

St. Luke's English Lutheran Church:

1936-1994

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Church History

May 1, 1996

"Necessity is the mother of invention". This popular phrase is one that has been used when explaining how it is that we keep making strides ahead in our technological world. When you think about it, this is indeed a very apt and fitting summary to the reasons behind everything we have that makes our lives a little easier. Necessity was also the driving force responsible for an event that occurred on Sunday, March 15, 1936. It was on this day that 15 children of God gathered together as a group for the first time, to worship their Lord and Savior. The story begins with the concerns of a Christian layperson by the name of John Bodeis.

John Bodeis was a Lutheran who had a very legitimate concern. As he looked around himself, he saw that the quickly growing city of Vassar, Michigan, in which he lived, was without a Lutheran church that the residents could call their own. Bodeis took his concerns to Pastor Emil Kassichke who was serving a parish in the nearby town of Mayville. Pastor Kassichke took Mr. Bodeis' concerns very seriously and quickly forwarded the problem to the Michigan District Mission Board of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other States.<sup>1</sup>

The first service was held in the Bodeis home on March 15, 1936. The service was officiated by Rev. A. F. Westendorf who was at that time serving a congregation in Bay City, Michigan. There were 15 people in attendance at that first Sunday worship service in the little town of Vassar. Encouraged by the results, this small group of Christians appointed Mr. Julius Ott to look for a more suitable place in which to hold weekly worship services. Eventually, arrangements were made to meet in the church building of the Seventh Day Adventists.

The first few months were difficult for this new "church." The main problem came in the area of scheduling services. There were only a limited number of pastors in the area, each with a hectic schedule at their own church. The group of Christians in Vassar <sup>were</sup> were at the mercy of the schedules of the area pastors. Relief came a few months later when Michigan Lutheran Seminary

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<sup>1</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Our Venture Of Faith, p. 5.

resumed at the beginning of a new school year. Mr. Erwin Froelich and Mr. Armin Schultz of the MLS faculty took turns holding regular services and Sunday School sessions.<sup>2</sup>

Although there are no written records proceeding 1937 it seems fairly certain that St. Luke's English Lutheran Church was officially founded in July of 1936. It was at this time that the congregation's constitution was adopted.<sup>3</sup> Now that there was a Lutheran church in Vassar a pastor was needed to lead it. Before a pastor could be called, however, the congregation realized that it would be necessary to provide their new pastor with a place to live. To that end, William Gruber and Julius Ott were assigned to a housing committee and given the task of finding a parsonage for the newly founded St. Luke's Lutheran Church. They found a home and on September 6, 1936 the congregation purchased it as their first parsonage.

With everything else taken care of, the next step was to call a pastor. On November 25, 1936, St. Luke's issued a divine call to Pastor A. W. Voges. Rev. Voges accepted the call and on January 17, 1937, he was installed as the first Pastor of St. Luke's. Upon the arrival of Pastor Voges, the little congregation consisted of 38 souls, 18 communicant members, 7 voting members, and a Sunday School of 19 students. The 18 charter members of St. Luke's include: Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Bender, Mr. and Mrs. John Bodeis, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Gohsman, Mr. and Mrs. William Gruber, Mr. and Mrs. Julius Catterfield, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Hoppe, Mr. and Mrs. Julius Ott, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Sorgatz, Mrs. Anna Fent, and Mrs. Arlene Atkins.<sup>4</sup>

Like so many other things in life, necessity had once again been the mother of invention. Necessitated by a need for Christian men and women to have a place of worship they could call their own, St. Luke's congregation was born. The dream of John Bodeis to have a Lutheran congregation in Vassar, was quickly becoming a reality.

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<sup>2</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 50 Years Of Grace, p. 1.

Over the next few years, things went very well for the congregation of St. Luke's. They <sup>congregat.</sup> applied for membership in the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other States, and was accepted into membership at the Synodical convention in August of 1939. Now as an official member of the synod with its own pastor, all that was left for the congregation to do was to grow.

The record of minutes from congregational and council meetings of St. Luke's does not begin until January of 1939. It is at this point that we find the congregation faced with its first problem, the need for more space. At a meeting of the congregation on January 23rd, it was decided that the parsonage needed the addition of one room for an office and remodeling <sup>of</sup> the kitchen totaling about \$500. It was eventually decided that the easiest route would be to just sell the parsonage and look for a new place for the pastor to live. This would eliminate the need for any kind of building project. A new home was found and the old parsonage was sold for \$1800 cash.<sup>5</sup>

The new parsonage was not without the need for remodeling, however. Although the chicken coops on the new premises fetched an attractive sum of \$10, there was a lot of work that needed to be done. The kitchen needed new linoleum and the porch needed to be repainted. A medicine cabinet needed to be purchased for the bathroom and the toilet needed to be remodeled.<sup>6</sup> This compounded with the fact that there was no heater for the bathroom made for a few monetary strains, but for a budding young congregation, these were only minor setbacks as the pastor moved into his new residence.

Things were looking very promising for St. Luke's Lutheran Church. They had a permanent pastor, services were well attended, and they were now a member of the <sup>L</sup> Lutheran Synod. All eyes were now looking to growth. The congregation did not have a place to call its own since services were still being held at the Seventh Day Adventist church of Vassar. The need for a building was thrust upon the congregation when, in March of 1940, St. Luke's was told by

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<sup>5</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 2, 1939.

<sup>6</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, September 1, 1939.

the Seventh Day Adventists that they were required to find another place for worship in 90 days unless building was commenced. In this case, they could remain until the building was complete.<sup>7</sup> Moved by this demand and fear of being back to square one, the congregation was prompted to begin its very first building project.

At the voter's meeting on March 4, 1940, the council presented to the voters the suggestions for a church building, as given by Mr. Samuel Allen, who was an architect stationed in Saginaw. Given the situation in which the congregation found itself, it was decided at the same meeting, that the rules regarding at least two weeks notice prior to a voter's meeting be set aside for the period of building.<sup>8</sup> With everything underway, it was now time to get financing for the project.

In January of 1940, the voters sought a \$6000 loan from the Synod.<sup>9</sup> On April 1, 1940, the church council met with the Mission Board of the Synod. At this meeting, Rev. Schroeder of the Mission Board explained the details of the loan which the Synod would give to St. Luke's. The Synod would loan St. Luke's the money for building with no payments due the first year. After that first year, the congregation would be expected to pay five percent of the principle, with no interest over the course of the next five years. Following that five year period, the loan would need to be refinanced with a small interest rate.<sup>10</sup>

On April 2, architect Joseph C. Goddeyne of Bay City was approached by the congregation and on June 19, 1940, the church council was named to serve as the building committee, with the trustees being given the job of developing the financing plans.<sup>11</sup> It was hoped that the entire building could be built for approximately \$6500<sup>12</sup>, but when the bids came in, the congregation was shocked to learn that the actual cost of the building would be approximately

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<sup>7</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, March 3, 1940.

<sup>8</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, March 4, 1940.

<sup>9</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, January 5, 1940.

<sup>10</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, April 1, 1940.

<sup>11</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 19, 1940.

<sup>12</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, August 31, 1940.

\$9500. It was obvious that some cuts would need to be made. Finally, after some cutbacks on the basement, chancel floor, and heating plans, the congregation was able to bring the total cost of the project down to \$7200.<sup>13</sup> It was still a bit more than anticipated, but a figure that the people were sure they could deal with.

Eventually the time came when it was necessary to choose a location for the new building. A member by the name of Dr. Swanson had some plots of land that he wished to donate as an outright gift to the church, but for some reason (probably location) the motion to accept them was defeated by a vote of 11-2, while a motion to have the church face Huron Street was accepted by a vote of 13-2. At that point, it was moved and accepted to solicit a loan <sup>of \$1000</sup> from a Mrs. Hazelwood ~~of \$1000~~ to start building.<sup>14</sup> At the July 1, 1940 meeting of the church council, it was decided to have the property surveyed. Then, on July 13, it was decided to begin gathering bids for the excavation of the property where the church building would be constructed.<sup>15</sup>

On August 31, it was reported that the lots had been surveyed at a cost of \$25.00. Later that same day, the congregation accepted bids and gave contracts of \$6500 for general construction and \$229 for the electrical work. With things pretty well underway it was also decided to get bids on the necessary heating and plumbing work.<sup>16</sup> By the grace of God, everything was off to a smooth and relatively problem-free start.

The people of St. Luke's congregation in Vassar managed to keep the attention of those who were members of area congregations. It was recognized that it was truly a blessing from the Lord that these people were able to successfully build a permanent structure in which they could worship. It was not long before the other congregations in the area began to acknowledge what the Christians in Vassar were doing. This recognition came in visible form in November of 1940,

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<sup>13</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 19, 1940.

<sup>15</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, July 1, 1940.

<sup>16</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, August 31, 1940.

when the congregation in nearby Mayville donated a bell to St. Luke's for their new church.<sup>17</sup> This was indeed a beautiful example of Christian love and rejoicing.

With the excavation well underway, attention was turned to the construction of the church basement. It was resolved to have L. Secce put in the basement floor while a contract was sought with a professional plumber. The plumbing contract was made with Nuechterlein Supply Company for \$231. Another gift was also donated for the new church building from Rev. George Luetke's church in Loledo. The gift was a new hymn board.<sup>18</sup>

Finally in the spring of 1941, the congregation of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Vassar, Michigan finally had its own building in which to worship. The cost ended up to be approximately \$8000 and the dedication service was held on March 30, 1941. Guest pastors were, the Rev. M. C. Schroeder of Bay City and the Rev. R. Hoenecke of Chesaning.<sup>19</sup>

In May of 1945, Pastor Voges was extended a call to serve as the executive director of the Lutheran Children's Friend Society. He accepted the call and St. Luke's began the process of calling another man to shepherd their growing flock of souls. A call was issued to Pastor Norman Engel of Eau Claire, Michigan, but he returned the call. The congregation then issued a call to the Rev. Willard Kehrberg of Hale, Michigan and he was installed as the second Pastor of St. Luke's on July 29, 1945.<sup>20</sup>

Two milestones for the congregation occurred during the pastorate of Rev. Kehrberg. The first was the purchase of a new organ. At the Voters' meeting in April of 1949, it was approved that a special fund would be set up specifically for the purpose of purchasing a new organ for the church.<sup>21</sup> The organ was officially purchased by the Ladies' Society, with the help of additional donations. On January 28, 1951, it was dedicated in a special service.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, November 8, 1940.

<sup>18</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, December 2, 1940.

<sup>19</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship. (May 15, 1977), p. 4.

<sup>20</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 6, 1945.

