeting rooms. An additional elevator was installed, a church library facility was created, and wash rooms were renovated. It was a much needed and well-done renovation.

The concern was that no new, additional facilities were built. The six classrooms which originally housed students were now eliminated for future classroom use expansion.

Our program with Living Word congregation began in 1997 but terminated in 2004. At that time Living Word took ownership of a Pre-K to Grade 8 program and St. John returned its kindergarten to Grade 3 students to the St. John building.

The 1992-93 school year was the “kick off” year of the fiftieth anniversary of our school—1943-1993. We had grown from 30 students to 520 students and 24 full time faculty. Rochester Hills Mayor Billie Ireland proclaimed, “St. John has dedicated itself to provide local students with a Christian-based quality elementary education to meet the needs for both ethical and intellectual training in a complex and modern world.”

We invited over 15 local community and state leaders to our opening school service on September 8, 1992. Those attending included Dorothy Beardmore, the President of the Board of Education for the State of Michigan, and Dr. John Schultz, Superintendent of Rochester Community Schools.

During the school year, we highlighted historical events celebrating our anniversary. In June 1993, a special alumni celebration was held including an open house, reunion banquet and alumni choir which sang in the Sunday services. The alumni contributed to a scholarship fund in the St. John Church and School Foundation and also purchased a beautiful wall mural depicting Jesus blessing the little children. This five-inch-thick wood cut, designed, sculptured, and sent from Italy, decorates the east wall of the school atrium. It is a beautiful addition to our building.

The Fiftieth Anniversary Committee did an excellent job in locating alumni as well as in making preparations for the year. One area of special note that was researched was the number of pastors and teachers St. John congregation had contributed to the church at-large. We found that through 1994, we had 11 pastors and 22 teachers who were former St. John members, now serving or had served in Lutheran church and school ministry. Another interesting statistic was that St. John congregation had during this 50-year history, utilized the services of nine pastors and 96 teachers.

In 1990 we set up an accelerated independent reading program for all grades. It was a computerized enrichment program that encouraged students to choose and read quality books at their own pace. We had excellent results for many years with this program.

In 1991 we had an all-out effort to bring technology into the program. Through the magazine drive, an all school walk-a-thon, and letters to community businesses asking for their support, we raised over \$25,000 for a computer lab. Sometimes I felt guilty that we may have bribed youngsters into raising money through various incentives. Winners or highest producers would get a chauffeured ride to McDonald’s, monetary awards or various prizes, such as a bicycle. Although sometimes I paid the price also! I remember in 1994, Michael Toth became Principal for the Day! He took over my role and I had to take his seat in Mrs. Kimmel’s eighth grade classroom for the day! Michael sold \$1570 worth of magazines during our annual sale.

I also paid the price in 1990 when I lost a bet with Bill Hinz and seventh grade teacher Tim Walz. Both were diehard Chicago Bulls fans. After the Pistons were beaten, I had to carry out the garbage from each classroom for the next five days. Wait until next year—Isaiah Thomas will be back!

I had an opportunity to surprise Eileen over Easter vacation in 1991. I had accumulated a number of frequent flyer miles from my travels on Synodical boards, so we did a whirlwind tour of Maui, Oahu and the Big Island, to celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary. What an experience!

During the decades, each new faculty enjoyed having fun together. We had family parties on a regular basis. I do recall being freaked out in the summer of 1991, when Eileen opened our family room drapes and there stood 35 faculty members and friends who surprised me on my 60th birthday.

Beginning of the year, Christmas, after school events, after basketball games, end of the year, whenever -- the faculty always enjoyed parties. The “beginning of the year” faculty parties that many remember were held in our back yard and called the “garbage can” dinners. We used a new galvanized 40-gallon garbage can that we placed in my in-ground, outdoor pit. The ingredients consisted of unhusked corn on the cob, new unpeeled potatoes, and bratwurst sausages. We allowed these to boil to perfection!

We had Christmas parties in various forms from each course served at a different home, to complete dinners in local restaurants and at various country clubs.

Many remember the “reverse dinner party” at the home of the Muellers. Karl and Nancy met us at the door as a butler and maid. We enjoyed the “After the Friday Night Basketball Games” get-togethers. How surprised we were one Friday, when Bob Claus called my home and told me to accept a delivery within the hour. A special delivery package arrived by a limo driver, it was just flown in from Maine. Boiled lobster was not the usual party treat!

Parties were a part of every school year and every decade. We were blessed to have faculties and staffs that appreciated and enjoyed these activities.

We were blessed to have student council members over the years who took their responsibility to heart, even though at times I had to vote down some of their recommendations! I do remember the time that they encouraged the student body to write letters to service men and women stationed in Saudi Arabia during the Operation Desert Shield in 1991, thanking them for their service to our country. How pleased and excited everyone was when we started getting return letters thanking us for the tribute.

In February 1991, another tragedy happened. Kristin Horstman, a junior at Lutheran High Northwest, a graduate of our school and church member, was killed in a car accident. The congregation was in mourning. About this time, Cindy Holsinger and other mothers organized a “Mothers in Touch” prayer group to pray for students, teachers and staff at St. John. What a blessing this group has been to our congregation.

