

Northland Lutheran High School

A Quarter Century of God's Grace

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The idea of the Area Lutheran High School is a fairly new concept to the WELS. Despite the fact that the oldest WELS area Lutheran High School is nearly one hundred years old, most WELS High Schools are fairly young.

Since the sixties and seventies, a real push has been made for Christian education on the high school level. As a result of this increased interest in Christian secondary education, many area Lutheran High Schools were formed. These schools were started by groups of people or congregations who saw the value and importance of a Christian education after graduation from a Lutheran elementary school. In the late seventies, ten area Lutheran high schools were founded, including four in 1979 alone!¹

One of the schools that resulted from this increased interest in Christian secondary education was Northland Lutheran High School. It was the fifteenth area Lutheran High School in the WELS.

Northland Lutheran High School, like any area Lutheran High School, has a history full of ups and downs, challenges and blessings, all of which have led those who have played a role in Northland's history to a greater trust and appreciation for all that God has done. God has certainly blessed Northland Lutheran High School richly, and will continue to guide it in the future. As we look to all the challenges and blessings that lay before Northland in the years ahead, we take the opportunity to remember how Northland got to where it is today.

To do that we go back nearly thirty years, and watch as the school progresses from its meager beginnings of some twenty students learning in temporary buildings in Merrill, Wisconsin, to become a school with over 120 students located on a new campus in Kronenwetter, Wisconsin.

The history of Northland can be neatly broken up into four different eras, each focused on a separate town in North Central Wisconsin. First, there are the pre-Northland years when people were getting organized in order to support a Lutheran High School. This era found most of the work done for the high school in the Rhinelander area. The second era of Northland's history describes those first

¹ Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Reports and Memorials to the 46th Biennial Convention*, 1981, pg. 53.

years spent in Merrill, Wisconsin. Northland's third era covers the time when Northland moved to Wausau, Wisconsin. Finally, the last and most recent years are those spent at the new campus in Kronenwetter, Wisconsin. May God bless our journey into Northland's past, that we may see how he has richly blessed this school, and that we may be strengthened in our own belief that God truly is a good and gracious God.

1. The Beginnings of Northland

Lutheran men and women in the city of Wausau were the first to discuss the formation of an Area Lutheran High School in north central Wisconsin. As early as 1973, a group of Wisconsin Synod Lutherans had gathered to talk about the possibility of a high school. After conducting a feasibility study in the Wausau area, they determined that there was an insufficient base to support a high school in the Wausau area alone.²

The idea of an area Lutheran high school was put on the back burner, so to speak, until January 10, 1975. At a pastor-teacher conference held in Eagle River, WI, a discussion led by Pastor David Kock of Zion-Rhineland, was held regarding the establishment of a high school. This discussion eventually led to action. A committee was formed to look into the prospect of forming an Area Lutheran High School in northern Wisconsin.³

Interested WELS members from two of the larger cities in northern Wisconsin, Wausau and Rhineland, held a meeting in May of 1975 to discuss the beginnings of a high school. This meeting took place at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhineland. At this meeting, it was decided to survey the congregations in north central Wisconsin to determine the interest the WELS congregations had about starting and supporting an Area Lutheran High School.⁴ Since the Wausau area already had a general feel for support, the survey was mainly for the Rhineland conference.

The results of the survey were announced and discussed in November of 1975 at a meeting held at Zion – Rhineland.⁵ Based on the positive feedback, the individuals who supported the idea of a high school took the step to form a loose organization of individuals whose main task was to look into

² *Feasibility Study for Northland Lutheran High School*. WELS Stewardship Committee, October, 1982., pg.1

³ *Feasibility Study*, pg 1

⁴ *Feasibility Study*, pg 1

⁵ *Feasibility Study*, pg 1

and take the necessary steps in starting an area Lutheran High School in northern Wisconsin and to promote interest in the high school.⁶

As the group began to work, Zion-Rhineland was a driving force behind the push for an area Lutheran High School. It spearheaded the efforts in these early stages of Northland and became in almost every aspect the center of operations for this fledgling organization.

While this association of individuals worked together on building a base of support, it was not until February 8, 1976, that this group took steps to become more formally organized. They began to go through the process of becoming a legal entity, an ^aAssociation of individuals interested in Lutheran secondary education.⁷ At this meeting, the newly formed ^aAssociation elected officers, with Mr. Robert Otterstaetter being elected president of this new organization.⁸ Four men, including Mr. Otterstaetter, were elected to serve on the ^cExecutive ^bBoard of the ^aAssociation and would oversee the administration of the school for the individual delegates. These four men were given the task to look into a name for this new high school, build an association of individuals who support it, and then to lead the organization through the different phases of incorporation with the final goal being the formation of an Area Lutheran High School.

The ^bBoard did not waste anytime, meeting again on February 23, 1976. Among other things, the ^bBoard recommended to the ^aAssociation that a bank account be opened, a committee be formed to look gather information on the various existing Lutheran ^bHigh schools, and to see if Zion Lutheran School would be willing to allow the ^aAssociation to use their facilities to begin a ninth grade already in 1976.⁹

⁶ *Northland Lutheran High School Update*. 1978-1986. Vol. 1, Number 1 (1:1), 3/78

⁷ *Northland Lutheran High School Executive Board Meeting Minutes*, 2/8/76

⁸ *Northland Board Minutes*, 2/8/76

⁹ *Northland Board Minutes*, 2/23/76

The Association was officially and legally incorporated as an association of individuals in June of 1976 under the name Northland Lutheran High School Association.¹⁰ The Association was made up of between 130-150 people in north central Wisconsin. These people were no longer looking to discuss the possibility of a high school, but were now seriously considering and taking action in order to establish their dream of Northland Lutheran High School.

The Board began the work of contacting the congregations in north central Wisconsin, seeking to find congregations interested in joining the Association. The Board met several other times in 1976, hammering out the details of the Constitution and by-laws of the Association. The Board modeled the constitution and by-laws after the Winnebago Lutheran Academy Constitution and by-laws.¹¹

In early 1977, the Board was busy looking for possible ways to open the school already in the fall of 1977. Zion Lutheran School in Rhinelander determined that they would be able to handle a ninth grade as far as the needed classroom space with both the space in their school and had the needed staff.¹² Pastor Ralph Jones was investigating the possibility of using a Catholic school in Merrill, Wisconsin, as a possible site for the high school.¹³ The Executive Board met on June 30, 1977 and passed a motion to recommend to the Northland Lutheran High School Association that a man be called to promote the high school and engineer the drive to invite congregations and individuals to join the Association. As part of the recommendation, they suggested that a pastor with a background in education be called to fill this position if possible.¹⁴

In order to facilitate and better plan the organization of Northland Lutheran High School, President Otterstaetter contacted Mr. Donald Zimmerman who was serving on the Wisconsin Synod Education Board.¹⁵ On July 18, 1977, Mr. Zimmerman explained the Wisconsin Synod's new program for assisting WELS high schools. One of the options available to the Northland Association was the

¹⁰ *Feasibility Study*, pg 1

¹¹ *Northland Board Minutes*, 8/30/76

¹² *Northland Board Minutes*, 2/14/77

¹³ *Northland Board Minutes*, 5/25/77

¹⁴ *Northland Board Minutes*, 6/30/77

¹⁵ *Northland Board Minutes*, 6/30/77

use of a WELS consultant who would help in guiding the Association through the process of forming a Lutheran High School. Following the advice and counsel given to them by Mr. Zimmerman, they requested that the Board for Parish Education recommend a secondary school consultant for the Northland Lutheran High School Association.¹⁶

On August 10, the Board met again and heard a presentation by Pastor Wayne Borgwardt, who was serving as principal at Fox Valley Lutheran High School. Pastor Borgwardt was a good fit as consultant for Northland, as he had some very practical experience serving as the principal of another WELS Area Lutheran High School. He took the Board through and explained the WELS resource, *Planning for Lutheran High Schools*, then made himself available for any questions they might have. Following the comments and advice given by Pastor Borgwardt, the Board rescinded the motions made at the June 30th meeting regarding calling a full time administrator, and instead recommended to the Association, to begin the Survey Phase laid out by *Planning for Lutheran High Schools*.¹⁷

The Association met on the twenty-first of August^{and} listened as Pastor Borgwardt described the different phases of *Planning for Lutheran High Schools* and how this resource would help the Association fulfill their dream of a high school. The Association quickly voted to officially adopt *Planning for Lutheran High Schools* and asked Pastor Borgwardt to be their consultant.¹⁸ The Association did not waste any time and quickly formed the six committees laid out by *Planning for Lutheran High Schools*. The six committees who would begin the tedious work of planning for Northland Lutheran High School were Organizational Planning, Enrollment Planning, Financial Planning, Site Planning, Instruction Planning, and the Membership Drive Committee.¹⁹

The rest of 1976 was spent getting the various committees organized and up to speed as to what their responsibilities were. They began the work of the Survey Phase, which involved surveying the

¹⁶ *Northland Board Minutes*, 7/18/77

¹⁷ *Northland Board Minutes*, 8/10/77

¹⁸ *Northland Update*, 1:1 3/78; *Feasibility Study*, pg.1; *Northland Lutheran High School Association Delegate Meeting Minutes*, 8/21/77

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

area congregations, analyzing their findings, and making proposals to the Board based on what they discovered. The committees gave their first reports in October 1977 and continued their work into 1978.²⁰

The Association met again as a body on February 26, 1978 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Merrill, Wisconsin. At this annual meeting, the members of the Association voted to expand the Executive Board to nine members and chose the official logo for the new school. It was determined, after seeking reviewing the results of the survey, that twenty-four congregations, which amounted to seventy-eight percent of the communicant membership in the area, demonstrated interest in the project and wanted to move forward.