<sup>21</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 3, 1949.

<sup>22</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, January 14, 1951.

The second milestone for the church during the tenure of Pastor Kehrberg, was the retirement of the debt acquired during the building of the church in 1941. In January of 1952 plans were made for observing this momentous occasion. The event would take place on January 27 with Pastor Kehrberg in charge of securing a guest speaker and notifying former members.<sup>23</sup> Former pastors Voges and Westendorf returned as guests for the "mortgage burning."

As wonderful as these two occasions were, Pastor Kehrberg was not without his share of difficulties. The biggest problem began to surface in 1950. Even though this was still eleven years before the official split between the Wisconsin and Missouri synods, tensions were already beginning to grow at St. Luke's over the doctrine of fellowship. In fact, during the late 1940's and early 1950's, theological differences caused some members to withdraw and form a second Lutheran church in the community.<sup>24</sup> The following excerpt from the Congregational meeting of June 25, 1950, gives us an idea of the problems that were starting to take root.

*Mr. Engelhardt wanted to know why the difference in the synods. Rev. Kehrberg explained the difference. Mr. Schmidt took the floor and talked about other synod Lutherans in Vassar that cannot belong to our church. Mr. Schmidt said we should work in harmony which we are not doing because of our pastor's attitude. Mr. John Krumnauer took the floor and mentioned personalities, clubs, etc. The pastor said it was our privilege to resign if we didn't like the constitution of the church and live by it. Mr. Geyer, Mr. Bauer, Mr. Engelhardt, and everybody talked. The main subject was our Boy Scouts, lodges, etc...Our pastor said there was a way to have him resign, also a way to change to another synod. Everybody agreed that a lot of good came out of this meeting.<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, January 13, 1952.

<sup>24</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 25, 1950.



In July of the same year, Pastor Kehrberg received a call to Wajack. Despite the problems that were beginning to arise, Pastor Kehrberg felt that he was still needed at St. Luke's in Vassar and at a special meeting on August 13, he announced his decision to return the call to Wajack.<sup>26</sup>

There were no real noteworthy events during the remainder of Pastor Kehrberg's tenure at St. Luke's and in June of 1953, Pastor Kehrberg accepted a call to St. Mark's in Watertown, Wisconsin. This left the congregation with a vacancy which they proceeded to deal with as soon as possible. On August 31, 1953 a special meeting of the congregation was held for the purpose of calling a new pastor. It was unanimously decided to issue a divine call to Pastor Edward Renz of <sup>Scottville</sup> Seatville, Michigan. The call stated that he would receive a yearly salary of \$3,300.00 and that the congregation would pay his water and telephone bills.<sup>27</sup>

Pastor Renz returned the call and on September 23 another special meeting of the voters was requested for the purpose of calling a pastor. It was unanimously decided to call Pastor Donald Meir of Gerard, Illinois. The salary and benefits would be the same as stated in the call previously issued to Pastor Renz.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, Pastor Meir also returned the call. On November 25, 1953 the voters met at another special meeting to issue another call for a pastor at St. Luke's.

There was another unanimous vote, this time to call Pastor Raymond Frey of Hemlock, Michigan. As in the first two cases, the same salary and benefits would apply.<sup>29</sup> Pastor Frey accepted the call and on January 24, 1954, he was installed as the third pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Vassar, Michigan.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Minutes of Special Congregational Meeting, August 13, 1950.

<sup>27</sup>Minutes of Special Congregational Meeting, August 31, 1953.

<sup>28</sup>Minutes of Special Congregational Meeting, September 23, 1953.

<sup>29</sup>Minutes of Special Congregational Meeting, November 25, 1953.

<sup>30</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 5.

Like Pastor Kehrberg, there are two events in the tenure of Pastor Frey that are of particular historical interest. The first took place in 1955. At a congregational meeting on March 7, 1955 it was decided to put together a committee whose job would be to make some changes to the church constitution and bring it up to date. The committee was made up of Pastor Frey, H. Bauer, E. Korthals, and N. Radina.<sup>31</sup> The changes were accepted by the congregation the following month.<sup>32</sup>

It was during the year of 1959 that we see the other major event during the pastorate of Raymond Frey. The congregation was once again confronted with a bit of a dilemma, as discussion turned to the matter of a new parsonage. On April 12, 1959, it was decided that the congregation should endeavor to build a new parsonage. A building committee was set up consisting of Werner Stuwe and Bernard VanWingen with Harvey Bruder and Carl Bleaser elected as the project's finance committee. A motion was made to put the old parsonage up for bids, and the house would be moved off of the lot by the party with the highest bid.<sup>33</sup> At a congregational meeting in June of 1959, the matter of building a new parsonage was approved, despite the fact that there were some who felt that the current parsonage could be repaired at a much lower cost than building a new one.<sup>34</sup> With the project approved, work began on the new parsonage. The project was completed in the spring of 1960.<sup>35</sup>

While the pastorate of Rev. Frey saw some very positive and encouraging events, that is not to say the congregation was free of problems. Throughout Pastor Frey's stay, finances remained the biggest struggle for the congregation. The problem became so great that the treasurer was forced to take funds which were designated for mission work and put them into the general fund, in order to finance the day to day operations of the church. The voters did not

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<sup>31</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, March 7, 1955.

<sup>32</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 4, 1955.

<sup>32</sup>See Appendix B.

<sup>33</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 12, 1959.

<sup>34</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 7, 1959.

<sup>35</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 5.

agree with this practice, however, and in the voters' meeting of July 8, 1956, "a discussion was held on church finances and on the using of mission money for home. It is the consensus of the members present that the treasurer strictly adhere to the regulations of disbursing of church money."<sup>36</sup> Such being the case, it was necessary for the treasurer to prioritize the disbursement of funds and it was later reported that mission and insurance payments remained the outstanding items of debt.<sup>37</sup>

Another problem that was persistent throughout the pastorate of Rev. Frey was that of fellowship. The ripples of discord, over the doctrine of fellowship, seemed to carry over from the Kehrberg era into the Frey years. Pastor Frey, unwilling to bend to the pressure, remained faithful to the scriptural teachings concerning fellowship with other church bodies. As a result, the church lost members and even whole families who transferred to other Lutheran churches in the area. This weighed heavily on Pastor Frey and ultimately was one of the deciding factors for his accepting a call issued to him from a Northfield Township parish. In the congregational meeting of September 27, 1959, Pastor Frey gave the following reasons for his accepting the call:

*He (Pastor Frey) said he feels that he has served his usefulness in our midst due to the fact that we have lost some of our church members and that many who used to be fairly regular attendants very seldom come to church. He said that he feels that many in the congregation do not have faith in him or have personal reasons for not liking him.<sup>38</sup>*

In a continuation of that September meeting, Pastor Frey wanted a correction made to the statements he had made. He commented that he did not mean that some of the members felt animosity toward him personally, but rather toward his firm stand in doctrine, as it was set forth

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<sup>36</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, July 8, 1956.

<sup>37</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, January 5, 1958.

<sup>38</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, September 27, 1959.

by Scripture. He said that some members felt that he was holding "too strict a course in compliance with the Wisconsin Synod."<sup>39</sup>

Pastor Frey left in October of 1959 and on October 28 of that same year, the congregation voted unanimously to issue a divine call to the Rev. Orville Maasch of Kenton, Ohio. Pastor Maasch accepted the call and on December 13, 1959, he was installed as the fourth pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church.

The first few years Pastor Maasch served St. Luke's had their share of challenges, but nothing that was detrimental to the ministry of the church. As the Synod was being rocked by the waves of division over the subject of fellowship with the Missouri Synod, St. Luke's was able to weather the storm without too much difficulty. Pastor Maasch attributes this to the fact that the split between the synods was not dwelt upon very much. On commenting about this matter he states, "It (the split with Missouri Synod) didn't really affect us at all. There was one discussion at a congregational meeting at which it was decided [St. Luke's] would continue teaching the truth of God's Word."<sup>40</sup>

By far, a greater challenge for Pastor Maasch was that of poor church attendance. There was also much room for growth. Upon his arrival, Pastor Maasch discovered that over 70% of the community was unchurched.<sup>41</sup> The importance of church attendance and evangelism work were given particular emphasis during the early years of Pastor Maasch's ministry.

With the concentrated efforts of a mission-minded Pastor, St. Luke's congregation began to see growth. The 1960's saw a steady increase in membership and church attendance. It actually got to the point that Sunday school classes were being conducted in every available space including the church nave and basement, parsonage basement, and even the Pastor's office in the parsonage!<sup>42</sup> To alleviate the problem of overcrowding during services, the church council

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<sup>39</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, October 4, 1959.

<sup>40</sup>Interview with Pastor Orville Maasch, August 3, 1995.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 50 Years Of Grace, p. 3.

decided to implement two worship services on Sunday mornings, but it was obvious that if St. Luke's were to continue growing more room would be needed, particularly for the purpose of education.

By the fall of 1964, it was decided that plans would need to be considered for expanding the facilities at St. Luke's. In the congregational meeting of April 4, 1965, Pastor Maasch brought up the topic of expansion. He said that the Sunday school classes were simply too large for the current space available. He suggested that a planning committee be set up to study the question and make recommendations both as to Sunday school and adult worship facilities.<sup>43</sup> The board of trustees was instructed to name a planning committee and the members named to this committee were Harold Bauer, Ernest Bender Jr., Hallie Greenwood, Werner Stuwe, and Charles Whitney.<sup>44</sup> In August of that same year, the planning committee returned to the congregation with a recommendation to proceed with whatever steps were necessary to expand the church's facilities to fit their needs. It was moved and accepted that a building committee be appointed and that an architect be consulted as to the cost and design for an expansion program. Appointed to the building committee in addition to those already on the planning committee were Alex Hubbard, E.C. Korthals, Don Thurston, Walfred Tollefson, and Marvin Rupprecht.<sup>45</sup>

On April 9, the congregation gave the building committee permission to hire an architect and get the project underway.<sup>46</sup> On January 28, 1966, approval was given to the hiring of architect Thomas Schmidt of Saginaw, Michigan. Plans were drawn up and accepted by a vote of 24 to 3.<sup>47</sup> Six classrooms and meeting rooms in the basement of the church, and six more classrooms, a fellowship hall and kitchen on the first floor were all part of the 5,200 square foot

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<sup>43</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 4, 1965.

<sup>44</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 5.

<sup>45</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, August 1, 1965.

<sup>46</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, January 9, 1966.