Bill Hinz wrote an article entitled “Prayer at St. John—a Great Privilege” for the church newsletter. In summary it said:

It all began before Desert Storm. Seventh grade teacher Tim Walz made the comment that it would be nice if the whole school could come together on a daily basis to pray for God’s protection during the armed conflict. The 2:10 p.m. prayer was begun. Each day the school family pauses for prayer—from kindergarteners to eighth graders, from cooks to custodians, from parent volunteers to special guests. What a privilege to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the birth of a child or to pray for an ailing grandfather in the hospital. Last March 4, I walked across the Crittenton Hospital parking lot just in time to hear the 2:10 prayer leader include a prayer of thanksgiving for a little boy (my son) born earlier that morning—a very special moment for me! Dr. Kaiser has a gigantic button in his office that says, “As long as there are exams—there will be prayer in school.” In that regard, St. John is no different from other schools, but most similarities regarding prayer end there. At St. John we have the great and distinct privilege of praying each and every day. Prayer is one of the great gifts God has given to His family of believers. In the parent pledge, the document signed by school families, parents are asked to pledge to pray for their child and all involved in his or her education. We are blessed to have a wonderful group of mothers, “Moms in Touch” who gather weekly to pray for the students, families, teachers, and all those involved.

In 1992, Bonnie Brown, who had served faithfully as our church secretary for many years, retired. Her services were greatly appreciated. Lu Jean Kassen was an excellent replacement.

We were pleased to have Harold Siewert serve as our Head Custodian during the ‘90s. He was truly committed to his work and enjoyed being with students. He was highly respected by both teachers and students.

In the early 1990s our congregation began a program for students in Grades 6-8 to receive the Lord’s Supper before confirmation. Parents and students had to attend special classes for this to happen. Mark Sengele, our youth director, together with the pastors instituted this program.

In 1992 the school started another major fund raiser beside the magazine drive. Bill Hinz, my assistant principal, took ownership of this venture. The Board of Education approved of this project. It was called the “Eagle Fund Drive.” Besides an October mailing, alerting school parents, friends, congregation members, and businesses and vendors of St. John, a phone-a-thon was conducted by volunteers over a two-day period in early November. Over 25 phones were hooked up in the church basement for this endeavor. I was hesitant to contact outside organizations, but pleasingly surprised at their positive responses to our request. Our original goal was \$15,000 but we raised over \$26,000. In 1993 over \$41,000 was raised. After working with the Genesis Project of Synod in starting new schools, in my retirement years, I have found that communities will cooperate and support our Lutheran schools because they see them as viable, positive, moral influences in the community. I was pleased that Bill and the Board of Education took the initiative to do this project. I have learned that we need not fear to ask for outside congregation support. If we have a quality product, folks in the business world will support us.

Another innovation during this time, developed by the Worship Committee, was the children's church program, including Grades 3-8, which was included in the non-traditional communion service. The intent of this program allowed families the opportunity to attend worship together.

Missionary Greg Lorenz, a former student and member of St. John, generously gave some of his furlough time from his mission work in Guatemala in 1992, to serve our congregation. We were pleased to enroll his children in our school during that time. Over the years St. John provided Greg with much needed financial support. In 1997 Greg invited Eileen and me to come to Guatemala and to serve as retreat leaders for the missionaries in the Caribbean area. Thirty-two missionary families from six Central American countries attended this four-day retreat in Puerto San Jose. It was a thrilling assignment for us.

We enjoyed the opportunity to have special educational as well as fun assemblies over the years. One that was particularly special was having Ben Franklin come from Philadelphia and perform for us in 1993. Mr. Ralph Archbold, a professional actor, portrayed the American statesman. Mr. Archbold is nationally known as Ben Franklin. It was especially exciting to know that he was the father of Liz Nelson, one of our third grade teachers.

Times do change! For over 20 years the eighth grade graduates looked forward to their graduation trip to Bob-Lo Island and then a Tiger night baseball game. Thanks to our eighth grade teachers, in the early '90s we developed an educational weekend in Chicago. I recall being extremely happy when I knew the graduates were all back "safe and sound" again in Rochester! A few years later, the location of this trip was changed to Washington, DC. It is continued to this day—what an experience! I wonder if Hong Kong, or Moscow might be the next venture!

Other highlights of the '90s that come to mind include the initiation of the Rainbow Support Program by Debbie Bozman. She trained facilitators to provide support for single families and those experiencing painful transitions.

We had good success with an expanded enrichment program for the middle school students. Grade 6-8 students had the opportunity to select one elective course per semester from 12 courses offered. The course met three times a week for 50 minutes. Computer programming and foreign language courses were popular. Beside the academic and athletic awards given each year, in 1990 we joined the National Honor Society. Students were now eligible for this honor also.

The Chess Club for Grades 3-8 became a very popular after school activity. Teachers John Shaffer and Bill Hinz enjoyed leading these sessions.

We appreciated the PR "plug" for our school during Lutheran Schools Week when Charles Ferry, a nationally known children's writer who resided in Rochester and who often served as a volunteer creative writing teacher at our school, wrote a nationally published article: "Good Reading Schools Don't Have Drug Problems." He wrote, "St. John is my favorite

school. It is singled out as an exemplary school. It places strong emphasis on reading and liberal arts. It is a very “clean” school. Young scholars don’t flourish in “dirty” schools.”¹⁵

As our enrollment increased, I found it necessary to spend more time engaged in a screening process for kindergarten enrollment. We now had three sections of kindergarten. We were cautious of enrolling youngsters who may not be ready for our program. During the months of March, April and May, I scheduled between 90 and 100 individual screenings. I spent between 15-20 minutes with each student. This activity became very tedious after a while, but very beneficial. I recall that years later, a number of parents remarked to me that they had been disappointed that I had suggested that they keep their youngsters in Pre-school for another year, but now, they saw that that extra year was beneficial and needed before the formal education began.