On the same day, the Board met and approved the formation of a newsletter entitled the *Northland Lutheran High School Association Update*.²¹ Its' purpose was to keep the congregations and all WELS Lutherans in the area informed and up-to-date on the progress of their study for an area Lutheran High School. The newsletter ran its first issue the next month, March of 1978.²² As these "Updates" were published, they focused on not only providing information as to what the Association and Board were doing, but also described the process of starting Northland, the importance of Christian secondary education, to offer^{ed} encouragement to those who supported the efforts to establish a high school, and perhaps most importantly, it attempted to recruit potential and prospective students and their parents.²³

In April and May of 1978, meetings were held at the various Lutheran Elementary Schools by the Board to answer any questions regarding the formation of the high school, and more importantly, to meet with prospective students and their parents.²⁴ The Board recognized the important role that the Lutheran Elementary Schools played in the success of any high school because they provided a source

²⁰ *Northland Board Minutes*, 10/25/77

²¹ *Northland Board Minutes*, 2/26/78

²² *Northland Update*, 1:1, 3/78

²³ *Northland Update*, 1:2 4/78

²⁴ *Northland Update*, 1:2 4/78

of students and in many ways, a base of support for the high school. By the end of May, nineteen eighth graders, twelve seventh graders, twenty sixth graders showed considerable interest in becoming part of the Northland student body.²⁵

As the Board was meeting with these various schools and congregations, the Site committee was busy trying to find an adequate facility for the school to use. The general consensus of the Board was to have one school in a central location (Merrill was suggested) rather than to have two separate schools (an idea that was looked into by the board).²⁶ The Site Committee investigated several different possibilities including Menard Junior College in Merrill, the old Junior High School in Rhinelander, and several facilities in the Wausau area.

In June 1978, the Association once again held their quarterly meeting, and confident of the results derived from the Survey phase, they resolved "to enter the Planning Phase of *Planning for Lutheran High Schools*, with the goal of opening the high school in the fall of 1979."²⁷ A major part of this phase included the calling of Northland's first full-time administrator. This was a major step for those interested in starting Northland. No longer were they surveying, trying to determine interest, but they now could begin the work of planning for the first year of a north central Wisconsin high school.

The Board began working on putting together a job description that would outline the characteristics and responsibilities of the Northland administrator.²⁸ They asked Pastor Voss, the District President for the Northern Wisconsin District, for a call list, with the goal being to extend a call in the August meeting of the Board. On August 27th, 1978, Professor Curtis Franzmann, who was serving at Michigan Lutheran High School, was called to serve as the first administrator of Northland Lutheran High School.

²⁵ *Northland Update*, 1:3, 5/78

²⁶ *Northland Board Minutes*, 4/25/78

²⁷ *Northland Update*, 1:4, 7/78

²⁸ *Northland Update*, 1:5, 8/78, *Northland Board Minutes*, 4/16/78

Professor Franzmann declined the call, so on October 8, 1978, a divine call was extended to teacher John Schultz, who was teaching at St. Paul's Lutheran Elementary school in Lake Mills, Wisconsin, by the Association.²⁹ He accepted the call and, in accordance with his job description, began to work to establish an association of congregations that would support the new high school. The goal was to open Northland Lutheran High School in the fall of 1979, less than one year away!³⁰

Things began to move more quickly, now that the Association had a full-time administrator working. At the September Board meeting, the Membership committee announced that Salem Lutheran Church in Wausau had joined as the first congregational Association member. It was also at this meeting that the financial committee of the Board determined that in order to run a high school, the cost would be approximately twelve dollars per communicant member of the congregations in the Association in addition to tuition and monetary gifts from individuals. They estimated that tuition the first year would be \$600 for students from association members, \$800 for non-Association member churches, and \$1200 for non-WELS members.³¹

Between December 1978 and January 1979, eleven congregations³² voted to join the Association that would own, operate, and support Northland. These eleven congregations, with a communicant base of over 3500, committed \$22,590 to the support of Northland in 1979 alone.³³

1979 turned out to be a big year for Northland Lutheran High School. On February 11, the Northland Lutheran High School Association was faced with another "go/no go" meeting. The delegates, meeting at Salem Lutheran Church in Wausau, voted *unanimously* to open an Lutheran high school in the fall of 1979 with a freshmen and sophomore classes. In a matter of six years, the idea of

²⁹ *Northland Update*, 1:6, 11/78

³⁰ *Feasibility Study*, pg. 1

³¹ *Northland Update*, 1:6, 11/78; *Northland Board Minutes*, 9/15/78

³² The eleven congregations were: Zion-Rhineland, St. John-Enterprise, Grace-rural Mosinee, St. Paul-Stratford, Grace-Ringle, Redeemer-Schofield, Salem-Wausau (September 1978), Our Saviors-Wausau, St. Paul-Hamburg, Trinity-Town of Berlin, and St. Andrew-Goodrich.

³³ *Northland Update*, 2:1 2/79

an Area Lutheran High School in north central Wisconsin had gone from the matter of a discussion and a dream, to that of a reality.

2. The Merrill Years

On March 25, 1977, the Northland Association met again and adopted the Constitution recommended by the Board. In addition, the approved the recommendation of the Board to call a second full-time teacher to cover the math and science departments. The remaining four teachers that would make up Northland's first faculty would be part-time and would be pastors or lay members who were able to teach from the supporting congregations. The Association's Board was formed into a Board of Directors for the school and would handle the administration responsibility of Northland Lutheran High School.³⁴

Since the delegates had voted to open a high school in the Fall of 1979, and^a suitable facility was needed to house the new school. The Site Committee, have researching and investigating several leads, determined that there was no suitable facility available in Rhinelander, Wausau, or Merrill. As a result, the Northland Lutheran High School Association decided to open the school in Merrill using temporary, relocatable buildings. Merrill was chosen as the site because of its centrality to almost all thirty WELS congregations that were involved in some way with Northland.³⁵

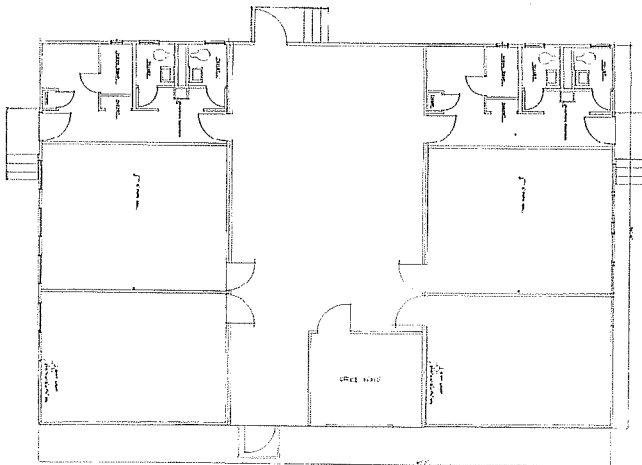
The Site Planning Committee immediately got to work on finding a workable site for the school to be located on. By May of 1979, the Association had approved the purchase of a forty-four acre tract of land just south of Merrill. Unfortunately, in June, they discovered that the plot of land would be unusable to Northland due to sewage disposal problems. The Site Committee did find a 250-foot by 250-foot lot in the city limits of Merrill that the Merrill City Council was willing to lease to Northland for free. While the site was not ideal to be the permanent site of Northland due to the size of the lot and its location, it gave the school a piece of land to place their buildings and open on time for the 1979-1980 school year.³⁶

³⁴ *Northland Update*, 2:3 4/79

³⁵ *Meeting at the Crossroads*. Paper delivered to congregations in North Central Wisconsin about Northland Lutheran High School, 1985, p.3.

³⁶ *Northland Update*, 2:5 7-8/79

By the end of June, three relocatable classrooms were purchased for approximately \$33,000, which included delivery and the assembly at the site. The three buildings were able to be joined together to form one sixty foot by forty foot building. As the school grew, they were assured that they



would be able to purchase more of the same type of buildings if needed for \$11,000.³⁷ The use of relocatable buildings was unique to the development of Northland. It was a situation that Northland was forced into due to the lack of other adequate facilities. However, the use of these types of units was both an asset and a liability.