<sup>47</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 5, 1966.

plan.<sup>48</sup> On February 12, 1967, the congregation decided, by a unanimous vote, to start work on the new building along with giving the finance committee approval to borrow \$120,000.<sup>49</sup> Work on the physical plant began with the ground breaking ceremony on Palm Sunday, March 19, 1967.<sup>50</sup> Finally, after months of planning and building, the new addition was dedicated in day-long services led by Pastor Maasch on February 25, 1968. Guest speaker for the afternoon thanksgiving service was Rev. Herbert Buch of Saginaw with Rev. Raymond Frey serving as liturgist.<sup>51</sup>

The next step was to get, in writing, the regulations concerning the use of the new facilities. The congregation appointed a committee for this purpose with Charles Whitney as the chairman.<sup>52</sup> The following is the list of regulations that were adopted by the congregation at the advisement of Charles Whitney's committee:

- 1. The fellowship hall will be available to members of St. Luke's only.*
- 2. The fellowship hall is not to be used for private money raising projects such as bingo, Tupperware parties, Stanley parties, or similar projects.*
- 3. The fellowship hall may be used for:*
  - a. Church family activities such as weddings, funerals, anniversaries, confirmation celebrations, etc.*
  - b. Hall may be used for congregational activities such as potluck dinners, meetings, etc.*
  - c. Hall may be used for W.E.L.S. activities such as conventions, meetings, etc.*
- 4. No member of the congregation may be excluded from any activities involving the use of the hall.*

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<sup>48</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>49</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, February 12, 1967.

<sup>50</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, March 6, 1967.

<sup>51</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>52</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, June, 1968.

*5. Fellowship hall furniture and furnishings are not to be removed from the hall except by special permission from the church council.<sup>53</sup>*

The years immediately following the building of the new addition were relatively peaceful and uneventful. Business in the church continued as usual, with most of the discussions at meetings revolving around upkeep of the building and grounds. One thing, however, stuck out among the otherwise normal affairs of the church and that was growth. More and more people were joining the congregation<sup>54</sup> and within a few years, a pleasant problem needed to be addressed. This problem was that, the congregation at St. Luke's Lutheran Church was beginning to run out of room for worship services. During the early 1970's, it became evident that efforts at building a new church would have to be faced soon. Morning services were overflowing and overflow facilities in the basement had to be used regularly.<sup>55</sup>

On April 7, 1974, the voting assembly gave congregational Chairman Charles Whitney authorization to appoint a planning committee, which would look into the feasibility of building a new church. Named to the committee were Donald Gunther, Harvey Bruder, Hallie Greenwood, Ronald Graubner, James Heidenberger, Richard Klockziem, and Gary Volz.<sup>56</sup> The planning committee went to work and within six months time, was able to present a report to the congregation which was unanimously accepted. At that time, the planning committee was granted building committee status. Dr. Fred Emling and Gil Somerville were added as new members and Hallie Greenwood was elected as the building committee chairman.<sup>57</sup>

Over the next year and a half, literally hundreds of man-hours of study, research, and planning went into the project. Looking back on the work which Thomas Schmidt had done in

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<sup>53</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 30, 1968.

<sup>54</sup>See Appendix E.

<sup>55</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>56</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 6, 1974.

<sup>57</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, October 6, 1974.

designing the education wing built in 1967, it was decided to hire him for the purpose of coming up with a building plan for a new church which could be presented to the congregation.<sup>58</sup> Finally on April 4, 1976, Hallie Greenwood, chairman of the building committee, gave a report to the congregation concerning all of the committees findings along with preliminary drawings from Thomas Schmidt. After a lengthy discussion the drawings were approved and a motion was made with support to build a new church. The motion passed with only one dissenting vote.<sup>59</sup> On May 26, 1976 plans were made to prepare for the building of the new church. June 20th was set as the day for the ground breaking ceremony. It was suggested that a new spade be purchased for this occasion which would then be chrome plated and engraved. It was also decided to start moving the furniture out of the church as soon as possible so that demolition of the current church building could begin.<sup>60</sup>

In the afternoon of June 20th, Maurice Finger of Frankenmuth, Michigan, began the work of dismantling "the little white church on the hill." While this was a sad day for everyone the congregation went full steam ahead with the building project, which now loomed before them. The congregation decided to call in a pastor whenever necessary during the time of building so that Pastor Maasch might have additional time to spend on the building project. It was also decided to purchase an organ from Wickes Organ Company, which would be custom built for the new church.<sup>61</sup> The cornerstone was laid on October 24, 1976 and the dedication for the new church building was set for May 15, 1977.<sup>62</sup> The work on the new building progressed nicely and it was reported to the congregation that "the building committee toured the new church with the

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<sup>58</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>59</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 4, 1976.

<sup>60</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, May 26, 1976.

<sup>61</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, July 18, 1976.

<sup>62</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church: On The Occasion Of The Dedication Of Its New House Of Worship, (May 15, 1977), p. 6.



job foreman and found very little fault with the workmanship."<sup>63</sup> Everything went according to schedule and on May 15, 1977, the new church building was dedicated to the glory of the Lord.

One goal still remained for St. Luke's Lutheran Church, a goal which really had been around since the founding of the congregation. Since its humble beginnings, St. Luke's always had a special concern for the spiritual training of their children. Already when Pastor Voges arrived in 1937, the small group of Christians which had formed the congregation, already had a thriving Sunday School program. Throughout the years, St. Luke's always did whatever it could to help promote the importance of a sound Christian-based education for its youth. With this concern also came the dream to one day have a Lutheran school which St. Luke's could call its own.

As the congregation grew, so did the concern for the need of a school. Already in 1978, only one year after the dedication of the new church building, discussion was starting on the plans for a school. At the October 1st congregational meeting, it was recommended that the congregation "begin formalizing plans for a Christian day school by the 50th anniversary of St. Luke's (1986)." At the same meeting it was also moved with support, to give the Board for Christian Education the authority to go ahead and be on the lookout for property to be used for a Christian day school.<sup>64</sup> The motion passed and St. Luke's was setting the stage for another building project.

On February 3, 1980 there was a special congregational meeting called. At this meeting, the Board of Christian Education presented a report on the progress of obtaining property for a Christian day school. Ron Graubner, chairman of the Board of Education, reported that they had met with Erhardt Bauer about some land, but the meeting was one of great confusion. Mr. Bauer was going to sell his land and told the board that he had been contacted by a developer who was willing to pay him \$24,000 per acre, but he refused to commit himself on what offer he would

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<sup>63</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 3, 1977.

<sup>64</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, October 1, 1978.

accept from the congregation. One moment he wanted to sell his land to the church and the next he would say that he wished the congregation would not try to buy it. Finally the board told Mr. Bauer that they would meet with the congregation to see how much St. Luke's would be willing to pay.<sup>65</sup>

After lengthy discussion, the congregation decided to offer Mr. Bauer \$5,000 per acre for 5 acres. It was also decided to allow the Board of Christian Education to go up to \$8,000 per acre for a land contract if it was necessary to help arrive at a figure which would secure Mr. Bauer's land for the church. The land really was prime property on which to locate the school because of its close proximity to the church. The congregation was ready to go to great lengths in order to purchase it.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, on December 7, 1980, it was reported that after months of meeting and discussion, Erhardt Bauer said he did not want to sell any of his land to the church at that time.<sup>67</sup> This meant that the work of finding a suitable location to build a school would have to continue.

Even though it seemed that this was not the time to make a land purchase, the future prospect of building a school remained in the thoughts of the congregation. After six years of watching and waiting, the congregation was able to get another chance at purchasing some choice acreage for their purposes. In June of 1986, 10.8 acres were under consideration by the church. A committee was promptly formed to look into purchasing the land from Ray McGillivray.<sup>68</sup> Three months later, Pastor Maasch reported to the Church Council that all the perk tests the church had ordered for the land came back good.<sup>69</sup> Not about to lose out once again, the congregation made the decision to purchase the land.

Even though the land had been purchased for the construction of a Christian Day School, the land would sit idle for a while as the plans for a school were developed. At the December

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<sup>65</sup>Minutes of Special Congregational Meeting, February 3, 1980.

<sup>66</sup>Minutes of Special Congregational Meeting, February 3, 1980.

<sup>67</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, December 7, 1980.

<sup>68</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 29, 1986.

<sup>69</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, September 8, 1986.

14th congregational meeting, a motion was made and approved to rent the land purchased for the use of a school, to George Miller. Mr. Miller would use the land for farming until the time when the church was ready to begin building. In return for the use of the land, Mr. Miller would pay St. Luke's congregation \$300.<sup>70</sup>

Now that the church had acquired land, it was time to consider what the future plans would be for the congregation. A committee was set up consisting of Tom Kabat, Ron Graubner, Tom Hecht, Jim Clinesmith, and Walt Martini to study possible options for the use of this newly acquired land.<sup>71</sup> Once this committee finished its preliminary work, it was now up to the Board of Education to take the next steps. The dream was beginning to turn into reality as the Board of Education met to decide on the guidelines and objectives for St. Luke's Lutheran School.

After careful study and considerations, the Board of Education made its report to the voter's of the congregation. Estimated enrollments for 1988-92 were presented and it was stressed that the school would be an opportune agent for doing mission work within the community. It was also reported that the church in the neighboring town of Mayville had also expressed interest in using St. Luke's school and estimated that approximately 20 students would attend.<sup>72</sup>

The Board of Education report was very encouraging and the voters' assembly immediately decided to set up a committee which would also study the feasibility of establishing a pre-school. This committee's findings would be reported to the Board of Education who would relay the findings to the Church Council. From the Council it would then be presented to the congregation. Congregational chairman Tom Kabat then appointed Dan Swaffer and John Solgat to the two-man committee.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, December 14, 1986.

<sup>71</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, October 4, 1987.

<sup>72</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, January 8, 1989.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

At the February meeting of the Church Council, the Christian Board of Education presented the approximate cost to operate a Christian day school. The following is an excerpt from the minutes of that meeting:

*Christian Board of Education, The realistic costs of operating a Christian day school were discussed. Example: The Synod's suggested salary for a school principal with 5 years experience is \$15,000 plus fringe benefits of \$8,200. In addition there is the cost of teaching material for a total estimated cost of \$29,500. This does not include the cost of insurance, etc. We would also need a janitor at about \$15,000. Bethel of Bay City has a principal and 4 full time teachers which costs \$114,000 per year plus to operate their school. A motion was made by Comstock and supported by M. Dowe to bring to the Congregation the anticipated costs of our school. In the meantime, the CBE should continue their studies as related to the starting of a Christian day school. The motion passed.<sup>74</sup>*

After further study, it was reported that the cost for a school would end up to be \$1450+ per student. This figure was based on a school enrollment of 155-200 students in grades 1-8 through 1992. Pastor Maasch pointed out that, if a Christian day school were to become a reality for St. Luke's, the budget would have to double in order to meet the 60% of operating budget necessary for operating a school. He also stressed that St. Luke's was capable of supporting a school, but that stewardship would have to improve, or else they would not be able to financially reach their goal. It was decided to keep studying the Christian day school, and to publicize to the congregation the need for better stewardship, in order to reach the goal of establishing a school.<sup>75</sup>

In June of 1989, the congregation was put into a position that necessitated action on the part of establishing a school. It was reported at an emergency meeting of the Church Council that families and prospects were being lost due to the fact that St. Luke's did not have a school.