In 1991, Bruce Gremel accepted the newly developed position of minister of Christian care. The Christian Care Committee was concerned with social concerns, wellness and parish life of the congregation. We were pleased that Linda Doebler accepted Bruce’s previous position as director of athletics. Linda had served as a middle grade teacher and coached girls’ athletics since 1975. She had been instrumental in developing the many sport activities for the girls’ programs. She was a perfect fit for the position—another blessing! Linda became the first female director of the many directorships available at this time.

In the early ‘90s we developed a math program for the middle school students that greatly enhanced that curricular area. We intentionally scheduled math at the same time for these grades. Seven different math classes were held at the same time, allowing students to attend the class that fit their individual needs. Pre-algebra, basic algebra, and honors algebra, together with grade level math courses were held.

We also developed a “Memory Book” curriculum for all grades. This was a big help as teachers now had knowledge of what memory verses and Bible doctrine students had been exposed to before entering their grade level.

In 1992, John Shaffer was recognized for his ten years of service as director of children’s ministry. Heidi Quitmeyer, a former graduate of St. John, was his assistant for these many years. The Sunday School enrollment was over 375 students, VBS had over 300 students and the Weekday School had 36 students.¹⁶

Bill Hammond was a long-time volunteer Sunday School superintendent, and Betty Kishner and Ruth Finch were long-time volunteer teachers. They were key people in growing the Sunday School program.

¹⁵ He was referring to cleanliness as well as drugs.

¹⁶ John Shaffer had served as the Director of the Part-Time Agencies as well as the Director of Youth during his 38 years at St. John. He retired as a middle grade teacher in 2016. If there was a job to do, John would do it. St. John and I were blessed through his services. He and his wife, Barb, were truly dedicated servants of the Lord. They currently live in Owosso, Michigan, near family.

We were blessed to have members as Dr. John Ohlsson, a dental surgeon, who led numerous medical mission trips to countries in Africa, Russia and Central America. Recently his son told me that his dad “left half of his dental equipment” in these foreign countries.

In 1992 over 75% of the eligible congregation families had their children enrolled in our school program.

In 1993, we developed a Talented and Gifted (TAG) program. Linda Dunklau became the coordinator. Teachers worked at challenging each student through projects, computer programs, accelerated reader motivation, advanced classes, clubs, contests, and other means of competition.

We were pleased to add some new positions in the 1990s. Bempie Misch became our church and school receptionist. Betty Bridges did our office printing. Don Ritter became our deacon and served as minister of visitation and Jim Juleff served as an administrative assistant. Blessings upon blessings-- to have dedicated staff!

It is interesting to note that six of my former teachers, after leaving St. John, went into the pastoral ministry: Keith Brutlag, Jim Keat, Cary Richert, Tom Brazinsky, Dan Ramthun and Jim Rolf. Dan and Jim are still serving parishes today. The other four men are now retired. Their service to the church at large has been a blessing.

A number of the professional staff were married during my tenure. It is interesting to note that three couples found their future spouses while serving on the faculty with each other. They were: Tom and Shirley Brazinsky; Jim and Cheryl Rolf; and Mark and Lynn Sengele. We were match makers!

I was unhappy to know that Pastor Burow and Walt Gresens were both taking calls to other locations at the time I was retiring in 1995. Pastor Burow, who served us since 1972, went to Texas and Walt, who served us since 1978, to Grand Blanc, Michigan. These were special, committed servants of the Lord.

Jon Pfund, a middle school teacher from 1987 to 2017 needs to be recognized for his leadership in the “Future Cities” project. This program was initiated after I retired, but I have been amazed at the success of the St John middle school students in winning awards in both district and national competition. They have been to Washington, D.C. on numerous occasions and have won first place nationally. We were sorry to see Jon retire, but truly appreciated his dedicated service.

During these decades it was necessary for faculty members to assist in various related responsibilities. I have referred to many of these in the course of these memoirs. In reviewing these responsibilities during the 1990s, I counted 76 areas of activity in which faculty members performed outside functions beside teaching. These roles varied from coaching to supervising the Safety Patrol to serving as yearbook editor, etc. How blessed I had been at St. John to have the support and cooperation of the teachers to fulfill these many needed roles.

The parent awards for the '90s were:

1992- Fidelis Award -- Dr. Ken Hightower

1994- Carrie McGaughey and Mike Burklow

1992 - New Worlds Award -- Lois Ponton

1994- Debbie Rank

To accommodate our increasing enrollment, prior to expanding to the Living Word campus, the congregation permitted the Board of Education to purchase a relocatable classroom which was placed on the west side of the school building. Initial permission was received from the city of Rochester in 1993, for a temporary three-year permit. A berm with shrubbery had to be erected between the street and the building even though this was a temporary structure. In 1994 we received permission for a second classroom to be installed. These buildings were brand new at the time and used until the students transferred to the Living Word campus in 1997. Since each room was air conditioned, every teacher wanted to teach there! We were pleased that the St. John Foundation could provide funding for these needed facilities. A Grade 2 and a Grade 3 were housed in these classrooms.