The buildings gave Northland something tangible for its money. It would give them something that they would be able to sell when they moved into their own facility. At the same time, the temporary nature of the buildings had the potential of forcing Northland into a building program sooner than the area appeared able to handle it.³⁸

The Instruction Planning Committee was also busy at work through the first half of 1979. By May, they had designed a curriculum for Northland that would serve the needs of Christian teenagers at the secondary education level. The curriculum had four major programs that a student could be involved in. First, the general education program for those who most likely would not be attending a major college or university after high school. The pre-college program sought to prepare Northland students for and give the classes and credits necessary to enter a post-secondary institution. Finally, there was the pre-ministry program that prepared male student to study for the pastoral ministry and for

³⁷ *Northland Update*, 2:5 7-8/79

³⁸ *Meeting at the Crossroads*, p. 4

entry into Northwestern College, and the pre-teaching program that prepared students to enter Dr. Martin Luther College.³⁹

In May of 1979, the first organization outside of the Association was formed to “promote interest in and lend financial and other aid and support to Northland Lutheran High School.”⁴⁰ On May 20, the Northland Lutheran High School Ladies Auxiliary was formed and adopted a constitution based on the Ladies Auxiliary at Winnebago Lutheran Academy. In addition to providing support to Northland and promoting it, it also sought to “provide Christian fellowship for its members.”⁴¹

Slowly but surely, everything began to come together. The opening service and Open House were planned. Calls were issued to the part-time instructors. Mr. Delbert Draeger was called to teach math and science at Northland, a call that he accepted to become the second member of the Northland faculty.⁴² The full-time faculty for the first year of Northland’s existence included Mr. John Schultz (administrator) and Mr. Delbert Draeger (Math/Science). The faculty was completed with the six part-time instructors: Rev. Ralph Jones, Rev. Mark Falck, Rev. Roy Hoenecke, Rev. David Babinec, Rev. Neil Hansen, and Mrs. Theckla Schultz.⁴³

Northland Lutheran High School began its first year of operation with an opening service held at Salem Lutheran Church in Wausau on September 2, 1979. 313 people attended the service at which Pastor David Kock of Zion-Rhinelanders preached. At the service, the high school was dedicated and Mr. Delbert Draeger was installed along with the 6 part-time instructors. Both preceding and following the opening service, the school building in Merrill was open for people to tour. More than 500 people saw the new facilities for Northland that day.⁴⁴

³⁹ *Northland Update*, 2:4, 5-6/79

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Northland Update*, 2:5 7-8/79

⁴³ *Northland Update*, 2:7 10/79

⁴⁴ *Northland Update*, 2:6 9/79

Two days later, on September 4, Northland Lutheran High School, the fifteenth Area Lutheran High School in the WELS, opened its doors to students for the first time.⁴⁵ There were twenty-two students present, and another 2 joined the next week for a total enrollment of twenty-four. There were twelve freshmen and twelve sophomores, all members of WELS churches.⁴⁶

As busy as the first month was for the faculty and administration making sure everything ran smoothly, the student body was just as busy. During the month of September, the student elected the first student council and decided on the "Trojans" as their mascot. Royal Blue and Silver Gray were decided on for the school colors. A student paper was published with the name *Nuntius*, and the yearbook was named *Odyssey*.⁴⁷

Despite its small size and lack of a permanent facility, Northland was similar in most respects to a regular high school. Many of the classes were the same, a choir was started, and Northland rented gym space from a nearby school for Physical Education classes and sports practices. Northland was also blessed to have a sports program including volleyball, basketball, and track.

While the faculty and students were quickly getting into the swing of things, the Board was busy searching for a more permanent site for Northland. By mid-November, that site was chosen by the Association. The twenty-three acre "Jopke" property would be the home of Northland Lutheran High School. The plot of land was within Merrill city limits and was served by the city's water and sewage lines. It was close to several major roads. Of the twenty-three acres, about 13 acres were useable, which the remaining 10 acres or so were wooded. The property bordered on the banks of the Wisconsin River, which formed the Northern and Western property lines. The sale of the land to Northland was pending the city's approval of the necessary rezoning.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Northland Lutheran High School Association Delegate Meeting Minutes*, 2/11/79

⁴⁶ *Northland Update*, 2:6 9/79

⁴⁷ *Northland Update*, 2:7 10/79

⁴⁸ *Northland Update*, 2:8, 11/79

December 18, 1979 marked the date of the first Northland Christmas concert held at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Wausau. The choirs performed again on the 19th of December at Zion Lutheran Church in Rhinelander. Three separate choirs performed, the Northland choir that was made up of twenty-two freshmen and sophomores, the Northland freshmen music class, and a student organized choir of six sophomore girls.⁴⁹

During the first school year of Northland, the Instructional Committee was also busy at work, preparing Northland's Master Schedule for its second year of operation. Included in this Master Schedule was a curriculum for the junior class in the 1980-1981 school year, the new electives that would be offered, and the expansion of the athletic program. Northland would offer volleyball, basketball, cross-country, and with softball or track to the girls, and cross-country, wrestling, basketball, and either baseball or track for the boys. In addition, Northland planned to join the Wisconsin Independent Schools Athletic Association (WISAA) for the 1980-1981 school year.⁵⁰

The Instructional Committee also recommended to the Association to call for two more full-time faculty members into order to handle the estimated increase of twenty to thirty more students and the added classes. In February, the Northland Association approved the recommendation to call for two additional teachers, one to teach and head up the English department, the other as the head of the athletic department. In addition, they welcomed Grace Lutheran Church of Monico, Wisconsin, as the twelfth WELS congregation to join the Association. The Association now numbered twelve congregations, over 4000 communicants with a commitment of more than \$44,000 to Northland for the 1980 school year.⁵¹

In many respects, Northland was no different than most area Lutheran High Schools. This was the same as far as their financial situation as well. Already in their first year of operation, they faced the financial struggle most fledging high schools face of making ends meet financially. It would be a

⁴⁹ *Northland Update*, 2:8 11/79

⁵⁰ *Northland Update*, 3:2 2/80

⁵¹ *Northland Update*, 3:3 3/80

struggle that Northland would battle nearly every year. In order to relieve some of the financial burden facing Northland, the Association began a program of private notes, where people would basically lend money to Northland for a specific number of years and receive interest on the money borrowed. It benefited Northland in that they were able to borrow money at an interest lower than a loan from a bank, and the people benefited in that they received an interest rate higher than a bank would give in a savings account. The money in the private note program was first designated to help with the Phase One land and building acquisition, and to help pay down the more than \$140,000 worth of debt that Northland had incurred.⁵²

April of 1980 saw the formation of the Northland Men's Club, an organization similar to the Ladies Auxiliary with basically the same purpose, to promote interest in Northland and to support it in any way they could. In the early years of Northland, this many times included manual labor as the permanent site was prepared, landscaped, and maintained.⁵³

In May, the Board followed the instruction of the Northland Association and extended at call to Mr. Kurt Troge to serve as the third full-time instructor at Northland in the English department. Mr. Kurt Troge accepted the call.⁵⁴ The Board went to the assignment committee at Dr. Martin Luther College in order to have a graduate assigned to cover the other full-time position. Mr. Jeffery Davis was assigned to Northland and took over the duties in the athletic department.⁵⁵

With the school year winding down, the final enrollment numbers for Northland's first year ended at twenty-eight students. Following the purchase of the "Jopke" property for \$61,000, much of the summer of 1980 was spent preparing the new, permanent site of Northland and moving the classrooms buildings there. With the anticipated growth in student body size, an additional two

⁵² *Northland Update*, 3:3 3/80

⁵³ *Northland Update*, 3:4 4/80

⁵⁴ *Northland Update*, 3:4 4/80

⁵⁵ *Feasibility Study*, pg 1

temporary, relocatable classrooms were purchased and placed at the permanent site.⁵⁶ As the site was prepared, the buildings moved, improvements were also made on the Northland campus for athletic fields in order to allow the sports teams to practice outdoors on school property.⁵⁷

September of 1980 marked the second year of Northland's existence and enrollment numbers were up. With three classes in the building, Northland now taught fifty teenagers, all of them but two were WELS with seventy percent coming from Association congregations. It highlighted and pointed to the fact that strong recruitment efforts were necessary, especially ^{with} to grade school kids in order to keep Northland's enrollment numbers growing. Mr. John Schultz made several recruitment trips, visiting the classrooms of the Lutheran elementary schools in the Northland Association. The school newspaper, the *Nuntius*, was sent to the grade schools. The pastors also played a role in recruitment as they gave Mr. Schultz and Northland the names of graduating eighth graders. All played a role as Northland's student body grew.⁵⁸

During Northland's first year of operation, the youth that commuted to school were normally bussed in on the public school busses, especially from the Wausau area. Beginning with the 1980 school year, the Northland transportation system consisted of two new twenty-nine passenger buses owned by Northland, three late-model cars, a contract with a private bus company, and the public school bussing routes.⁵⁹ Through these different means, students were brought to Northland from Rhinelander, Tomahawk, and the Wausau area.

The Association met in their quarterly meeting again in November of 1980. At this meeting they approved a four-year curriculum devised by the Instructional Committee. They also determined that with the resulting course additions that were necessary for the Senior year being added, that the staff needed to be expanded as well. They approved two new positions and instructed the Board to call

⁵⁶ *Northland Update*, 3:5 7-8/80

⁵⁷ *Feasibility Study*, p. 1

⁵⁸ *Northland Update*, 3:6 9/80

⁵⁹ *Northland Update*, 3:7 10/80

to fill these positions as soon as they were able. In order to facilitate these new calls, Mr. Kurt Troge was moved to the head of the Social Studies department and a call was to be issued for an English teacher and for a pastor to head the religion department.⁶⁰

The second year progressed smoothly. In February, the Men's Club held their first area wide banquet titled "Night with Northland." It was held at Les and Jim's Lincoln Lanes in Merrill. The purpose of the banquet was inspiration, fellowship, and most importantly, the support of Northland Lutheran High School. The speaker for the evening was then president of the Wisconsin Synod, Pastor Carl Mischke, who spoke about Christian Education.⁶¹ Over \$3000 was raised to support Northland through the banquet!⁶²

February also ^{saw} the addition of the 13th congregation to join the Northland Lutheran High School Association when Zion Lutheran Church in Rib Falls, Wisconsin voted to join the Association.⁶³

As the enrollment numbers continued to grow at Northland, so did the realization that there may be a situation that could eventually arise of a student and his family not being able to pay the tuition costs. With this very situation in mind, a group of anonymous donors from the Wausau area set up a Tuition Assistance Fund. The fund was first utilized during the 1981-1982 school year and aided families who needed help paying their tuition costs.