*Pastor Maasch informed us that the reason for the emergency meeting was to voice his concern that members were leaving our congregation or were contemplating leaving because of the fact*

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<sup>74</sup>Minutes of Church Council Meeting, February 13, 1989.

<sup>75</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 2, 1989.

*that we do not have an operating Christian Day School. Pastor informed the council that since April of 1988, 10 adults and 14 school age children had left our congregation because of the lack of a Christian Day School, and that several more families had contacted him and discussed leaving the congregation for this reason. Pastor also informed us that he has lost several prospects because of our lack of a Christian Day School. After much discussion, it was agreed that we must better inform our congregation of the progress of the Christian Day School, and that it is a reality. Pastor read a letter that he proposed be sent to each member detailing the seriousness of this matter, and also detailing the steps that have taken place already in preparation for our Christian Day School. Pastor suggested that an informational assembly be held informally to discuss the school and to our members know what is going on and where we are going with the school. The meeting will stress the importance of patience and loyalty which the Board of Christian Education completes their study.<sup>76</sup>*

Despite the alarming circumstances, the leadership of the congregation chose not to act rashly and in haste, but to plan carefully before coming to any conclusions. On October 1, it was reported to the congregation that six subcommittees would continue to study the establishment of a school. They would then report their findings to the Church Council in April of 1990, and would seek the approval of the voters in June of that same year.<sup>77</sup>

True to their word, the subcommittees reported their findings to the Church Council and in June of 1990, it was officially decided by the congregation to proceed with the establishment of a Christian day school.

*Jerry Comstock opened the vote for the day school by answering questions concerning the school. Jerry then motioned that we adopt the question for the vote, "Should St. Luke's establish a Lutheran Christian day school with a tentative date to open in the Fall of 1991?" with support from Ron Graubner. Motion carried. The vote was a secret ballot, with votes counted by Ron Graubner and Guy Brunner. The vote was affirmative, with 22 votes for and 5 against. Motion to establish a day school carried. A motion was then made by Ron Graubner to have*

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<sup>76</sup>Minutes of Emergency Church Council Meeting, June 22, 1989.

<sup>77</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, October 1, 1990.

*Mayville join with us in a joint venture in the day school establishment.  
Motion was supported and carried.<sup>78</sup>*

Once the motion was passed, a nine member building committee was appointed consisting of Ron Graubner, Roy Brunner, Harvey Bruder, Marvin Dowe, Halle Greenwood, Wes Martin, Brad Rupprecht, Donald Streeter, and Dan Swaffer.<sup>79</sup>

Two months after the formation of the building committee, the congregation decided to hire John Meyer of Bay City as the architect for the job, and to use the preliminary sketches he had developed.<sup>80</sup> The sketches called for a four room school which would also include a school office, principal's office, faculty work room, faculty, boys and girls toilet rooms, a spacious storage room, mechanical room and janitor's room. Future phases of building were designed into the original building plans which would allow for four additional classrooms, a cafeteria, kitchen, and gymnasium with locker rooms.<sup>81</sup>

The motion was also made, supported, and approved to hold a call meeting on January 20, 1990, for the purpose of calling a male teacher to fill the position of principal.<sup>82</sup> At the call meeting in January, it was unanimously accepted to call Mr. James Bilitz to be the principal of St. Luke's school with a salary of \$28,000 plus insurance and pension.<sup>83</sup>

While they waited for an answer from Mr. Bilitz, the congregation asked for bids from ten local contractors regarding the building of their school. The lowest bid of \$315,960, was submitted by builder, Vern Purdy. The estimated time of completion for the school was set at 150 days.<sup>84</sup> In July of 1991, the President and Secretary of the congregation were given authorization to secure a loan of \$220,000 for the financing of the new school.<sup>85</sup> With the money in hand,

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<sup>78</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, June 10, 1990.

<sup>79</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Our Venture Of Faith, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, August 12, 1990.

<sup>81</sup>St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Our Venture Of Faith, p. 15.

<sup>82</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, August 12, 1990.

<sup>83</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, January 20, 1991.

<sup>84</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, February 17, 1991.

<sup>85</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, July 7, 1991.

building commenced, and the doors of St. Luke's Lutheran School were ready to open for the 1991-92 school year.

Although the building process seemed like it would move fairly quickly, finding a principal did not. In March 1991, James Bilitz returned the call which St. Luke's had issued to him. Upon the return of the call, the congregation decided to issue the call to Mr. Kurt Rosenbaum.<sup>86</sup> Once again the call was returned and a third call was issued, this time to Mr. John Lange of Houston, Texas.<sup>87</sup> Mr. Lange accepted the call allowing the congregation to start calling for a lower grade/kindergarten teacher. This call was issued to Clare Rehberger of Hemlock, Michigan. It was decided to offer the new teacher \$18,300 per year with FICA, workman's compensation, and pension.<sup>88</sup> Mrs. Rehberger returned the call, so the congregation issued the same call with the same terms to Mrs. Cori Einhart. Mrs. Einhart accepted the call and St. Luke's Lutheran School was able to open with a total enrollment of 45 students, 23 in Cori Einhart's room (K-3rd grade) and 22 in John Lange's room (4th-8th grade).<sup>89</sup>

Once again the Lord blessed the efforts of St. Luke's beyond what they had anticipated. Due to increasing enrollment potential, the congregation made the decision to call another teacher. The call was issued to Elsa Manthey, of Wisconsin, at a salary of \$30,186 per year.<sup>90</sup> When the call was returned, the congregation then decided to tap a resource which was right in the Vassar area. On April 4, 1993 the call was offered to Cindy Lange, the wife of Principal John Lange. Mrs. Lange accepted the call, and it was decided that she would be installed as a full time Kindergarten/1st grade teacher due to the high enrollment levels. This meant that there would now be a need to call a teacher for the pre-school. The recommendation from the Church Council regarding the structure of classes for 1994-95 was Kindergarten-1st grade in one room (18 students), 2nd-4th grade in one room (21 students), and 5th-8th grade in one room (29

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<sup>86</sup>Minutes of Call Meeting, March 10, 1991.

<sup>87</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 17, 1991.

<sup>88</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, July 7, 1991.

<sup>89</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, October 6, 1991.

<sup>90</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, January 6, 1992.

students).<sup>91</sup> With the structure in place, it was decided to call Miss Rachel Westendorf to serve as the pre-school teacher on a part time basis.<sup>92</sup> Miss Westendorf accepted the call and was installed in August of 1994.

St. Luke's has shown interest in all areas of Christian education. From adult Bible study to Sunday School, the congregation has displayed a zeal for studying the Word of God. They have also recognized the importance of educating the men who will one day serve in the full-time pastoral ministry. This has been displayed since 1981, the year the congregation decided to get involved with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's vicar program. Since that time, they have taken on the responsibility of a new vicar every year.

At the time of this writing, St. Luke's has seen another chapter in its history come to a close. On October 15, 1995, Pastor Orville Maasch retired after 35 years of faithful service. With the loss of this dedicated servant of Christ, many are asking, "What lies in the future for this group of Christians in Vassar, Michigan?" Only the Lord really knows. Although the next years will be filled with challenges, St. Luke's has a history they can look back on for evidence of the fact that it is the almighty power of a loving, gracious God which will carry this congregation into the year 2000 and beyond. St. Luke's certainly has flourished, particularly over the past few decades. We continue to pray that the Lord would continue to bless the work which the Christians in Vassar are doing, so that through St. Luke's Lutheran Church, the gospel may continue to be shared with a world which so desperately needs to hear it.

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<sup>91</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, January 2, 1994.

<sup>92</sup>Minutes of Congregational Meeting, March 27, 1994.



## APPENDIX A

*The following is a copy of the Constitution and by-laws for St. Luke's as it was adopted on July 18, 1937.*

### CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF ST. LUKE'S ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH Vassar, Michigan

Adopted July 18, 1937

#### PREAMBLE

Whereas God's word demands (I Cor. 14, 40) that in a Christian congregation all things be done decently and in order, therefore have a number of Lutherans in and about Vassar, Michigan, deemed it proper to lay down by the present document the order by which they are to be united in this congregation, and according to which the inner and outer affairs of the congregation shall be administered.

#### CONSTITUTION

##### Article I

##### NAME

The name of this corporate church body shall be: St. Luke's English Lutheran Church of Vassar, Michigan.

##### Article II

##### ARTICLES OF FAITH

This congregation accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the inspired word of God, and as the sole rule and norm of Christian faith and life; likewise it accepts all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the pure and correct interpretation and exposition of this divine word. These confessional writings of the church are the following: The Apostolic Creed, The Nicene Creed, and The Athanasian Creed; The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and The Apology of the same; The Smalcald Articles; Dr. Luther's Small and Large Catechisms; The Formula of Concord, and The Articles of the Visitation of Saxony.

##### Article III

##### SYNODICAL AFFILIATION

This congregation shall be a member of such synod only as confesses these symbols and obligates its members to them in both faith and practice.

##### Article IV

##### PASTORATE

The pastoral office of this congregation shall be conferred upon such ministers only:

- a. Who declare their acceptance of and adhere to all canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired word of God, and all the symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church enumerated in Article II as the correct exposition of this word of God;

- b. Who possess the qualifications of a servant of the Word as described in I Tim. 3, 1-6 and Titus 1, 7-9.
- c. Who have been examined by competent representatives of an orthodox Lutheran church body and found to be sound in doctrine and apt to teach.

Article V  
DUTIES OF THE PASTOR

The duties of the pastor shall be to preach the word of God and to administer the holy sacraments in full accordance with the confessions of this congregation (Article II), to lead a godly and exemplary life, to visit the sick and destitute, to be diligent in the religious instruction and proper training of the young, to comfort, instruct, reprove, admonish, and warn, both publicly and privately, as the word of God directs in I Tim. 2.

He shall also keep and preserve carefully and accurately the following records: Record of Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages, Deaths, Communion Attendance, Communicant Membership, and such a record of souls as is feasible.