I recall the scenario of a young mother who recently came from India, who said, "I prayed to *your* God that there would be an opening for my daughter!" There was! We were pleased to be able to share *our* Triune God with this Hindu family.

We were pleased to once again, have male teachers in the primary grades: Mr. Julian Petzold in Grade 2 and Mr. Henry Pohlkötter in Grade 3.

Over the years we continued to relate our enrollment to a percentage of the Rochester Community Schools' elementary enrollment. We found that we enrolled between eight and nine percent of the public school system. As they grew, so did we. In 1960 there were 10 elementary schools and three middle schools. In 1995 there were 13 elementary schools and four middle schools. The district had 89% white; 3% black; 6% Asian and 4% Hispanic.

During my final years before retirement, in 1992 I was honored to receive the Christus Primus Award from Concordia University-Ann Arbor. This award was given for faithful and dedicated service to the Lord and His church. I was privileged to give the commencement address at this graduation ceremony. I was also blessed to receive the Administrator of the Year award in 1994 from the Michigan District Lutheran Teachers Conference.

The 1994-95 school year was my final year as principal. Our theme for this year was "Precious in his Sight!" God had used St. John to share the message of his love in helping youngsters to understand that they were "precious in His sight" for over 51 years!

In my final report to the congregation in 1995, I recorded that we began the year with 695 students, including 88 pre-schoolers, and ended with over 700. We were now the largest Lutheran elementary school in Synod. We had that distinction for a number of years. Statistics show that we reached 758 students in 1998.

Of the student body, 64% were children of member families—this represented 86% of the eligible children of school age in the congregation. Children from other Lutheran congregations comprised 26% of our enrollment, including Living Word and Gethsemane as well as other Christian congregations. Ten percent of the students were considered mission prospects. About 7% of the student body was non-Caucasian.

Over 78 applicants could not be accepted because of space limitations for 1994-95. There were two classes of age 3; three classes of age 4; three classes each in Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3 and two classes each in Grades 4-8.

We continued to have a cooperative program with Gethsemane congregation. Two sections of Grade 3 were located on that campus. Living Word congregation now had 23 students enrolled in the school program.

The total teaching staff for Pre-school through Grade 8 included 25 full-time staff, 13 part-time staff, one full-time Gethsemane staff, one full-time Living Word staff, seven pre-school staff and a special services team of seven professionals who served our school on a regular basis from the Rochester Community Schools.

I was pleased to announce that seven students were baptized as a direct result of our school program and 17 families joined St. John through baptism and /or confirmation as a direct result of our school. Eleven families transferred into St. John as a direct result of the school program.

Special programs offered included:

1. Middle School Enrichment Program - consisting of courses in art, computers, contemporary American history, choir, band, Spanish, etc.
2. LAP (Learning Abilities Program - with Mrs. Shoemaker as coordinator. She had numerous volunteers who provided short term remedial services for students having difficulty in reading and math.
3. Rainbows - a special family program for children living in a single parent home or a step-family household going through difficult transitions.
4. Foreign language programs - French and Spanish for students in Grades 2-8 prior to regular school hours.
5. Numerous extra-curricular clubs - including math, journalism, science, chess, etc.

During my final year, the faculty and church and office staff included the following:

Pastor Paul Burow, Senior Pastor	Diane Sell, Coordinator and teacher-Pre School
Pastor Steven Theiss, Associate Pastor	Dr. Bill Hinz, Assistant Principal
Jan Cherne, Pre-school teacher	Bruce Gremel, Director of Christian Care
Lynn Sengele, Pre-school and Kdg. teacher	
Tim Bode, Director of Evangelism	Lucy Fry, Kindergarten teacher
Mark Sengele, Minister to Youth and their Families	
Jean Geil, Grade 1 Assistant for PT Agencies	

Don Ritter, P-T Minister of Visitation Walt Gresens, Minister of Music
 Lynda Doeblen, Director of Athletics & Health
 Ellen Landskronner, Grade 1 Assistant with Girls Sports
 Lu Jean Kassen, Office Manager
 Michelle Peterson, Grade 1 Cheerleading Coordinator
 Bempie Misch, Church /School Receptionist
 Jan Braunick, Grade 2 Coordinator of Volunteers
 Betty Bridges, Printer Elaine Pauli, Grade 2 Music Assistant
 Sharon Brusseau, P-T School Secretary Julian Petzold, Grade 2 Athletic Coach
 Kathy Wendland, School Secretary Henry Pohlkotter, Grade 3 Athletic Coach
 Debbie Herzog, P-T School Bookkeeper
 Lucy Moerer, Grade 3 Gethsemane Satellite Program
 Ellen Hohnstadt, P-T Church Records Liz Nelson, Grade 3 Gethsemane Satellite Program
 Wendy Larkin, P-T Church Secretary Bev Koch, Grade 4 Music Assistant
 Jim Juleff, P-T Adm. Assistant Kristen Billig, Grade 4 Assistant with Girls Sports
 Jim Rolf, Grade 5 Resource/ Athletic Coach
 Diane Krueger, Media Center Coordinator John Shaffer, Grade 5 Director of P-T Agencies
 Nancy Kuehn, Teacher Assistant Jon Pfund, Grade 6 Coordinator of Special Projects
 Barb Shaffer, Teacher Assistant
 Linda Dunklau, Grade 6 Coordinator of Gifted/Talented
 Candy Horstman, P-T Gym teacher Tim Walz, Grade 7 Athletic Coach
 Trudy Shoemaker, (LAP) Coordinator Cindy Brown, Grade 7 Art Coordinator
 Tim Grothaus, Grade 8 Director of Communications
 Beth Kimmel, Grade 8 Intramurals Coordinator