As Northland continued to grow, it became evident that temporary buildings were only going to be able to handle a certain number of people. With that in mind, the Board began working on plans for a permanent facility on the Northland campus. In April of 1981, the Northland Association approved and authorized an architectural firm to come up with working plans for a permanent facility and then to carry out the bidding process in order to determine what the cost of the building project would be.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Northland Update*, 3:8 12/80

⁶¹ *Northland Update*, 4:1 1/81

⁶² *Northland Board Minutes*, 3/9/81

⁶³ *Northland Update*, 4:1 1/81

⁶⁴ *Feasibility Study*, pg. 2

By August, the Association had engaged the services of the architectural firm of Hackworth, Juerisson Associated, Inc. of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to determine the permanent space needs and prepare the initial designs. By the end of the month, they proposed to the board a 56,000 square foot design, which the Association accepted as the eventual permanent building for Northland Lutheran High School.⁶⁵

The summer of 1981 also saw the addition of two more full-time faculty members. Pastor Richard Kogler accepted the call to serve as the head of the religion and foreign language department while Mr. Earl Monday accepted the call to serve as the head of the English department.⁶⁶ Also that summer, Mrs. Sally Davis, the wife of Jeff Davis, became a full-time instructor in business education. The full-time faculty of the small school had grown to seven!⁶⁷

Several exciting events occurred in the fall of 1981. First, the Northland Lutheran High School Association grew to fourteen congregations as Redeemer Lutheran Church in Tomahawk was accepted as a member.⁶⁸ Then, in November, Northland developed a thirty-minute video describing the high school, its purpose, and facilities and was aired as a TV documentary on WAOW-TV, channel nine in Wausau on Thanksgiving Day. Many people in the Wausau area expressed their support for Northland after seeing the High School portrayed in such a positive light.⁶⁹

The Board continued their plans on expanding the courses and activities offered at Northland. In February of 1982, the Association's delegates approved the calling of a teacher to head the fine arts department.⁷⁰ After the first call was returned, the Board extended a divine call to Mr. Gerald Johanning. He accepted the call and immediately began work on beginning a band program. He took over the directing and expanded the vocal music program and taught various courses during the 1982-

⁶⁵ *Feasibility Study*, pg. 2

⁶⁶ *Northland Update*, 4:4 7/81

⁶⁷ *Northland Update*, 4:5, 10/81

⁶⁸ *Northland Association Minutes*, 8/17/81, *Northland Update*, 4:5 10/81

⁶⁹ *Northland Update*, 4:6, 11/81

⁷⁰ *Northland Update*, 5:2 3/82

1983 school year. In addition to all of this, he began a Cadet band, which was a grade school band program sponsored by Northland.⁷¹

On May 30, 1982, Northland Lutheran High School graduated its first class. A total of eleven seniors graduated, four of which went on to Dr. Martin Luther College and another to Northwestern College. Over 400 people attended the graduation.⁷² The Northland choir, which was made up of two-thirds of the student body, sang and Pastor Neil Hansen delivered the address.⁷³

Northland's enrollment numbers continued to grow as it began its third year of operation with eighty-three students. This continued growth on furthered the conviction that Northland would soon need a permanent facility. At the beginning on September, the architectural firm delivered the working plans to the Board and to the Northland Association along with the bidding estimates. The total cost of the project was an estimated \$2,445,000, which included the current debt of \$250,000!⁷⁴

The Northland Association held a special meeting at the end of September to discuss the plans that were delivered and what they next course of action was for the Association and the school. The motion was made and passed to enlist the help and services of the Wisconsin Synod Stewardship Office for the means of organizing a capital fund drive.⁷⁵

The first step the Stewardship office, led by Mr. Arthur Schaefer, took was to conduct a feasibility study in the fall of 1982 to see what the potential result of such a capital fund drive would be based on congregational giving and average household incomes.⁷⁶

In October, the Stewardship [?]completed their feasibility study. In the study, they compared Northland's situation with that of other Area Lutheran High Schools, it looked at past stewardship patterns in North Central Wisconsin, and through a number of interviews, tried to get a handle on the general attitude of people regarding Northland. What they discovered was not that particularly

⁷¹ *Northland Update*, 5:3 5/82

⁷² *Northland Update*, 5:4 7/82

⁷³ *Northland Update*, 5:1 1/82; *Northland Update*, 5:3 5/82

⁷⁴ *Feasibility Study*, pg. 2

⁷⁵ *Northland Update*, 5:6 10/82

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

surprising. The general stewardship of north central Wisconsin was on the low side, which explained the difficulty congregations had in fulfilling their commitments to Northland. This low stewardship practice would be potentially detrimental to any capital fundraising campaign. As a result, the conclusion of the study was that “a capital campaign in the amounts stated (\$2.4 million) is almost certain to fail due to the fact that there is not sufficient commitment on the part of a significant number of members in the constituent churches to support the proposed efforts...Our last recommendation is that no major effort be undertaken until the communicant base reaches 8,000 and until those communicants accept that the operation of a private school carries with it the obligation of financial support of that school.”⁷⁷

While the Board and Association members were discussing these matters, the students at Northland were starting their new year. The soccer team began its first year at the varsity level in the Woodlands High School soccer league. They had twenty-two students participating and finished with an overall record of 1-8.⁷⁸ One particular highlight of the season was the first ever Northland Homecoming game on October 16th verses East DePere. While the outcome was a loss, it was certainly an exciting and memorable event.⁷⁹

The end of 1982 and the beginning of 1983 saw three congregations withdraw from the Northland Lutheran High School Association. In November, both Grace-Ringle and Our Saviors-Wausau withdrew followed by Immanuel-Medford in January.⁸⁰

1982 ended with a gesture of generosity by fellow Christians and by a sister High School. Fox Valley Lutheran High School loaned Northland \$150,000 in order to help Northland cover their expenses and to help keep an Area Lutheran High School in central Wisconsin.⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Feasibility Study*, pg 5-6

⁷⁸ *Northland Update*, 5:6 10/82

⁷⁹ *Northland Update*, 5:7 11/82

⁸⁰ *Northland Board Minutes*, 11/10/82, 11/15/82

⁸¹ *Northland Board Minutes*, 12/13/82

The spring of 1983 saw the resignation of two of Northland's faculty. With their departure, the Board once again went to the assignment committee at Dr. Martin Luther College for a graduate to cover the positions taught by these departing faculty members. Miss Rita Putz was assigned on May 12, 1983 to Northland. She took over teaching Business Education and mathematics.⁸²

The spring of 1983 also saw the first ever pops concert at Northland. The Trojan Band performed, along with the Northland Choir and the Cadet band. Also, Northland graduated its first class of four-year students. Fourteen seniors received their diplomas!⁸³

On June 21, 1983, the Northland Lutheran High School Association met in the quarterly meeting, and after narrowly defeating a motion to go ahead and construct the gymnasium phase of the permanent facility, the delegates approved the purchase of a fifth relocatable building that would be constructed on the Northland campus. The Merrill city council, as part of their approval of the project, requested a timetable from the Association for the further construction at Northland. There were growing concerns on the city council regarding the appearance of the buildings and the fire hazard the wooden buildings posed to the students and faculty at Northland.⁸⁴

In order to prepare the buildings to accommodate the new building, the interior of Northland was remodeled in July of 1983. The addition of the fifth building provided Northland with about 8,000 square feet of space that was divided up into nine teachings stations, offices, and a small gathering area. The maximum capacity of students was set at 115-120.⁸⁵

The beginning of the 1983-1984 school year saw the addition of two part-time faculty members. Mrs. Janet Nuessmeier began teaching the Home Economics classes while Pastor Dean Fleming began teaching Latin in the foreign language department.⁸⁶ The ^{continuing} containing growth in enrollment numbers led the Board of Directors to instruct the faculty to evaluate and review the

⁸² *Northland Update*, 6:3 5/83

⁸³ *Northland Update*, 6:3 5/83; *Northland Update*, 6:2 4/83

⁸⁴ *Northland Update*, 6:4, 7/83

⁸⁵ *Meeting at the Crossroads*, p 6

⁸⁶ *Northland Update*, 6:5 9/83

curriculum over the course of the year. This was done in order to review the courses that were being taught, to plan for any new courses that could be added, and more importantly in helped the Board in their planning for the future ministry of Northland. This curriculum review also helped the Board in planning any future calls that were to be extended along with providing help in estimating budget numbers.⁸⁷

The Northland Association met again in April of 1984 and unanimously adopted a refinancing proposal of Northland's existing debt that would allow the Association to borrow a sufficient amount of money to being to construct a phase of their permanent facility. However, the events of the coming summer would put those plans on hold.⁸⁸

In July, Pastor Kogler accepted a call to serve a parish after serving Northland for three years. The Northland Board extended a call to Pastor Edward Schuppe.⁸⁹ Pastor Schuppe declined the call, which led Northland to ask Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for a student who would be able to teach at Northland for a year. Mr. James Pankow accepted a one-year call to teach at Northland.⁹⁰

The end of July and the beginning of August say Northland struggle through some extremely severe budget shortfalls. The financial situation was so dire that Northland was nearly closed because of a lack of money. The Lord however had a different idea as he provided \$102,000 through a special offering that led the Association, in a special meeting on August 12, 1984, to vote to open Northland as scheduled for the 1984-1985 school year.⁹¹

For most of its history Northland has found itself fighting off financial struggles and operating with budget deficits. In the early years of Northland, a lack of congregational support and the small student body (and therefore low tuition amounts) played a large role in the lack of money. By this time, with the larger student body led to more cash for Northland through more tuition money, but

⁸⁷ *Northland Update*, 7:1 1/84

⁸⁸ *Northland Update*, 7:3 4/84

⁸⁹ *Northland Update*, 7:5 8/84

⁹⁰ *Northland Update*, 7:6 9/84

⁹¹ *Northland Update*, 7:6 9/84

irregular fulfillment of commitments by congregations and individuals caused cutbacks in approved expenses and what is worse, cause^e_A anxiety in the minds of the faculty, students, families, and supporters of Northland. It caused concern on the part of parents, students, and faculty as they wondered if Northland would open the coming year. It played a role in some students leaving the Northland family, caused instability in the school, and made recruitment that much more difficult.⁹² Despite these tough circumstances and, at times, unfortunate situations, God continued to richly bless Northland, its students, faculty, and supporters. He always provided a way for Northland to remain open, boldly proclaiming the gospel to teenagers and their families in north central Wisconsin.