Article VI  
PASTOR'S TENURE OF OFFICE

The office of pastor in this congregation is properly filled if a pastor has been called by a unanimous vote, after having been elected by a majority vote, and is duly installed upon his acceptance of the call under authorization by the president of the synodical district to which the congregation belongs.

The office of pastor is properly vacant if the pastor receives a call from a sister congregation or tenders his resignation and is peacefully dismissed; it is also properly vacant, should the congregation dismiss its pastor because charges of manifest incompetency, neglect of duties, false doctrine, or willful and persistent scandalous life have been brought and substantiated.

Such removal from office shall be binding upon pastor and congregation only if the following procedure has been observed: The party or parties having any such charge to bring against the pastor shall first inform him of this in writing by them and properly signed; they shall thereupon communicate their charge through the president of the congregation to the elders, and as a last measure to the congregation. If their efforts to obtain a satisfactory understanding are successful at any of these stages, further action is unwarranted. No action of the congregation whereby a pastor is dismissed from the pastorate of this church shall be final or conclusive until the action has been examined and sanctioned by the president of the synodical district to which this congregation belongs, or its representative.

Article VIII  
SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFICERS AND TEACHERS

The pastor shall be the superintendent of the Sunday School. He may appoint an assistant superintendent, who shall tend to such matters as the pastor may direct.

The Sunday School teachers shall be appointed by the pastor and they shall be required to be punctual, regular, and faithful, setting a good example to the pupils in the Sunday School and church. If providentially they are hindered from attending, they shall give timely notice to the pastor, so that the class may be provided with a teacher.

The church council shall elect a treasurer for the Sunday School, whose duty it shall be to be present regularly, keep an accurate record of all Sunday School money and an accurate record of attendance. He shall present a financial and an attendance report at every regular meeting of the congregation. He shall have power to disburse money for Sunday School supplies and gifts, but all disbursements must be approved of by the pastor. When a sufficient balance in the Sunday School treasury warrants, the congregation may disburse it as it wills.

Article IX  
OFFICERS

Other officers of the congregation shall be: a president, a vice- president, a recording secretary, a treasurer, a financial secretary, two elders, three trustees, and five school elders. Church elders shall serve for a term of two years; trustees for a term of three years; school elders for a term of five years, one elected and one retiring each year. All other officers shall serve for a term of one year.

These officers shall be elected by ballot in the first meeting of the year, a majority of votes cast being necessary for election.

Article X  
DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1. The PRESIDENT shall preside at the sessions of the congregation, together with the financial secretary or with the treasurer sign all official papers and appoint all committees.
2. The VICE-PRESIDENT shall act in the absence of the president.
3. The RECORDING SECRETARY shall keep a record of the proceedings of the congregation and the council, and submit his record for revision and final approval at the next session of the respective body. He shall have charge of the correspondence, keep the copies of official letters, committee reports and other communications of the congregation.
4. The FINANCIAL SECRETARY shall receive all collections, contributions, dues, subscriptions, and money for the congregation; he shall keep an accurate account of them and deliver them, after accounting, to the treasurer, instructing him for what purpose of purposes they are intended, and receive from the treasurer the proper vouchers. He shall make a quarterly report of his receipts, and submit his books to the congregation for an audit at least semi-annually or at any time the congregation desires.
5. The TREASURER shall, as directed by the financial secretary, place all monies received into the designated funds and disburse them according to the instructions received from the trustees, taking vouchers for them and keeping an account of all. He shall make a quarterly report and submit his books to the congregation for an auditing at least semi-annually or at any time the congregation desires.
6. The ELDERS shall assist the pastor in maintaining church discipline by reproofing, admonishing, correcting, encouraging, and comforting those in need of Christian ministrations, and in general supervise the affairs of the congregation to the end that all matters pertaining to it, especially its divine services, be conducted decently and in order. They are also to sign all such documents and letters of the congregation as do not come under the jurisdiction of the trustees.
7. The TRUSTEES shall meet within ten days after the election for the purpose of organizing; at this meeting a chairman and secretary shall be elected. They are the supervisors of the congregational property

and are to administer them same in the name of the congregation, performing in the capacity of ownership. To all these matters they shall however not administer such property according to their own judgment, but in accordance with the resolutions of the congregation. The congregation shall assume full responsibility for all transactions and acts of the trustees which are done according to resolution and order of the congregation. In all unauthorized transactions they shall be personally responsible.

The trustees shall make and keep correct inventory of all property of the congregation and to append the same to the annual statement, and keep the property in necessary repair.

The trustees shall not be permitted to expend an amount exceeding twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) without consent of the congregation.

8) The SCHOOL ELDERS shall look after the welfare of the day school, visiting the various classes during school hours, and making reports of their findings to the congregation at its regular meetings.

#### Article XI

#### CHURCH COUNCIL

The church council of this congregation shall be composed of the pastor as residing officer and all duly elected officers of the congregation.

The school board shall be composed of the pastor as presiding officer, the duly elected school elders, and the teachers.

Each body shall meet separately once every month in regular meeting, in order to discuss such business as pertains to the welfare of the congregation and to decide upon the necessary recommendations to the congregation.

#### Article XII

#### REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

All officers of the congregation may in Christian and lawful order be removed from office if adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life or willful neglect of official duties is manifest after a thorough investigation.

#### Article XIII

#### MEMBERSHIP

No one shall be and remain a member of this congregation, nor enjoy and exercise the rights of a member, nor have any claim to the real and personal property of this congregation except such as:

- a) are baptized and confirmed;
- b) confess the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Article II);
- c) do not live in manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 1,5. 9- 21), but lead Christian lives;
- d) are not members of any anti-Christian society.

The duties of the individual members shall be:

- a) to accept and receive willingly all ministrations of the pastor and elders whether public or private;
- b) to avoid inciting or fostering party spirit within the congregation;
- c) to use their best judgment in the election of church officers;
- d) to contribute toward the maintenance of the church and school and the defraying of other expended, according to their ability;
- e) to assist in the relief work of the church according to their ability.

All male members who have reached the age of twenty-one years, shall have the privilege of voting membership upon proper application and acceptance by the congregation. All such as have been received into voting membership will be required to sign their name to the constitution. Only those who have reached the age of twenty-five years and have been voting members for at least one year shall be eligible to the office of president, vice-president, elder, school elder or trustee. This privilege of voting membership shall be forfeited, if a voting member fail without a reasonable excuse to attend at least two meetings of the congregation in two consecutive years. Re-instatement to voting membership shall require proper application and acceptance by the congregation.

This constitution must first be read by every prospective voter. (N.B. Loss of the voting privilege does not exclude a member from communicant membership.)

Article XIV  
CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Manifest and impenitent sinners with whom conscientious and loving admonition according to Matthew 18, 15ff has proven fruitless, shall be excommunicated, and excluded from all rights and privileges of church membership. As such they forfeit all claims to the church property, the right to partake of holy communion, to be sponsors at a Lutheran baptism, to vote at the meetings, and the right to the services of the pastor and church.

Such who have been excommunicated shall be received again into the congregation and all rights and privileges restored to them, if they repent honestly of their sins and declared their willingness to amend. In all dealings with such manifest sinners, the gaining and not the losing of a member should at all times be the end and objective in view.

Article XV  
BOOKS AND FORMS

In the public services of the congregation only Lutheran books, and in all ministerial acts Lutheran forms only shall be used. In the Christian Day School and the Sunday School Lutheran books only shall be introduced in religious instruction, in conjunction with Holy Scriptures and Luther's Small Catechism.

Article XVI  
MEETINGS

Business meetings of the congregation are held at such dates as the congregation may from time to time decide. In these meetings such things only as pertain to the congregation's business and spiritual welfare shall be admitted. The right to vote in these meetings is restricted to the voting membership of the congregation.

In matters of doctrine and church discipline the Scriptures and the Lutheran symbols shall decide; in all purely business matters a simple majority of votes cast if binding.

Unless otherwise specified all voting shall be done by acclamation.

The members present shall constitute a quorum.

No meeting of the congregation shall be considered constitutional unless it has been previously announced in the public service on two successive Sundays.

Article XVII  
REPEALS AND ALTERATIONS

No article of this constitution that concerns doctrine and confession shall ever be changed. In all other matters the congregation may, if it sees fit, make changes and improvements. An alteration in the constitution requires a two thirds vote in favor of the change, while a simple majority of all that is needed to change a by-law.

Such changes, improvements, or additions shall be voted upon in only that meeting in which the elections were held.

Article XVIII  
DISSOLUTION

Should strife and dissension arise within the congregation and a satisfactory conciliation and understanding be unattainable by the congregation itself, the officers of the synodical district to which the congregation belongs, shall be invited and received by the congregation to assist in adjusting such difficulties.

If such dissension result in a division of the members, all claim to the property shall be bested in that part of the membership that adheres to the confession and principles of church practice as declared in the articles of this constitution, even though this number of faithful members be as small as three.

This article shall never be changed.

BY-LAWS

Article I  
ELECTIONS

The election of officers of the congregation shall be held during the first meeting of the year.

Article II  
OFFICERS

Until such time that the congregation is large enough to make practical the number of officers listed in Article IX of the constitution, the officers shall consist of three elders and three trustees. The election shall be so arranged that one elder and one trustee retire each year, with a new member taking his place.

Of these men the president, recording secretary, and treasurer are chosen.

Article III  
TENURE OF OFFICE

No officer shall hold office for more than two consecutive terms. After the second term, one year must elapse before the retiring officer is again eligible for an office.

Article IV  
ORDER OF BUSINESS

The following order of business shall be observed at all meetings:

1. Opening with prayer and Scripture Lesson
2. Minutes of previous regular meeting and special meetings
3. Report of treasurer

4. Acceptance of new members
5. Unfinished business
6. Committee reports and new business
7. Minutes of present meeting
8. Lord's Prayer and adjournment.

## APPENDIX B

*The following is a copy of the Constitution and By-laws as they were revised on July 10, 1955.*

### CONSTITUTION

AND

### BY-LAWS

OF

St. Luke's English  
Evangelical Lutheran Church  
of  
Vassar, Michigan

### PREAMBLE

Whereas God's word demands (I Cor. 14,40) that in a Christian congregation all things be done decently and in order, therefore have a number of Lutherans in and about Vassar, Michigan, deemed it proper to lay down by the present document the order by which they are to be united in this congregation, and according to which the inner and outer affairs of the congregation shall be administered.

### CONSTITUTION

Article I

#### NAME

The name of this corporate church body shall be: St. Luke's English Evangelical Lutheran Church of Vassar, Michigan.