These teachers were new to the staff in the 1990s:

Henry Pohlkotter
 Ellen Landskronner
 Michelle (Balsar) Peterson
 Kristen Billig
 Julian Petzold
 Lisa Humphery
 Lynn (Garreits) Sengele
 Bill Hinz

Our school goals were:

- To continue to implement the Mission Renewal goals for continued growth, expansion of enrollment, facilities, and staffing relating to school and congregational ministries.
- Continue educating parents regarding their spiritual and financial roles in the church
- Continue to provide a parenting program for parents at all grade levels in order to assist them in developing skills for raising children.
- Begin procedures for renewal of the National Lutheran School and Michigan Association of Non-Public School accreditation.

- Carry out procedures for the calling of a principal to replace Dr. Kaiser (I got a lump in my throat as I reviewed that final goal!).

I turned in my keys the end of June 1995, confident that the Lord would continue to bless the efforts of the congregation and faculty in the challenging future ahead.

The Lord truly BLESSED St. John. It was also a BLESSING to Eileen and me for three-and-a-half decades. At my retirement, I said, “This is a great school. As I walked the halls for the last time, last week, I saw the youngsters at their desks, I saw teachers sharing their expertise with love, I saw an educational program in operation that I was proud of---if I could re-live my life, I would like to be principal of this school. *It is a great place to be!*”

Special Persons Who Positively Affected My School Ministry at St. John

Although I have tried in these memoirs to recall many individuals who positively affected my ministry, I know I have missed many. Looking back over 34 years of ministry to remember is difficult, especially now some 20 years since retirement. Included below are some who need recognition. Some of these and their spouses may have been mentioned previously—but that’s OK too.

Jim and Candi Schwark	David Bates
Neil and Pauli Hoegemeyer	Henry and Marilyn Meyer
Carol Korn	Mark Walkenhorst
Roger and Janet Guetzkow	Gerry and Carolyn Post
Dr. Tony and Carlene Nehra	Dr. Loren and Rea Siffring
Gary and Marge Meissner	John and Deb Crissman
Howard and Ellen Hohnstadt	Bill and Patti Hammond
Ruth Finch	Dr. Eugene and Lois Timm
Nancy Mooneyham	Dr. Ken and Diane Hightower
Harv and Joann King	Dr. Ed and Judy Henderschott
Don and Bempie Misch	Vern Weidner
Dick Keinath	Dale Van Wulfen
Larry and Vi Smith	Lloyd and Jean Graves
Gil Preuss	Don and Sandy Olson
Henry and Helen Lind	Claire Wirsing
Dr. John Ohlsson	Jim and Cheryl Fitzpatrick
Don and Jean Susewitt	Ruth Schlecht
Mark Abraham	Clarence and Lucy Strand
Mary Pattersen	Ruth Leucht
Dale and Susan McGorman	Ed and Shirley Heins
Bill and Mitzie Younk	Harlan Worden
Bob and Sally Hobson	Bob Vanderheid
Dick Paris	Doug and Vicki Eicher
Dan and Bonnie Brown	Jim and Geri Fleming
Arnold and Elva Schilke	Lloyd and Kathrine Bentley
Harold and Marion Barley	Roger and Marilyn Miller

Ron McClure
Delores Rigg
Wendy Larkin
Dave and Pat Hofmeister
Jim and Norma Juleff
Len and Sue Tillard
Arlan and Doris Hughes
Roger and Audrey Ruggiero
Ruth Sadler
Dr. Tom and Sue Peeples
Pete and Kitty Grund
Dr. Carlos and Cynthia Gales
Wes and Dale Griffith
Mark and Margaret Hall
Bob Deneen
Mary Becker
Dr. Hans and Davi Stein
Larry and Sally Wagner
Bob and Marie Coppins
Roland Steinwert
Jim King
Charles and Melda Hilgendorf
Trudy Moynaham
Don Reese
Milt Simpson
Al and Irene Russ
Rich Meadows

Peter Harris
Des and Carol Lewsley
Rick Hipple
Paul Weyer
Harold and Shirley Kiebusch
Roy and Joann Juhl
Dave and Candi Horstman
Roger and Deb Herzog
Mark Rafdal
Mitzi Patterson
Linda Adams
Ron and Marlene Barnett
Frank and Vicky Grocki
Jerry and Mary Hammerlund
Larry Lutz
Don Trinklein
Marie Schwartz
Chuck Feucht
Charles Raper
Russ and Leah Hummel
Bud Leake
Erv Cprek
Jim Schievenin
Liv and Carolyn Newberg
Chuck Krause
Betsy Hissong
Andy Noland and many, many, more!

As the old adage says, “out of sight, therefore, out of mind” – it’s my only excuse for missing someone.

THIRTY TO SIXTY-FOUR

I've been asked the question a number of times, "how did you prepare for your retiring from St. John?" I enjoyed my role so much that I really never thought about it until I reached the age of 60. I had been blessed with so many opportunities over these many years. I had the best of "many worlds." I served as a teacher, an administrator, counselor, Bible class instructor, coach as well as had opportunities to serve as a college instructor, serve on District, Synodical and Community Boards and committees.

I was blessed to be able to obtain a Bachelors, Masters, Education Specialist and Doctorate degrees. I had been blessed with many achievements for which I was very grateful.