While most of the 1984-1985 school year passed quickly and quietly, Northland found itself on the receiving end of a generous gift. Manard Junior College in Merrill, Wisconsin had closed in the early 1980's and in December of 1984, offered to donate its entire library of nearly 12,000 volumes to Northland for the cost of moving the books. Northland quickly scrambled to find free storage space among the member congregations in order that they would be able to accept this generous gift.⁹³

In order to help alleviate the serious financial struggles, in June of 1985, the Northland Association approved the development of a new program entitled "Abundantly Sow, Abundantly Reap," nicknamed ASAR. The program was designed as both an educational and stewardship tool, which they tried to make as clear as possible through the theme. The program was originally run by Mr. Al Brockelman, a retired AAL man, who led the program through its initial phases.⁹⁴

Following a summer remodeling project that cost \$1600 and hundreds of volunteer man-hours, Northland opened its doors once again to students on August 26th, 1985.⁹⁵ It offered fifty-six courses in four programs (general, pre-college, pre-teaching, pre-N^wMC) and was staffed by eight full-time

⁹² *Meeting at the Crossroads*, p. 7

⁹³ *Northland Board Minutes*, 12/10/84

⁹⁴ *Northland Update*, 8:3 8/85

⁹⁵ *Northland Update*, 8:4 11/85

faculty members and three part-time instructors.⁹⁶ New to the faculty was Wisconsin Lutheran Seminarian Joel Nitz who replaced Mr. James Pankow and taught foreign languages and social studies during his year at Northland.⁹⁷

The Northland Board in March of 1986⁸ appointed a committee called the Blue Ribbon Committee whose goal was to improve and strengthen Christian secondary education at Northland Lutheran High School. In order to accomplish this goal, the Blue Ribbon Committee began to publish the *Northland Communicator*. Its focus was to be primarily on the school, its board, and delegate news, while the *Northland Update* would focus more on the promotion of Northland and the recruitment of students.⁹⁸ However, the two publications would only be published together for a few months. Due to financial constraints, in June of 1986, the last *Northland Update* was published.⁹⁹

Once again, during the summer of 1986, the budget and financial problems facing Northland was the main focus of discussion. On June 17, 1986, the Northland Association changed its Constitution and By-laws requiring the school to operate with a balanced budget. The result being that if the financial support was not there, then there would be a reduction in the Lord's work at Northland. Despite the financial concerns, the delegates once again unanimously approved a resolution to commit the Association to support Northland Lutheran High School and to guarantee that it would be open and operating during the 1986-1987 school year.¹⁰⁰

The financial burdens caused other forms of wear and tear on the Association and school. In July of 1986, Zion Lutheran Church in Rhineland, one of the original founders of Northland, withdrew from the Association because of the concerns it had regarding the finances of Northland. It

⁹⁶ *Northland Lutheran High School: Working to Meet the Needs of Today's Youth.. Variation of Meeting at the Crossroads.* 1985, p.2

⁹⁷ *Northland Update*, 8:4 11/85

⁹⁸ *Northland Lutheran High School Communicator*. 1:1 3/86

⁹⁹ *Northland Update*, 9:2 5/86

¹⁰⁰ *Northland Communicator*, 1:3 6/86

was just one of a number of congregations that had withdrawn, leaving just 12 churches in the Association.¹⁰¹

On August 24, 1986, Northland's eighth academic year began with an enrollment of seventy-seven students and two new full-time members on the faculty. Ms. Beth Wendland was assigned from Dr. Martin Luther College as an instructor, and Mr. Paul Koelpin was the Seminarian who replaced Mr. Joel Nitz.¹⁰²

In September, 1986, Pastor Rhinehart Pope, a retired pastor who had served a congregation close to Shoreland Lutheran High School, met with the Ladies Auxiliary and Men's Club. It would be a meeting that would have a lasting effect on Northland. In his address to these groups, he described how his congregation started a separate corporation for the purpose of running a resale center in support of Shoreland. That year alone they had been able to donate more than \$60,000 to the high school.¹⁰³

From the Ladies Auxiliary and Men's Club emerged a group of individuals who began to take the steps in order to open their own resale center in order to support Northland. Great Faith, Inc. was formed to operate the store, and on April 10, 1987, the first Dime and Dollar thrift store opened its doors at 1001 N. Third Avenue in Wausau.¹⁰⁴ In the first month alone, they were able to donate \$1000 to Northland, followed by an additional \$1500 in the month of May.¹⁰⁵

In November, the Northland Board once again addressed the issue of beginning one phase of the building project. For a second time the Northland Association approved a financial plan to consolidate the existing \$200,000 in debt and begin construction on a portion of the permanent facility. The beginning of the construction was contingent, however, on the approval of two-thirds of the

¹⁰¹ *Northland Communicator*, 1:4 9/86

¹⁰² *Northland Communicator*, 1:4 9/86

¹⁰³ *Northland Communicator*, 1:5 10/86

¹⁰⁴ *Northland Communicator*, 2:8 12/87

¹⁰⁵ *Northland Communicator*, 2:4 5/87

Northland Association congregations. The cost limit that was set was that the total cost of the building, including the cost of consolidating the existing debt would not exceed \$650,000.¹⁰⁶

By February 3, 1987, the Association had the necessary approval from the member congregations and approved the debt consolidation and building of the first phase of the project. The new permanent addition would be constructed to the rear of the relocatable buildings and would include a 138 foot by 130 foot gymnasium / auditorium, locker rooms, 3 classrooms, and office space.¹⁰⁷ With the completion of the addition, Northland would have 10 classrooms, a library, a locker/shower/restroom area, and an office complex. To help defray some of the cost, "Old Main," one of the original relocatable buildings, would be sold. Groundbreaking for the new building was set for May 31, 1987.¹⁰⁸

In order to help with the financing of this project, in April of 1987, the Association delegates approved the "Building Excitement" fund drive with a goal of collecting \$350,000. With the approval of this fund drive was also an amendment that stated if the goal of \$350,000 was not met, that steps were to be taken to close the school.¹⁰⁹ Northland faced yet another "go/no go," all or nothing point in its history.

The "Building Excitement" fund drive consisted of visits by the administrator to congregations and individuals, group meetings, and various mailings.¹¹⁰ The delegate reconvened at the end of May to hear the progress of the fund drive. The news was not very encouraging. Only \$137,832 was committed, not even half of the goal! The delegates resolved to extend the deadline for the fund drive to the end of June, then reevaluate the situation. However, Mr. Robert Shuch was appointed to investigate possible locations for the school in the Wausau area if a move was considered while the

¹⁰⁶ *Northland Communicator*, 1:7 12/86

¹⁰⁷ *Northland Communicator*, 2:2 2/87

¹⁰⁸ *Northland Communicator*, 2:3 4/87

¹⁰⁹ *Northland Communicator*, 2:4 5/87

¹¹⁰ *Northland Communicator*, 2:4 5/87

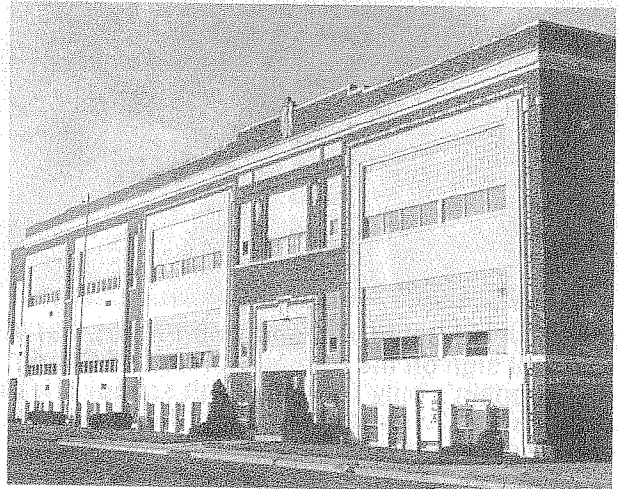
Board of Directors and the Finance Committee were to draw up two plans by the end of June, one showing the cost of keeping the school open, the other showing the cost of closing.¹¹¹

The delegates once again reconvened on June 30, 1987. The "Building Excitement" plan had reached \$154,036 of the \$350,000 goal. Without the \$350,000, Northland would be unable to refinance its current debt. The inability to refinance coupled with the inability to build due to a lack of funds strongly pointed to the end of Northland and the closing of the high school. However, on June 29th, the committee charged with investigating moving Northland to the Wausau area submitted a detailed report to the Board. The Northland Board then recommended to the Association and delegates to move Northland to Wausau. The relocatable buildings would be sold, along with the Merrill campus and a building in Wausau would be leased. The Northland Association approved of the plan and voted to move the school to Wausau, closing the Merrill era of Northland's history.