Article II

#### ARTICLES OF FAITH

This congregation accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the inspired word of God, and as the sole rule and norm of Christian faith and life; likewise it accepts all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the pure and correct interpretation and exposition of this divine word. These confessional writings of the church are the following: The Apostolic Creed, The Nicene Creed, and The Athanasian Creed; The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and The Apology of the same; The Smalcald Articles; Dr. Luther's Small and Large Catechisms; The Formula of Concord, and The Articles of the Visitation of Saxony.



Article III  
SYNODICAL AFFILIATION

This congregation shall be a member of such synod only as confesses these symbols and obligates its members to them in both faith and practice.

Article IV  
PASTORATE

The pastoral office of this congregation shall be conferred upon such ministers only:

- a) Who declare their acceptance of and adhere to all canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God, and all the symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church enumerated in Article II as the correct exposition of this Word of God;
- b) Who possess the qualifications of a servant of the Word as described in I Tim. 3:1-6 and Titus 1:7-9.
- c) Who have been examined by competent representatives of an orthodox Lutheran church body and found to be sound in doctrine and apt to teach.

Article V  
DUTIES OF THE PASTOR

The duties of the pastor shall be to preach the Word of God and to administer the holy sacraments in full accordance with the confessions of this congregation (Article II), to lead a godly and exemplary life, to visit the sick and the destitute, to be diligent in the religious instruction and proper training of the young, to comfort, instruct, reprove, admonish, and warn, both publicly and privately, as the Word of God directs in I Tim. 2.

He shall also keep and preserve carefully and accurately the following records: Record of Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages, Deaths, Communion Attendance, Communicant Membership, and such a record of souls as is feasible.

Article VI  
PASTOR'S TENURE OF OFFICE

The office of pastor in this congregation is properly filled if a pastor has been called by a unanimous vote, and is duly installed upon his acceptance of the call under authorization by the president of the synodical district to which the congregation belongs.

The office of pastor is properly vacant if the pastor receives a call from a sister congregation or tenders his resignation and is peacefully dismissed; it is also properly vacant, should the congregation dismiss its pastor because charges of manifest incompetency, neglect of duties, false doctrine, or willful and persistent scandalous life have been brought and substantiated.

Such removal from office shall be binding upon pastor and congregation only if the following procedure has been observed: The party or parties having any such charge to bring against the pastor shall first inform him of this in writing by them properly signed; they shall thereupon communicate their charge through the president of the congregation to the elders, and as a last measure to the congregation. If their efforts to obtain a satisfactory understanding are successful at any of these stages, further action is unwarranted. No action of the congregation whereby a pastor is dismissed from the pastorate of this church shall be final or conclusive until the action has been examined and sanctioned by the president of the synodical district to which this congregation belongs, or its representative.

Article VII  
EDUCATION

It shall be the duty of all members to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6,4) and to this end teach them religion at home, send them to the Sunday School and, if possible to Lutheran day-school, and two (2) years to the pastor's confirmation class. (If a Lutheran day-school has been attended for a sufficient number of years, only one year of confirmation instruction is required.)

This congregation pledges itself to create a Christian day-school as soon as it is able to, and to maintain it, as long as it possibly can.

Article VIII  
SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFICERS AND TEACHERS

The pastor shall be the superintendent of the Sunday School. He may appoint an assistant superintendent, who shall tend to such matters as the pastor may direct.

The Sunday School teachers shall be appointed by the pastor and they shall be required to be a punctual, regular, and faithful, setting a good example to the pupils in the Sunday School and church. If providentially they are hindered from attending, they shall give timely notice to the pastor, so that the class may be provided with a teacher.

The church council shall elect a treasurer for the Sunday School, whose duty it shall be to be present in Sunday School regularly, keep an accurate record of attendance. He (or she) shall prepare a financial and an attendance report for every regular meeting of the congregation.. He shall have power to disburse money for Sunday School supplies and gifts, but all disbursements must be approved of by the pastor. When a sufficient balance on the Sunday School treasury warrants, the congregation may disburse it as it wills.

Article IX  
CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS

Officers of the congregation shall be: a president, a vice president, a recording secretary, a treasurer, a financial secretary and assistants, six elders, three trustees. Church elders shall serve for a term of three years; two elected and two retiring each year. Trustees shall serve for a term of three years; one elected and one retiring each year. All other officers shall serve for a term of one year. The number of elders and trustees may be increased as the need arises.

These officers shall be elected by ballot in the Elections Meeting during the month of December, their term of office beginning with the next January 1. A majority of votes cast is necessary for election.

Article X  
DUTIES OF OFFICERS

- 1) The PRESIDENT shall preside at the sessions of the congregation, shall together with the financial secretary or the treasurer sign all official papers, and shall appoint all committees.
- 2) The VICE-PRESIDENT shall act in the absence of the president.
- 3) The RECORDING SECRETARY shall keep a record of the proceedings of the congregation and the council, and submit his record for revision and final approval at the next session of the respective body. He

shall have charge of the correspondence, keep the copies of official letters, committee reports and other communications of the congregation.

4) The FINANCIAL SECRETARY shall receive all collections, contributions, dues, subscriptions, and money for the congregation; he shall keep an accurate account of them and deliver them, after accounting, to the treasurer, instructing him for what purpose or purposes they are intended, and receive from the treasurer the proper vouchers. He shall make a quarterly report of his receipts, and submit his books to the congregation for an audit at any time the congregation desires.

5) The TREASURER shall, as directed by the financial secretary, place all moneys received into the designated funds and disburse them according to the instructions received from the trustees, taking vouchers for them and keeping an account of all. He shall make a quarterly report and submit his books to the congregation for an auditing at any time the congregation desires.

6) The ELDERS shall assist the pastor in maintaining church discipline by reproof, admonishing, correcting, encouraging, and comforting those in need of Christian ministrations, and in general supervise the affairs of the congregation to the end that all matters pertaining to it, especially its divine services, be conducted decently and in order. They are also to sign all such documents and letters of the congregation as do not come under the jurisdiction of the trustees.

7) The TRUSTEES shall meet within ten days after the election for the purpose of organizing; at this meeting a chairman and secretary shall be elected. They are the supervisors of the congregational property and are to administer the same in the name of the congregation, performing in the capacity of ownership. In all these matters they shall however not administer such property according to their own judgment, but in accordance with the resolutions of the congregation. The congregation shall assume full responsibility for all transactions and acts of the trustees which are done according to resolution and order of the congregation. In all unauthorized transactions they shall be personally responsible.

The trustees shall make and keep correct inventory of all property of the congregation and to append the same to the annual statement, and keep the property in necessary repair.

The trustees shall not be permitted to expend an amount exceeding one hundred dollars (\$100.00) without consent of the congregation.

Article XI  
CHURCH COUNCIL

The church council of this congregation shall be composed of the pastor as presiding officer and all duly elected officers of the congregation.

The body shall meet once every month in regular meeting, in order to discuss such business as pertains to the welfare of the congregation and to decide upon the necessary recommendations to the congregation.

Article XII  
REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

All officers of the congregation may in Christian and lawful order be removed from office if adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life or willful neglect of official duties is manifest after a thorough investigation.

Article XIII  
MEMBERSHIP

No one shall be and remain a member of this congregation, nor enjoy and exercise the rights of a member, nor have any claim to the real and personal property of this congregation except such as:

- a) are baptized and confirmed;
- b) confess the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Article II);
- c) do not live in manifest works of the flesh (Gal. 1:5, 9-21), but lead Christian lives;
- d) are not members of any anti-Christian society.

The duties of the individual member shall be:

- a) to accept and receive willingly all ministrations of the pastor and the elders, whether public or private;
- b) to avoid inciting or festering party spirit within the congregation;
- c) to use their best judgment in the election of church officers;
- d) to contribute toward the maintenance of the church and the defraying of other expenses, according to their ability;
- e) to assist in the relief work of the church according to their ability.

All male members who have reached the age of eighteen years, shall have the privilege of voting membership upon proper application and acceptance by the congregation. All such as have been received into voting membership shall be required to sign their name to the constitution. Only those who have attained the age of 21 and have been voting members for at least one year shall be eligible to the office of president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, financial secretary, elder or trustee. Those who have attained the age of 19 and have been voting members for one year shall be eligible to the office of assistant financial secretary. This privilege of voting membership shall be forfeited, if a voting member fail without a reasonable excuse to attend at least two meetings of the congregation in two consecutive years. Re-Instatement to voting membership shall require proper application and acceptance by the congregation.

This constitution must first be read by every prospective voter.

N.B. Loss of the voting privilege does not exclude a member from communicant membership.

Article XIV  
CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Manifest and impenitent sinners with whom conscientious and loving admonition according to Matthew 18, 15ff has proved fruitless, shall be excommunicated, and excluded from all rights and privileges of church membership. As such they forfeit all claims to the church property, the right to partake of holy communion, to be sponsors at a Lutheran baptism, to vote at the meetings, and the right to the services of the pastor and the church.

Such who have been excommunicated shall be received again into the congregation and all rights and privileges restored to them, if they repent honesty of their sins and declare their willingness to amend. In all dealings with such manifest sinners, the gaining and not the losing of a member should at all times be the end and objective in view.

Article XV  
BOOKS AND FORMS

In the public services of the congregation only Lutheran books, and in all ministerial acts Lutheran forms only shall be used. In the Christian day school and the Sunday School Lutheran books only shall be introduced in religious instruction, in conjunction with Holy Scriptures and Luther's Small Catechism.

Article XVI  
MEETINGS

Business meetings of the congregation are held at such dates as the congregation may from time to time decide. In these meetings such things only as pertain to the congregation's business and spiritual welfare shall be admitted. The right to vote in these meetings is restricted to the voting membership of the congregation.

In matters of doctrine and church discipline the Scriptures and the Lutheran symbols shall decide; in all purely business matters a simple majority of votes cast is binding.

Unless otherwise specified all voting shall be done by acclamation.

The members present shall constitute a quorum.

No meeting of the congregation shall be considered constitutional unless it has been previously announced in the public service on two successive Sundays.

Article XVII

No article of this constitution that concerns doctrine and confession shall ever be changed. In all other matters the congregation may, if it sees fit, make changes and improvements. An alteration in the constitution requires a two thirds vote in favor of the change, while a simple majority is all that is needed to change a by-law.

Such changes, improvements, or additions may be proposed for discussion in any regular meeting. Voting in the proposed changes shall be deferred to the next regular meeting of the congregation.