It probably was during my final two years that I seriously considered the time was near to retire to seek out other challenges. I remember that during these years that regularly while I walked the long hall visiting classrooms and carrying on my duties, I would think to myself, enjoy the moment, the day is near when you won't be walking these halls anymore.

I think this prepared me for the inevitable in June 1995.

By the way, that hall had gotten longer as the years went by and we expanded the building. From the front of the chancel in church to the final classrooms on the west end of the building was a distance of over two football fields—not including the portable classrooms on the west end of the building or the lower level hallways. Now, I didn't walk up to the chancel each day!

As I think back over these years, I spent the most productive time of my life in these halls, classrooms and offices. I arrived at age 30 and left at age 64! The Lord had truly blessed me.

RETIREMENT—THE TIME HAD COME!

I remember sharing with the Voter's Assembly in May 1994 that I would retire at the end of the next school year. I had hoped for a year to “wind down” and leisurely enjoy the final activities—but that was not to be! The Living Word association became a high priority during this time, and needed much attention.

I remember Eileen helping me sort through my office files, deciding what to discard, what to leave and what to take home. We hurriedly did this in the evening hours of a weekend in early June so that Bill Hinz could move into my office.

The student body held a special farewell assembly for me during the last week of school. Eileen and I received a beautiful red, white and blue patchwork quilt with the signatures of each of the 700 students on it. What a keepsake!

The retirement celebration on June 4, 1995 was a super event. Cindy and Mark and granddaughters, Gretchen and Anna came from New York. Lori and Kraig came from Chicago. Joel and Pam and grandson, Zachary came from Saginaw. The unexpected surprise was seeing Tim, who was doing research in Berlin at the time. He was not expected to come home!

In the celebration service, Tom Brazinsky, a former teacher from 1969-79, and now a pastor in Rockford, Michigan, served as the liturgist and Joel was the preacher. Joel reminded us in his sermon that we must continue to be tools of the Master for accomplishing His work.

My niece, Ann, had made a beautiful 3' by 5' banner, with the words “Master Teacher for the Lord 1955-1995.” It remains in a prominent spot in our home.

The dinner celebration was held at the Monte Carlo Hall in Utica. Over 275 guests signed the register. It was special to have these many congregation members and friends attend. It was a humbling, yet joyous feeling to have each of our children say kind words about Eileen and me.

I appreciated the many colleagues present as well as the congratulatory letters from District and Synodical officials, our Concordia universities, former faculty and former students and friends. I was pleased that Dr. John Schultz, Superintendent of the Rochester Community Schools, was invited. He presented me with a plaque commemorating my service to the community. I also received a special Tribute Citation from the State of Michigan celebrating my 34 years at St. John. It was signed by Governor Engler, Senator Matt Dunakiss, and Representatives Greg Kara and Penny Crissman. The Mayoral Proclamation from the Rochester City Council declared June 4, as “Roy Kaiser Day.”

The hundreds of cards and letters from former students, colleagues, faculty, and friends had been filed away in scrapbooks. As I now reread many of these, I am again humbled, as to the expressions of love and kindness shared for Eileen and me. A few samples are:

Kathy Wendland, my school secretary for 10 years wrote:

Now I ask you, amidst all the sentimental tributes and accolades, will there be anyone else, beside Eileen, who will mention the real secrets behind all those polished presentations and organized agendas? It's a scenario that still makes me grin. "I have an hour and a half before my flight leaves—do you think we can get out 140 copies of this devotion? Here's the beginning and then you go to paragraph A, and the B and C on this sheet—you type and I'll get it copied!" And we did!! It's one of the things that was a real gift to me in the job of school secretary, the feeling that I was not working FOR you, but that we worked together, and so many good things came to pass. How can a person measure affection and respect, the two qualities I feel so strongly for you? St. Paul talks about "Christ in you" and that is what I see day in and day out amidst frustrations and successes: Christ in you in your humility, in your relationships with everyone from kindergarteners to faculty to office staff; Christ in you, with your heart in mission outreach; Christ in you as you and Eileen model a beautiful, unassuming, Christ-centered family life.

Tom Klix, a former student said, "Thank you for helping me to grow up. I'll make it now!"

Randy Einem, my former assistant principal, wrote:

I firmly believe you are the one responsible for showing me how to be an effective administrator. We were attending a conference where Mel Kieschnick was the key speaker. You said, "Isn't he great! He knows so much and is able to share that with us. I have always considered him my mentor." Roy, that statement has stayed with me and now as I reflect on the times our paths have crossed, I want you to know that I have considered you my mentor over the years. You allowed me to learn for myself, yet you were always there to help and give counsel.

Dr. George Locke, Superintendent of Lutheran Schools in Michigan, wrote:

What can I say when the "cornerstone" retires? Well Roy, here goes, "On behalf of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod and the Michigan District, its brothers and sisters in the teaching ministry, and especially your fellow administrators, I say to God be the glory and praise for giving us YOU. What a servant! What a blessing! What a gift!"

Jim and Norma Heins wrote:

Our association with you goes back a few years. Jim remembers the softball games during the Walther League—then the trips to and from Concordia, River Forest. We have been blessed through our friendship. Getting acquainted with Eileen was also special. She surely is an inspiration to us all.