¹¹¹ *Northland Communicator*, 2:4 5/87

3. The Wausau Years

The Committee in charge of Northland's move to Wausau found an adequate facility in downtown Wausau. The former St. Francis Cabrini Middle School became Northland's new home. The Catholic school system had just finished a reorganization and consolidation that led to the closing of the school and the opportunity for Northland to use the building.¹¹² The new building provided a potentially permanent building for Northland, but for the time being, the Northland Association was renting the space from the Catholic Archdiocese who still owned the building.



Northland Lutheran High School's newly acquired building at 321 Grand Avenue. Photo by Michael Martens.

The move was definitely an upgrade for the high school as far as facilities were concerned. The high school was now blessed with nine full-sized classrooms, a number of smaller classrooms, a gym, and a cafeteria. Perhaps it is best stated by the then chairman of the Northland Board, Mr. Dale Gehring, who stated, "Students will no longer have to wear coats when going from one class to another."¹¹³

The move was more than just finding an adequate building. The high school with all its equipment, desks, office equipment, and books needed to be moved from Merrill to Wausau. Northland Lutheran High School officially moved from Merrill to Wausau in August of 1987 and opened their ninth academic school year at the end of the month with seventy-five students enrolled.

In order to pay for the rent on the Cabrini buildings, the normal operating expenses, and the costs in moving, the Board quickly authorized the sale of the buildings and land in Merrill. By October of 1987, two of the five relocatable buildings had been sold, with the sale of another two

¹¹² *Northland Update, Special Edition, 8/87*

¹¹³ *Northland Update, Special Edition, 8/87*

forthcoming. There were no solid bidders for the property, and in order to sell it quickly, the Board approved a plan to hold land auctions if no bids were received by November.¹¹⁴

By the end of the November, the third building had been sold, and due to the time of the year, the land auction was put off while other options to sell the land were being pursued. The remained two buildings were sold in the beginning of 1988.¹¹⁵ The land was finally sold to a development company in November of 1988.¹¹⁶

A second Dime and Dollar store was opened in the middle of October in Merrill, to further support Northland. By December, in just nine months of operation, Great Faith, Inc., the operators of the Dime and Dollar stores, had given Northland more than \$15,000. By April of 1988, one year since the first dime and dollar opened, they were open six days a week staffed by a crew of volunteers. This enabled them to donate \$30,000 to the general operating fund of Northland.¹¹⁷

Recruitment was still an important tool to Northland. November of 1987 saw the first "Trojan-for-a-day" recruitment effort started. The premise of the effort was to invite grade school kids to come to Northland for a day. During the day they would attend some classes with the students, have a hot lunch in the cafeteria with the student body, meet some of the teachers at Northland. This was followed by a special program for them in the evening that focused on what Northland was all about.¹¹⁸

While these recruitment efforts were taking place, Northland got another boost of support with the Northland Boosters was formed at the beginning of December. It was an informal organization whose main objective was to develop and improve the grassroots support of Christian secondary education in general, but especially at Northland. Both Associated and non-Associated congregations were invited to the Boosters activities and were the focus for the Northland Boosters efforts.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ *Northland Communicator*, 2:6 10/87

¹¹⁵ *Northland Communicator*, 2:7 11/87

¹¹⁶ *Northland Communicator*, 3:8 12/88

¹¹⁷ *Northland Communicator*, 3:4 5-6/88

¹¹⁸ *Northland Communicator*, 2:7 11/87

¹¹⁹ *Northland Communicator*, 2:8 12/87

An interesting note about the dances held for Northland students. On February 8, 1988, the Board of Directors, after examining the Northland policy on dances, expanded the policy from square dancing to include other types of dancing. This change did not come easily or quickly. It changed after two years of surveys, studying the policies of the other area Lutheran high schools, and much debate and discussion.¹²⁰

The relatively new Fine Arts department at Northland continued to grow and offer students new opportunities to use the God-given talents and abilities. In April of 1988, the Northland Drama Club was formed to provide theatrical experience to those students who were interested.¹²¹

The close of the first year in Wausau saw some relatively major changes in the Northland faculty. In May, Mr. Kurt Troge accepted a call to serve at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. He had faithfully served Northland for eight years. The faculty determined that his classes would be able to be covered by the present faculty making some minor adjustments. Later that same month, Mr. Delbert Draeger accepted a call to teach at Shoreland Lutheran High School. He had served Northland nine years and was one of the original faculty members. In order to cover positions that were now vacant, Northland Board extended a divine call to Miss Andrea Stelter. She accepted the call and stepped in to teach the Business Education classes and coach.¹²² That fall, Mr. Mark Tacke accepted the call to serve in the Science department, while two other part-time instructors also accepted calls to teach various classes at Northland.¹²³ The Lord provided teachers who were faithful to their calling, and continued to supply Northland with capable teachers as faculty members came and went.

The summer months of 1988 saw another new organization formed to help support the school financially. The school was still operating with a fairly large debt. An informal group of individuals and families formed the "360 Club." The group pledged a regular, monthly amount of financial

¹²⁰ *Northland Communicator*, 3:2 2/88

¹²¹ *Northland Communicator*, 3:3 4/88

¹²² *Northland Communicator*, 3:4 5-6/88

¹²³ *Northland Communicator*, 3:5 8/88

support on an annual basis to Northland. It was a benefit to Northland in that now they had a regular, monthly source of income. As the program began to catch on, information was sent to the congregations in the Association and who were connected with Northland in order to promote more members in the 360 Club.¹²⁴ By September, there were more than seventy members who had pledged an annual income of more than \$25,000 to Northland.¹²⁵ The Club continued to grow! By January of 1989, the 360 Club was up to ninety members with an annual giving of \$31,000.¹²⁶ This was a tremendous boost to Northland and helped its financial situation.

August of 1988 was the tenth year of operation for the high school. It had survived its first decade of operation. A decade that witnessed growth in its enrollment numbers, an unfortunate decrease in Association members, and a move from Merrill to Wausau. In order to attract more congregations, the Association delegates in their November meeting approved a new policy that new members to the Association would not be responsible for debt that Northland had incurred prior to their joining the Association. At the same meeting, the Association also approved a tuition deduction for non-Associated congregations in the form of a credit.¹²⁷

To help commemorate the ten years that Northland had served north central Wisconsin as the only Lutheran high school, a special tenth anniversary service was held on April 16th at Salem Lutheran Church in Wausau. Pastor Karl Gurgel, the president of the Western Wisconsin District preached and a special offering was taken. More than \$5000 was received and used to help pay off the loan to ^{From} Fox Valley Lutheran High School.¹²⁸

Two months later, on June 4, 1989, twenty-four seniors graduated from Northland Lutheran High School. Over the first ten years of its existence, Northland graduated 129 Christian teenagers.¹²⁹ It did more than just that however. It prepared teenagers to be servants in his church, and stood as a

¹²⁴ *Northland Communicator*, 3:4 5-6/88

¹²⁵ *Northland Communicator*, 3:6 9/88

¹²⁶ *Northland Communicator*, 4:1 1/89

¹²⁷ *Northland Association Minutes*, 11/29/88

¹²⁸ *Northland Communicator*, 4:4 5/89

¹²⁹ *Northland Communicator*, 4:4 5/89

testament to the power of God to all who knew or heard of Northland to the great things our God can do!

Following two years of teaching at Northland, Pastor Roger Knepprath was assigned to a parish.¹³⁰ The same summer, Mr. Earl Monday also accepted a call to teach English at Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School. This led the Northland Board to once again call to fill these vacant positions.¹³¹ Pastor Joel Suckow accepted the divine call to serve Northland and fill the vacant position in the religion and foreign language department.¹³² Mr. John Aschenmacher accepted the call to teach English at Northland.¹³³

Financial struggles once again confronted Northland in 1989. In addition to their long-term debt, Northland was unable to pay their normal monthly expenses. In October, it got to the point where Northland once again had to appeal to the Association and congregations for help.¹³⁴ Dime and Dollar made their largest donation yet to the Northland Operating Fund, over \$3800!¹³⁵ By December, the situation was still critical. Northland had approximately \$15,000 worth of bills that were still unpaid.¹³⁶

In April, the Association began a new stewardship drive with a special offering entitled "Light the Way." The goal of the campaign was to raise \$140,000 to help pay past due bills and to pay off some of Northland's commercial loans.¹³⁷ The following summer, Administrator John Schultz was sent out by the delegates to the congregations to continue to encourage and enlist their support for Northland, both individually and as a congregation. The Finance committee met and determined that

¹³⁰ *Northland Communicator*, 4:4 5/89

¹³¹ *Northland Communicator*, 4:5 7/89

¹³² *Northland Communicator*, 4:4 5/89

¹³³ *Northland Communicator*, 4:5 7/89

¹³⁴ *Northland Communicator*, 4:7 10/89

¹³⁵ *Northland Communicator*, 4:8 11/89

¹³⁶ *Northland Communicator*, 4:9 12/89

¹³⁷ *Northland Communicator*, 5:3 4/90

Northland would end the year short \$40,000 in income.¹³⁸ The Association and Board began looking for ways cut costs and save money.