Article XVIII  
DISSOLUTION

Should strife and dissension arise within the congregation and a satisfactory conciliation and understanding be unattainable by the congregation itself, the officers of the synodical district to which the congregation belongs, shall be invited and received by the congregation to assist in adjusting such difficulties.

If such dissension result in a division of the members, all claim to the property shall be vested in that part of the membership that adheres to the confession and principles of the constitution, even though this number of faithful members be as small as three.

This article shall never be changed.

## BY-LAWS

### Article I ELECTIONS

The election of officer of the congregation shall be held during the month of December.

### Article II TENURE OF OFFICE

No officer shall hold office for more than two consecutive terms. After the second term, one year must elapse before the retiring officer is again eligible for an office.

(Article II was revised December 10, 1960 to read as follows: "until such time that new members become interested in holding office an officer shall be eligible to hold office for more than two consecutive terms.")

### Article III COMMITTEES

Committees shall be appointed as the need may be.

#### A. Nominating Committee

The duty of this committee shall be to draw up a list of candidates for the several congregational offices.

#### B. Scholarship Committee

The duty of this committee shall be to disburse funds for the Christian education of our children in our synodical schools.

### Article IV ORDER OF BUSINESS

The following order of business shall be observed at all meetings:

1. Opening with prayer and Scripture Lesson.
2. Minutes of previous regular meeting and special meetings.
3. Report of treasurer.
4. Acceptance of new members.
5. Unfinished business.
6. Committee reports and new business.
7. Lord's Prayer and adjournment.

## APPENDIX C

*The following is a copy of the Constitution and by-laws for St. Luke's which are currently in use. It was adopted in January, 1980.*

### CONSTITUTION

AND

### BY-LAWS

OF

St. Luke's English  
Evangelical Lutheran Church  
of  
Vassar, Michigan

### PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, The Apostle Paul sets forth, I Corinthians 14:40, that all things in the Church shall be done "decently and in order," and

WEREAS, The history of the Christian Church of all times shows that certain agreements and regulations are helpful properly to fulfill the purpose and attain the objectives of congregations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we, a congregation of Lutherans of Vassar, Michigan, do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and by subscribing our names hereto, adopt the following CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS.

### CONSTITUTION

#### ARTICLE I

#### NAME

The name of this congregation shall be  
St. Luke's English  
Evangelical Lutheran Church of  
Vassar, Michigan

## ARTICLE II

## Articles of Faith

### Section 1.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments as the verbally inspired Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life (II Timothy 3:15-17).

### Section 2.

This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of Scriptural doctrine. They are:

#### A. The three Ecumenical Creeds

- 1) The Apostles'
- 2) The Nicene
- 3) The Athanasian

#### B. The six Lutheran Confessions

- 1) Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism
- 2) Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism
- 3) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
- 4) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
- 5) The Smalcald Articles
- 6) The Formula of Concord

### Section 3.

This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

### Section 4.

Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.

### Section 5.

Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.

## ARTICLE III

## Purpose and Objectives

### Section 1.

The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures. (Matthew 28:18-20).

### Section 2.

The primary objective of this congregation shall be:

To proclaim the Law and the Gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation. (II Tim. 4:2; Luke 24:46-48; Romans 10:17).



To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the means of grace. (Eph. 4:11-12).

To equip believers as disciples, stewards, and witnesses for sharing the Gospel of Jesus with our fellowmen.

## ARTICLE IV

## Synodical Affiliation

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a synod that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a synod exists.

## ARTICLE V

## Church Membership

### Section 1. Classification

- A. Baptized members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God.
- B. Communicant members are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life.
- C. Voting members are those male communicant members (I Corinthians 14:34; I Timothy 2:12) who have declared their agreement with this Constitution and who have been accepted by the voters' assembly of the congregation.

### Section 2. Privileges and Responsibilities

"God is love" (I John 4:8), and His love ever moves Him to bless the members of His Church with innumerable physical and spiritual gifts (I John 3:1; James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we can do nothing less than to love Him with all our heart (I John 4:19) and to show that love with the works that we do. The giving of such expressions we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are the following:

- A. Our God has given us His Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which alone can save our souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (II Tim. 3:15-17). Consequently, a member of His Church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to
  - 1) Hear and receive the Word of God diligently;
  - 2) Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education;
  - 3) Bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).
- B. Our God has given us two Sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which are means that our Lord uses to bring His grace to us. Consequently, a member of His Church will:
  - 1) Have his children baptized early in life, for "Baptism doth also now save us" (I Peter 3:21)
  - 2) Frequently partake of Holy Communion (I Corinthians 11:23-26), if he is recognized as one who can properly examine himself (I Corinthians 11:28). Only those in the confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar. (Close Communion - II Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16-17).

C. Our God has given us the privilege of being stewards over a certain portion of His estate and of receiving the steward's rich reward of grace (Matthew 25:14-30). Consequently, a member of His Church will

- 1) Continually remember that all his property, time, and talents really belong to God;
- 2) Conscientiously determine which part of his money, time, and talents shall be devoted to that which the congregation has made its concern, not omitting the work of the Synod (Mark 16:15; I Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; I Peter 4:10);
- 3) If he is a voting member, regularly attend the voters' meeting and lend the congregation his counsel and aid.

D. Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the New Man, who desires to live righteously (II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, a member of His Church will

- 1) Not live in manifest works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25);
- 2) When he has erred, permit himself to be fraternally admonished and corrected in the spirit of Matthew 18:15;
- 3) Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g. lodges) (John 5:23; John 8:31-32; II Corinthians 6:14-18).

### Section 3. Church Discipline and Excommunication

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation in the spirit of Matthew 18:15-20 toward those who err from the faith or who in other ways have given offense. At all times this shall be done in the spirit of the Gospel, namely, to regain the erring as brethren. Those members who finally must be excommunicated and those who have excluded themselves from the congregation by evading Matthew 18:15-20 lose all their rights in the congregation and in its property. For excommunication, a unanimous vote of the voters' assembly is required. A copy of said resolution, signed by the secretary and the pastor, is to be sent to said person by certified mail.

### Section 4. Reinstatement

When an excommunicated member by the grace of God repents of his sin, he is to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (II Corinthians 2:6-8).

## ARTICLE VI

## Powers and Rights of the Congregation

### Section 1.

In all matters of Christian faith and life, the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105).

### Section 2.

In all matters not decided by the Word of God, the voters' assembly alone shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10; 14:19; Ephesians 5:21).

### Section 3.

The church council, any other elected committee or organization within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power or authority beyond that conferred upon by the congregation. However, in rare occasions of emergency, the church council may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be fully explained at the next voters' meeting and submitted for approval.

#### Section 4.

No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the congregation. The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before it grants its approval (II Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 1:10; 12:25).

### ARTICLE VII

### The Ministry

#### Section 1.

The congregation has the exclusive right to call pastors and teachers and to elect other officers.

#### Section 2.

The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such men (already ordained or ministerial candidates) as unqualifiedly and publicly profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution; and such acceptance and adherence shall be required of them in the call or vocation extended by the congregation (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; Colossians 4:5-6; Ephesians 4:11-16).

#### Section 3.

The teachers called by the congregation shall be such as are in accord with the confessional standard of the congregation (Article II) and are qualified for this field of work (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 14:40).

#### Section 4.

In case of a vacancy in the office of pastor or teacher the congregation shall notify the president of the local district of the Synod that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to the calling of a new pastor or teacher.

### ARTICLE VIII

### Officers of the Congregation

#### Section 1.

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men of "honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the Apostles in the administration of its temporal affairs. likewise shall this congregation choose officers, boards and committee members with like qualifications to aid the pastor in administering its affairs (I Timothy 3:8-13).

#### Section 2.

The listing of the officers and their duties is given in the Bylaws.

#### Section 3.

These officers shall be given the cooperation of the congregation in the performance of their duties and they shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsible office (I Timothy 3:8-13).

## ARTICLE IX

## Removal from Office

### Section 1.

If anyone who holds an office in the congregation willfully neglects his duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right and eventually the duty to remove him from office and to elect another in his place (I Timothy 3:8-13).

### Section 2.

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a pastor or a teacher are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty, or established inability to perform the duties of his office. In such cases the advice and counsel of a district official is to be sought (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

## ARTICLE X

## Meetings of the Congregation

Meetings of this congregation shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the Bylaws. The meetings shall give the voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss, and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church at large.

## ARTICLE XI

## Separation or Dissolution

### Section 1.

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation - may God graciously prevent it - the property and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.

### Section 2.

In the event of termination or dissolution of the corporation, the board of directors shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the corporation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the corporation, by distributing the remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law.

## ARTICLE XII

## Repeals and Alterations

### Section 1.

Article II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, IX, XI, and XII, Section 1 of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrepealable, inasmuch as the express clear, Scriptural teachings.

### Section 2.

Proposals to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this Constitution, or to add an article, shall be submitted in writing to the church council and shall be publicly announced on two Sundays immediately preceding the regular business meeting of the congregation, and posted in the church during that period.

### Section 3.

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the congregation.

### Section 4.

A majority vote, consisting of not less than two-thirds of the voting members present at such a constitutional meeting, shall be required to alter or repeal any alterable or repealable article of this Constitution, or to add an article thereto.

## BYLAWS

### ARTICLE I

### Meetings of the Congregation

#### Section 1.

At, or near, the beginning of each quarter of the calendar year, a regular meeting of the congregation's voters shall be held.

#### Section 2.

The church council shall set the exact date, time, and place of the meetings, unless otherwise specified by the congregation. Announcement of the meetings shall be given in print on at least two different dates prior to the time of the meeting.

#### Section 3.

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the church council, or the pastor, or upon written request of ten voting members. Such meetings must be announced according to the general rule set forth in Section 2, with the purpose clearly stated.

#### Section 4.

A special meeting shall be held in December for the purpose of electing officers. The council shall determine the date of the December meeting at its regular November meeting. The announcement of this meeting shall be given in the same manner as any congregational meeting as stated in Section 2.

#### Section 5.

The order of business for the regular meetings shall be as follows:

- A. Opening with a devotion.
- B. Reading and approval of minutes of previous regular and special meetings.
- C. Reception of new members; transfer, release or removal from membership.
- D. Unfinished business.
- E. Reports of officers and committees.
- F. Recommendations of the church council and new business.
- G. Elections.
- H. Adjournment with prayer.

#### Section 6.

The meetings shall be conducted according to good, Christian order. Robert's Rules of Order may be followed for parliamentary procedure.

Section 7.

No one shall bring to any meeting a charge or complaint against any member, or against a pastor or a teacher, unless he has first admonished him in a Christian manner according to Matthew 18:15-20.