Hans Quitmeyer, a former student, and now a lawyer at Rogers and Wells in New York City, wrote:

I was among your first classes at St. John--- your realized vision of St. John School as a place where educational excellence coexists with the nurturing of a childlike faith is a rare legacy. We are in your debt and are grateful for your ministry among us.

Rev. Ron Irsch, my former pastor and co-worker at St. John, wrote: “You have truly been a positive role model to those who would aspire to serve the Lord in the noble profession of Christian Education.”

Rev. Jon Kassen, Pastor of Living Word congregation wrote “Truly the kingdom has grown through your ministry.”

Dr. Carl Moser, Director of Lutheran Schools, LCMS, wrote:

You have served the Lord long and well. All glory to Him for giving you the ability, the health, and the willingness to dedicate your life to His service. Indeed, our gracious God has been kind to you. Through you He has blessed many people, young and old.

Dr. John Herzog, Superintendent of the Lutheran High School Association of Greater Detroit, wrote:

Roy, the Lord has used you in a mighty way as His instrument to further the cause of Christian Education on so many levels—in the congregation, district, and synod. You are a tremendous blessing to the Church and have exemplified the humble ‘servant leadership’ asked of us by our Lord.

Arlene Kolb, former St. John teacher, wrote: “Thanks for being an encouraging and visionary principal. I enjoyed learning and teaching under you for the first 10 years of my ministry.”

Roy Midgley, a former parent, wrote: “Both my girls, Fay and Lynne and son, Mark, spent enough time under your tutelage and dedication to establish learning patterns and Christian values to guide them the rest of their lives.”

Dr. James Koerschen, President of Concordia College, Ann Arbor, wrote:

You are fondly remembered by many here at Concordia from your years of service on behalf of this and other institutions. Your years of leadership and service to our church offer an example of dedication and commitment for today’s students.

Gary Crawford, a former student, now working for the Saturn Corporation in Tennessee, wrote: “Congratulations! I went to St. John from kindergarten through eighth grade. I remember being in your office on a number of occasions!”

Marilyn Miller, former St. John teacher, wrote:

You passed along your famous cantaloupe wine at our housewarming/baby shower. Is that bottle still going around the faculty somewhere? What we will miss most is a toss-up between your always genuine friendliness we've experienced—and your overhead presentations.

Dr. Albert Huegli, former President of Valparaiso University, wrote:

My friendship with you goes back to the days when you were a student at Concordia, River Forest, and I was Dean of Students. Even then it was evident that the Lord had given you unusual gifts, and that you would be a great service to Him. Since that time the record of your accomplishments has been impressive.

Stella Sommerfeld, wife of Arthur, under whom I served as a teacher at Jehovah in Detroit, wrote:

Art often talked about his appreciation in having you as his co-worker. Art loved his teaching ministry just as you did. He went to his heavenly home in 1973. God has richly blessed your ministry in His vineyard. With your dear wife, Eileen and your family members you have succeeded with your vow to "feed my sheep."

Dr. John Loughner, former student at Jehovah, in Detroit, wrote: "You were a special person in my life in 1957. A lot of your influence has rubbed off on me because I am active with our church youth group and teach Sunday School. I now serve as an Assistant professor of Oncology at the University of Rochester Medical School in New York."

Dr. Rich Bimler, President, Wheat Ridge Ministries, wrote: "Hooray to the Lord! Hooray to the Kaisers! Hooray for life! Happy celebration—keep serving in retirement!"

Frank Walker, former teacher at St. John, wrote: "God has blessed your ministry with growth and used you to lead hundreds and hundreds of young people to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Master."

Dr. Mel Kieschnick, former Superintendent of Lutheran Schools in Michigan and former Director of Schools –LCMS, wrote: "It's one of the blessings of my life that some of my days have intersected with your days—and every time that happened, I came away blessed—and it ain't over yet!!!"

WOW! How blessed to have these wonderful remembrances!

One of the family thrills of this celebration was when I arrived home and there on the front lawn was a six-foot-by-six-foot hunting blind! The kids had chipped in together to pay for this blind that Joel had a member from his church in Saginaw build. This wood blind had windows that opened on all sides. It comfortably held three persons and was about seven feet tall. Wally Papenberg had transported it down with his truck on a flatbed trailer—I couldn't believe my eyes!

The real fun came the next week when Wally transported the blind up to our ten acres of hunting land in Gladwin county. We tried to position it in the middle of our land. We had to clear brush and cut down some trees. We finally had to use log rollers and man power, since the truck could not drive into the swampy area. It was now permanently placed for my life time!!

The local newspapers had articles regarding my retirement. Over the years, I had been interviewed a number of times by the various newspapers for educational comments. I have always been skeptical of making statements because sometimes I had “put my foot” in my mouth. At this time in retirement, I was asked by a number of the reporters of the local newspapers, a final thought. I did feel comfortable with this answer: “Our school has been accepted in our community, and our growth, I believe, reflects a trust in us. I’m also proud of our faculty and staff: through the years I’ve seen them totally committed to their calling. That calling involves transmitting core Christian values to children. We feel the values we want to project to youngsters are special. They are Biblically grounded; we can say God loves you, He has made you and cares about you. Teachers can witness to their own faith, and what it means to them. Those are things you can’t do in a secular public school, and nor should we; this is a Christian based message.” One newspaper writer went on to say, “For all his faith in his own school, Kaiser is also a staunch supporter of public education.”
What a celebration! The Lord be Praised!
Unpublished Memoirs—February, 2017

AN EPILOGUE---- REPOSITIONING AFTER RETIREMENT

What happens now? After serving 40 years in the teaching ministry, 34 of those years at St. John, I knew it was time to retire and look for other ways to yet serve the Lord. Eileen and I had often talked of foreign mission work - now was the time. I felt it was important to “get away” from St. John for a time and allow the new administration to function without me looking over their shoulders.