On December 11, 1990, the Northland Association heard a report from an Ad Hoc Committee regarding the budget shortfalls and the recent deficit budgeting. The Committee recommended cutting \$40,000 from the budget by increasing tuition slightly (which was still lower than the WELS area Lutheran High School average), by making slight adjustments to the bussing routes, and by reducing the staff at Northland by two full time workers. The courses taught by these teachers would be covered by the remaining faculty members and by part-time staffing. In June of 1991, the Association approved the recommendation of the Board to rescind the calls of Mr. William Mundt and Mr. Gerald Johanning.¹³⁹

That May, Mr. John Schultz accepted a call to serve at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. He had served as the administrator of Northland for thirteen years. Mr. Schultz played an integral part in the formation of Northland. He led Northland through the process of becoming a tiny Lutheran high school with three temporary buildings, through a major move, to the point where Northland now had a more permanent facility. He led Northland through many difficult years when finances and money concerns threatened to close the school. God used the gifts, talents, and spiritual leadership of Mr. John Schultz to guide his church, and more specifically, Northland Lutheran High School, through the struggles and joys that go with starting a new high school. Mr. Schultz was a rich blessing to Northland Lutheran High School.

Following the departure of Mr. Schultz, the Northland Board extended a one-year call to Mr. Jeff Davis to also serve as administrator of the school in addition to his teaching duties. The call was then extended the following year and Mr. Davis stayed on as administrator for the remainder of his time at Northland.

¹³⁸ *Northland Communicator*, 5:5 5-6/90

¹³⁹ *Northland Lutheran High School Parent Newsletter*. 12:5 1/15/91

The next two school years, from 1991 to 1993 passed with little fanfare. In the fall of 1993, the Northland Association approved what they called a “Growth Study.” The purpose of this study was to obtain feedback from the Northland High School “stakeholders,” those who were playing an integral and important role in keeping Northland a viable institution. This was done in conjunction with the fifteenth anniversary of Northland in order to give the Board and the Association an idea of where the high school was. It also served to give them a measuring stick of sort to help determine the future of Northland using the input and support of the area congregations.¹⁴⁰ Northland completed its Growth Study in November of 1994. As a result of the study and the feedback received from it, the delegates of the Northland Lutheran High School Association voted overwhelmingly to continue the operation of the school and to recommit themselves to the operation and support of the high school!¹⁴¹

The 1993 school year also saw some minor changes at the school. In October of 1993, the high school adopted a new logo, replacing the star logo with a cross. In the spring, the high school changed its mascot from the Trojans to the Northland Lutheran High School Wildcats.¹⁴²



Northland was chosen as an exemplary Lutheran High School by the Wisconsin Synod in the spring of 1994. It was chosen from among the other twenty area Lutheran high schools. In addition to the award, Northland was given a \$2500 grant that it used to purchase two new computers for the keyboarding room.¹⁴³

By the end of the 1993-1994 school year, Northland again found itself with an income shortage of nearly \$25,000. In April, Mr. Mark Tacke accepted a call to teach at Evergreen Lutheran High School. Instead of entering the school year shorthanded and save about \$25,000 in salary (and meet the needs of the budget), the Northland Association instead approved the motion for the Board to

¹⁴⁰ *Northland Communicator*, 10:7 10/93

¹⁴¹ *Northland Parent Newsletter*, 16:3 11/94

¹⁴² *Northland Update*, 1:1 11/94

¹⁴³ *Northland Communicator*, 11:2 3/94

extend a call to fill the vacancy.¹⁴⁴ This highlights not only the Board's, but also the Association's dedication to provide a quality Christian education to the teens of north central Wisconsin, and at the same time not completely wear out their faculty. However, that vacant spot on the faculty wouldn't be filled until the following summer.

The 1994-1995 school year saw the addition of a brand new course to Northland. Spanish was taught for the first time, however, the teacher never set foot in the Northland building. The class was taught by "distance learning." Mr. Vic Fenske, a teacher at Arizona Lutheran Academy, taught students at Northland Spanish. He communicated with the students daily by means of a computer, by video, teleconferencing, and by fax. Fourteen students enrolled in this breakthrough and cutting edge method of teaching.¹⁴⁵

In October of 1994, Northland held its first annual Northland Lutheran High School Alumni reunion in conjunction with that year's homecoming festivities. About fifty people attended the event, thirty-two of which were Northland alumni. By this time, Northland had graduated more than 200 students!¹⁴⁶

1995 ushered in a flurry of changes to the faculty at Northland Lutheran High School. Mr. Rick Grundman was extended a divine call to teach science. He accepted the call. Near the end of January, Mr. Jeffrey Davis accepted a call to serve at Lakeside Lutheran High School. Mr. Davis served Northland for fifteen years, including three as administrator. The next month, the Board took the somewhat unusual step of issuing another call to Mr. Grundman, this time to serve as the third administrator in Northland's history. He accepted the call and that summer began his service at Northland.¹⁴⁷ In order to fill the need for a science teacher that was open, the Board extended a call to

¹⁴⁴ *Northland Communicator*, 11:3 4/94

¹⁴⁵ *Northland Update*, 1:1 11/94

¹⁴⁶ *Northland Update*, 1:1 11/94

¹⁴⁷ *Northland Update*, 2:1 9/95, *Northland Parent Newsletter*, 16:5 2/95

Mr. Dan Fenske. Part of the responsibilities, in addition to teaching the science classes at Northland, involved coaching. Mr. Fenske accepted the call.¹⁴⁸

The summer of 1995 was also an exciting time for Northland. It was first named the recipient of the “1995 High School Recognition Award for Exemplary Ministry to Young People,” along with a \$2500 grant from AAL for teacher recognition and school improvement. More importantly, the Association began the Ebenezer program, which began a land search for the new Northland Lutheran High School facility. Northland was looking for a home it could call its own!¹⁴⁹

In February of 1996, the Northland Lutheran High School Association adopted its Mission statement: “Northland’s Mission is to assist families and churches in discipling young people to live and share their faith in Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁰ It served to remind not only the Association but also all involved in some way with Northland the real reason why Northland existed, to continue to help Christian teenagers and their families grow in their faith.

The spring also saw Northland once again at the cutting edge of technology. In March of 1996, Northland set up its first website. It was one of the first high schools in all of Wisconsin to have a website!¹⁵¹

The rest of 1996 passed quickly and quietly by. In March of 1997, Northland officially started the “On the Grow” building fund drive to raise money for the purchase of land and the financing needed to build a new school building. Things began to move quickly. A site had been chosen by the Ebenezer committee and on March 31, 1997, the Northland Association purchased a lot in Kronenwetter, a few miles south of Wausau and their school. This site in Kronenwetter would serve as the future home of Northland.

¹⁴⁸ *Northland Parent Newsletter*, 16:6 4/95

¹⁴⁹ *Northland Update*, 2:3 Summer 1995

¹⁵⁰ *Northland Update*, 2:2 3/96

¹⁵¹ *Northland Update*, 2:2 3/96

The “On the Grow” campaign continued to operate, collecting funds and securing pledges throughout the year. Finally, in April of 1998, the Northland Board recommended to the Association that they move ahead with the building project. The Association opted for a pre-engineered steel frame building in order to save money.¹⁵² On August 23, 1998, the opening service for Northland was held in Kronenwetter and also served as a groundbreaking for the new building. It also marked the twentieth year of operation for Northland Lutheran High School.¹⁵³ Never before had God’s blessings and guiding hand been so evident to the supporters of Northland!

By October of 1998, the Northland Board signed a contract with Wimmer Construction to erect Northland’s new school building. They did not wait too long. Work began on the new building almost immediately so that it would be ready for the next school year.¹⁵⁴

As the new school was being built a few miles to the south, changes were also happening at the high school. The § student body voted to change the colors of the school slightly, from Royal Blue and White to Navy blue and white.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² *Northland Board Minutes, 4/13/98; 4/21/98*

¹⁵³ *Opening Service / Groundbreaking Announcement*

¹⁵⁴ *Northland Board Minutes, 10/12/98*

¹⁵⁵ *Northland Board Minutes, 3/8/99*

4. The Kronenwetter Years

Already in June of 1999, the new Northland facility was completed to the point that the high school was able to move their offices over. On June eighteenth and nineteenth, Northland Lutheran High School made its second, and perhaps final, move in its twenty-year plus history. As the high school moved over to their new facilities, St. Mary's Catholic Parish, the landlords of the St. Francis Cabrini School allowed them to take with them several items, including desks, tables and chairs.¹⁵⁶

In August, Northland held its dedication and opening service for the new school year at its brand new facility. More than 600 people attended and toured the new facility.¹⁵⁷ Having a new facility and their own land allowed Northland to be able do many things they were previously unable to do. In October, the Association built a pole barn that was used for storage and maintenance space.¹⁵⁸ In December, Northland held the first ever, Journey to Bethlehem, a live nativity that took visitors from the fields outside Bethlehem, through the city streets to the quiet manger. In the first year alone, more than 1000 people walked through the nativity in which Northland students played the parts of the shepherds, townsfolk, innkeeper, and others.¹⁵⁹ During the 2001-2002 school year, students were able to take a construction elective ^{in which} where through the course of the year, they worked on constructing a building on the Northland campus that would serve as a concessions stand, additional storage space, and a woodshop/engine repair classroom.¹⁶⁰

Having a brand new facility also attracted more students to Northland. The enrollment grew considerably. The increase in enrollment made their brand new building seem almost too small! In November of 2001, the Northland Board recommended to the Association to approve another building project, an addition of two classrooms and a media center.¹⁶¹ The association authorized the addition and in May of 2002, work began on the new addition with Wimmer Construction again doing the

¹⁵⁶ *Northland Board Minutes*, 6/14/99

¹⁵⁷ *Northland Board Minutes*, 9/13/99

¹⁵⁸ *Northland Board Minutes*, 11/99

¹⁵⁹ *Northland Board Minutes*, 3/13/00

¹⁶⁰ *Northland Board Minutes*, 2001-2002

¹⁶¹ *Northland Board Minutes*, 11/01

work. The work was completed by the beginning of August, which allowed Northland to use the new classrooms and media center for the 2002-2003 school year. It is space that is well used as Northland is expecting another record enrollment of 145 students for the 2003-2004 school year!