Section 8.

Only voting members present at the meeting shall have the right to vote.

Section 9.

Voting membership shall be restricted to male communicant members who have reached the age of 18 (I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:12-14). All voting members shall sign the Constitution and Bylaws, indicating their acceptance of them.

ARTICLE II

Quorum

The voting members present at a properly announced meeting of the congregation shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE III

The Church Council

Section 1. Personnel of Council

The church council shall consist of the pastor, the principal (when there is a Christian day school), the president, the vice-president, the recording secretary, the treasurer, the chairman of the board of elders, the chairman of the board of trustees, and the chairman of the board of Christian education. The president shall serve as the chairman of the church council.

Section 2. Church Boards and Committees

The church boards shall be the board of elders, the board of trustees, and the board of Christian education. The number of members on each board shall be determined by resolution of the congregation. The pastor is an ex officio member of all boards and committees within the congregation. Temporary or permanent committees and boards in addition to those heretofore mentioned may be established or dismissed by the congregation as existing needs may warrant.

Section 3. Vacancies

Vacancies occurring in an elected position of the church council or church board, or vacancies occurring on any committee, shall be filled temporarily through election by the church council at its next meeting. Such action of the church council is to be ratified at the next congregational meeting.

Section 4. Responsibilities

The members of the church council shall adorn their high office with an honest way of life and be good examples to the congregation (I Timothy 3:8-12). They shall aid the pastor in the spiritual affairs of the church. They shall be accountable for good order in the services. They shall particularly care in love for the poor, the sick, the widows, and the orphans (Galatians 6:9, 10). The members of the church council shall consult together concerning the total spiritual and physical well-being of the congregation, giving due attention also to the work of the Lord in the church at large. They shall implement resolutions of the congregation and carry out such assignments as are directed to them by the congregation.

## Section 5. Installation

As soon as possible after the election, the church officers and board members shall be installed into office in a regular service and shall thus be presented to the congregation.

## Section 6. Dismissal

If any member willfully neglects his duty, and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right, and eventually the duty, to remove him from office and elect another to take his place. (Cf. Constitution, Article VIII, Section 3).

## Section 7. Meetings

The church council shall meet regularly once each month. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president. The church council shall never convene to transact business without the knowledge of the pastor.

# ARTICLE IV

## Duties of Officers and Boards

### Section 1. President

The president shall preside as chairman of all business sessions of the congregation and church council and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him. He shall have general supervision of the affairs of the congregation subject to the regulations of the board of trustees, sign all deeds, mortgages, notes, leases, and/or all legal documents directed to be executed by the corporation and conduct all its business affairs according to established good order.

### Section 2. Vice-President

The vice-president shall serve as chairman of voters and council meetings in the absence of the president. In the absence of the vice-president, the congregation shall elect a temporary chairman.

### Section 3. Secretary

The secretary shall record accurately the proceedings of all meetings of the congregation and church council. He shall be responsible for the legal records of the congregation. He shall have the authority to countersign all deeds, mortgages, notes, leases, and/or legal documents executed by the corporation and assist in the orderly conduct of its business affairs according to established good order. He shall also perform such duties as may be assigned to him by the congregation.

### Section 4. Treasurer

The treasurer shall receive from the financial secretary a report of all monies and credit the same to the proper accounts. He shall make disbursements according to instructions from the church council. He shall make a quarterly report and also special reports whenever the board of trustees shall so request. He shall submit his records to the congregation annually for audit, or at any time the congregation so desires. In the absence of the secretary, he shall have the authority to countersign legal documents. In the event the treasurer is unable to carry out his duties, the president or secretary shall have the authority to carry out his obligations.

### Section 5. Financial Secretary

The financial secretary shall receive and deposit all contributions for the congregation, shall keep an accurate account of the same and deliver a report of them to the treasurer, indicating the proper account to be credited. He shall make a report for the regular meetings of the congregation and submit his

books for audit annually or at any time the congregation so desires. He shall also prepare reports of contributions for the membership of the congregation as directed by the congregation.

#### Section 6. Assistant Financial Secretaries

The assistant financial secretaries shall assist the financial secretary in opening of offering envelopes and making an accurate count of all contributions.

#### Section 7. The Board of Elders

The board of elders, as assistants to the pastor, shall concern itself with the spiritual life of the congregation, and under the pastor's direction shall be charged with the supervision of public worship, evangelism and stewardship. They shall also be called on to assist in cases of admonition and discipline (Matthew 18:15, 16). They shall concern themselves with the spiritual, physical and emotional welfare of the pastor and his family.

#### Section 8. The Board of Trustees

The board of trustees, elected according to the laws of the State of Michigan, shall be charged with the supervision of church property and financial affairs according to the direction given by the congregation. The board of trustees shall supervise all lay employees of the congregation, e.g. custodians, secretary, etc. and outline their duties when necessary. The board shall have the authority to make expenditures up to \$500.00 without the previous approval of the voters.

#### Section 9. The Board of Christian Education

The board of Christian education shall formulate all policies to be followed in the educational phases of the congregation's work, such as Sunday school, Christian day school, vacation Bible school, instruction classes and the like, and present them, by way of the church council, to the congregation for ratification. In similar manner it shall prepare budgets for its departments, make appointments, select course of study and engage in such other activities as it may deem necessary for the successful operation of this function of church work.

### ARTICLE V

### Terms of Office

#### Section 1.

The president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer shall be elected for a term of three years. None of these officers may serve more than two consecutive terms. He shall be eligible for re-election one year after the expiration of his term of office.

#### Section 2.

The financial secretary and assistant financial secretaries shall be elected for a term of one year.

#### Section 3.

The term of office for members of the church boards shall be three years. The term of one-third of the members of each board shall expire each year. No member of a church board shall serve more than two consecutive terms. He shall be eligible for re-election one year after the expiration of his term of office.



## ARTICLE VI

## Organization of the Boards

### Section 1.

The board of trustees, the board of elders, and the board of Christian education shall elect annually their own chairmen and secretaries with the chairman of each board becoming a member of the church council.

### Section 2.

The boards shall conduct regular meetings to plan and carry out their responsibilities. They shall prepare written reports for all regular meetings of the church council and the voters. They shall prepare and keep current a handbook showing how they are carrying out their respective duties, subject to ratification by the voters' assembly.

### Section 3.

The boards shall be authorized to nominate such officers and committees as are necessary to assist them in carrying out their respective duties. Appointments shall be made by the president of the congregation subject to ratification by the voters' assembly.

## ARTICLE VII

## Election of Members to the Church Council

### Section 1.

The church council shall present to the October meeting of the congregation for ratification a committee of three voting members to serve as a nominating committee.

### Section 2.

The nominating committee shall select from the voting membership a slate of candidates for each vacant office and shall publish the names prior to the annual meeting.

### Section 3.

The congregation at its annual meeting shall hear the recommendation of the nominating committee, add to the list, if it so desires, and proceed to elect by ballot. A majority of votes cast shall be necessary for election.

## ARTICLE VIII

## Reception into Membership

### Section 1.

Persons who wish to be received into membership in this congregation other than through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism or the Rite of Confirmation, shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor or the church council. The council shall honor the request when accompanied by a letter of transfer or other recommendation from a sister congregation, or when qualifications for membership, as specified in Article V of this Constitution, have been met. Such action of the council shall be submitted for ratification at the regular meeting of the congregation and notice of such receptions reported to the congregation.

Section 2.

Since reception into membership signifies acceptance of and submission to this Constitution and Bylaws each family shall be given a copy of the same prior to their reception so that they may become familiar with its provisions.

**ARTICLE IX**

**Transfer or Release from Membership**

Section 1.

Those desiring a transfer, or release from membership, shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor or the church council for action, to be ratified at the next meeting of the congregation.

Section 2.

Transfer of membership shall apply only to those who desire membership in a congregation which holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II of this Constitution. Release from membership shall apply when affiliation is sought with those denominations not in agreement with our congregation in doctrine and practice.

Section 3.

Members released or transferred relinquish all rights in this congregation.

**ARTICLE X**

**Repeals and Amendments of the Bylaws**

Any and all Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a majority vote of the voting members present at any quarterly meeting, provided that public notice of this proposed action shall have been given the congregation on at least two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting and provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the church council for its study and recommendation.

## APPENDIX D

*The following statistical information is taken from Michigan District History 1833-1970 by Michigan District, W.E.L.S. which was printed by LithoCrafters, Inc. of Ann Arbor, Michigan, copyright 1972.*

### ST. LUKE'S ENGLISH EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH Vassar, Michigan

Organized 1936

#### PASTORS

1. Rev. A.W. Voges (1936-45)
2. Rev. Willard Kehrberg (1945-53)
3. Rev. Raymond Frey (1954-59)
4. Rev. Orville Maasch (1959- )

#### MILESTONES

Mar. 15, 1936 - Services begun.  
Jan. 17, 1937 - Pastor A.W. Voges installed.  
1937 - Parsonage acquired and dedicated.  
1939 - Second parsonage acquired, together with five extra lots.  
Mar. 30, 1941 - New church dedicated.  
1951 - New organ dedicated.  
1960 - New parsonage dedicated.  
1966 - Education building dedicated.

#### THINGS OF NOTE

- First services held in a home.
- Served by various area pastors.
- Constitution adopted in 1936.
- Incorporated in 1937

## APPENDIX E

*The following records the growth of St. Luke's Lutheran Church from 1936 - 1994. The sources for these figures are: 1936-1944, Parochial Reports of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States; 1946-1959, Statistical Report of The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States; 1960-1994, St. Luke's Lutheran Church Annual Report.*

YEAR	BAPTIZED SOULS	COMMUNICANTS
1936	NA	NA
1938	77	44
1940	150	89
1942	176	115
1944	223	130
1946	205	138
1948	235	162
1950	265	170
1952	290	170
1953-54	285	183
1955-56	214	144
1957	224	150
1958	247	155
1959	240	156
1960	245	157
1961	261	170
1962	293	175
1963	316	199
1964	342	222
1965	358	235
1966	400	255
1967	446	273
1968	446	291
1969	470	301
1970	507	320
1971	528	335
1972	556	358
1973	586	373
1974	594	399
1975	598	410
1976	614	432
1977	631	447
1978	661	474
1979	683	497
1980	724	521
1981	726	532

YEAR	BAPTIZED SOULS	COMMUNICANTS
1982	736	543
1983	746	565
1984	770	580
1985	789	598
1986	800	612
1987	803	606
1988	787	591
1989	767	579
1990	768	578
1991	771	578
1992	793	583
1993	788	577
1994	781	576

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