The Lord saw fit to send us 12,000 miles away—to Bangkok, Thailand. We couldn’t go any farther. What an experience!

I had the privilege to teach English and religion classes at the Concordia Gospel Ministry Center and Eileen helped out in the women’s ministry at the Center. We worked with over 300 Thai college students and adults during our year of volunteer ministry in 1995-96. It was an amazing experience to share the love of Jesus with these folks of the Buddhist faith.

In 1996-98 I had the opportunity to serve as assistant to Dr. George Locke, the Education Executive of the Michigan District. I traveled 76,000 miles around Michigan visiting Lutheran Schools. I believe I have been in every McDonald’s in the state.

From 1998 through 2007, I served as a Genesis consultant for the LCMS School Ministry program. This program was designed to assist congregations in starting a Lutheran school. I worked with 30 congregations throughout the U.S. from New England to California. Usually 4-6 congregational visits were required over a 12-month period.

From 1999 through 2014, I also served as the Project Director for the “Strengthening Schools and Congregations” (SSAC) program of the LCMS School Ministry program. This program was designed to aid those congregations throughout the U.S. that were having difficulty in maintaining a strong and quality school. I counseled with between 30 and 40 consultants, at times, who in teams of three, visited over 250 congregations throughout the U.S. during this time period. I personally went out on 20 congregation consultations during this time.

I retired from all travel programs in 2014. Running through airports was now over!

I continue to serve at St. John in Bible class and Lifelight teaching as well as giving devotions at the Sunrise Assisted Living Center in Rochester. Eileen continued to serve St. John as the volunteer church librarian through 2016. She had organized it originally in 1988. She also continued to be involved in the Esther Circle, Lifelight Bible class, Gleaners and the Christian Book Club. Recent back surgery for me and a severe hearing loss for Eileen, have now limited our involvement in many activities.

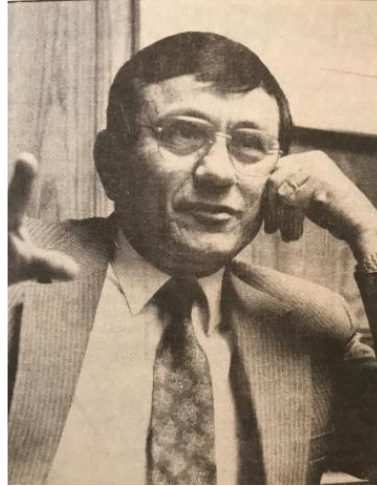
We now try to enjoy our children and grandchildren, a total family of 21 at this time, and growing. Phone calls and text messages bring us close together, since all of them are in different parts of the country.

All through these memoirs I have used the words “BLESSINGS, or BLESSED” time after time. I could think of no better word than that to share my feelings of how the Lord has been present in my life work and also His presence in the workings of St. John congregation and school.

Eileen and I are grateful that the Lord has continued to BLESS us with untold BLESSINGS.
May His will be done.
Roy Kaiser January 1, 2018



1961



1995

DR. KAISER... We dedicate this yearbook to you

Roy, as you conclude a most distinguished and respected career of some 40 years in the teaching/administrative ministry of the Lutheran church- Missouri Synod, with 34 of those years spent here at St. John.

It is with the greatest pleasure that we, the faculty and students of St. John Lutheran School, wish God's richest blessings to Dr. Roy Kaiser, our sincere friend, teacher and principal who 40 years ago responded to the commission of the Lord who said, "Feed my lambs," by accepting a call in 1955 as audiologist and teacher from the Lutheran School for the Deaf in Detroit, thus beginning a ministry in which the lives of many would be touched with the Love of Jesus. From 1957 to 1961 Roy served Greenfield/Peace Lutheran School also in Detroit and eventually was called to St. John in 1961 as Principal and part-time teacher. His deep interest in education manifested itself in the completion of a Doctor's Degree in Curriculum Development bestowed upon him in 1978 by Wayne State University. During this time Roy has faithfully nurtured the joy of learning in hundreds of students, taught them the will of God, but highest and above all, showed them the path to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ with great joy, love, and spirit! He likewise has given much guidance, wisdom, and direction in the work of the kingdom by serving on many boards, committees, and professional organization, too numerous to mention, of the community and the church as large. His administrative gifts were well used to the glory of God's kingdom as evidenced in the growth of our St. John, St. Stephen, Gethsemane, and eventually Living Word Lutheran Schools.

Among the many awards upon him were the MASTER TEACHER, 1981 from Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska; ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR, Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois; CHRISTUS PRIMUS from Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Michigan; and the most distinguished award given the first Lutheran school principal, namely the NATIONAL DISTINGUISHED PRINCIPAL AWARD from the U.S. Department of Education in 1984.

We thank the Lord for placing Roy in our school and church for the many years of faithful and loving service and by using him in a ministry affecting the lives of so many in God's Kingdom. We will miss seeing him every day. Thank you, Roy, for the many years; it has truly been a joy! May God Bless you!

“Auf Wiedersehen”

And

The Lord go with you...

+ Soli Deo Gloria +