5. Concluding Thoughts

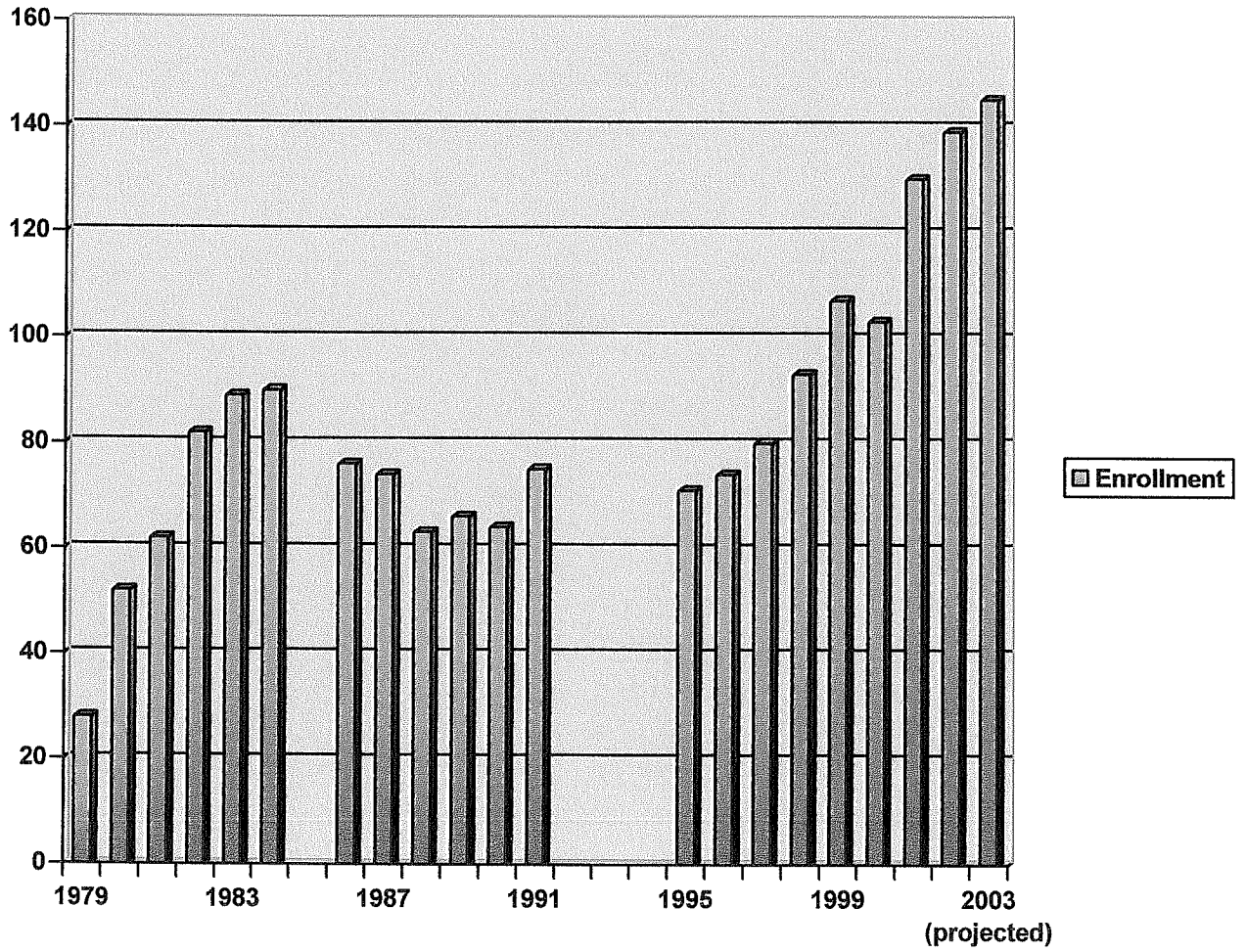
Anyone who looks back at their life and point out many instances where God's grace was especially evident in their life; a life lived in the comfort of knowing one's Savior, or a job opportunity that came along at an opportune time, or a horrible accident that everyone walked away from. Sometimes God's grace given to his church on earth is evident as soon as it is given, other times only clearly seen in hindsight.

The same is true, not only for individuals, but also institutions. It is only by the grace of God that he has allowed His Word to continue to be preached throughout the world. It is only by his grace that he has allowed church bodies to proclaim that message of salvation to people of all ages throughout all time.

The history of Northland Lutheran High School can only be described with that one thought in mind. Grace. It is only by the grace of God that Northland Lutheran High School has proclaimed God's grace and his salvation for twenty-five years in north central Wisconsin, and it is only by that same grace of God poured out on his church and this institution that Northland will continue to proclaim the gospel for twenty-five more.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

Appendix 1 – Northland Lutheran High School Enrollment Figures¹⁶²



¹⁶² For those years without a bar, no enrollment number could be found.

Appendix 2 – Northland Lutheran High School Faculty Members

Teacher	Years	Position
Mr. John Schultz	1978-1991	Administrator
Mr. Delbert Draeger	1979-1988	Full-time – Science
Rev. David Babinec	1979-1981; 1985-86	Part-time – Athletics, German
Rev. Mark Falck	1979-1983	Part-time – Latin
Rev. Neil Hansen	1979-1981	Part-time – Religion
Rev. Ralph Jones	1979-1982	Part-time – Athletics, coaching
Mrs. John Schultz (Theckla)	1979-1991	Part-time – Secretary, art, reading improvement
Rev. Roy Hoenecke	1979	Part-time – English
Mr. Kurt Troge	1980-1988	Full-Time – English, Social Studies
Mr. Jeff Davis	1980-1995	Full-Time – Athletics, Math / Administrator 1991-95
Mrs. Judy Martin	1980-1983	Part-time – Home Economics
Mrs. Nancy Broekering	1983	Part-time – Home Economics
Rev. Richard Kogler	1981-1984	Full-Time – Religion / Foreign language
Mr. Earl Monday	1981-1989	Full-Time – English
Rev. Carl Siegler	1981-1982	Part-Time – Foreign Language
Mrs. Sally Davis	1980-1983	Part-time / Full-Time – Business Ed., Typing, Math, Piano
Mr. Gerald Johanning	1982-1991	Full-Time – Music, Band, Fine Arts
Ms. Rita Putz	1983-1986	Full-Time – Business Ed. & mathematics
Mrs. Janet Nuessmeier	1983-1986	Part-Time – Home Economics
Pastor Dean Flemming	1983-1985	Part-Time – Latin
Mr. Jim Pankow (WLS)	1984-1985	Full-Time – Foreign Language, Social Studies
Mr. Joel Nitz (WLS)	1985-1986	Full-Time – Foreign Language, Social Studies
Rev. John Dorn	1985-1986 (Dec)	Part-Time – Religion
Pastor Raymond Schumacher	1985-1986	Part-Time – Religion
Ms. Beth Wendland	1986-1987	Full-Time
Rev. Adam Horneber	1986-1987	Part-Time – Religion
Mr. Paul Koelpin (WLS)	1986-1987	Full-Time – Foreign Language
Rev. Roger Knepprath (WLS)	1987-1989	Full-Time – Religion, German, coaching
Ms. Sidney Grunst	1987-1988	Part-time – Typing, English workshop
Ms. Andrea Stelter	1988-Present	Full-Time – Business Education, Guidance
Mr. Mark Tacke	1988-1995	Full-Time
Mr. William Mundt	1988-1991; 1992-96	Part-Time / Full-Time
Mrs. Coreen Adams	1988	Part-Time
Pastor Joel Suckow	1989-Present	Full-Time – Religion
Mr. John Ashenmacher	1989-2002	Full-Time – English, Fine Arts
Pastor Jon Tesch	1989	Part-Time
Mr. David Ring	1992-1998	Full-Time
Rick Grundeman	1995-Present	Full-Time – Administrator, Religion
Dan Fenske	1995-Present	Full-Time – Science
Mrs. Dan (Lisa) Fenske	1995-1997	Part-Time
Mrs. Lynee Edwards	1997	Part-Time
Mr. Jeffrey Kneser	1997-Present	Full-Time – Social Studies / History
Mr. Ryan Wiechmann	1998-Present	Full-Time – Athletics, Spanish, coaching
Mr. Thomas Price	1999-Present	Full-Time – Mathematics
Pastor Daniel Solofra	1999-Present	Part-Time – Religion
Mrs. Jill Bertolotti	2001-2002	Full-Time – Music, English
Mrs. Deb Enter	2002-2003	Full-Time – English
Mrs. Jennifer Rainey	2002-2003	Full-Time

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