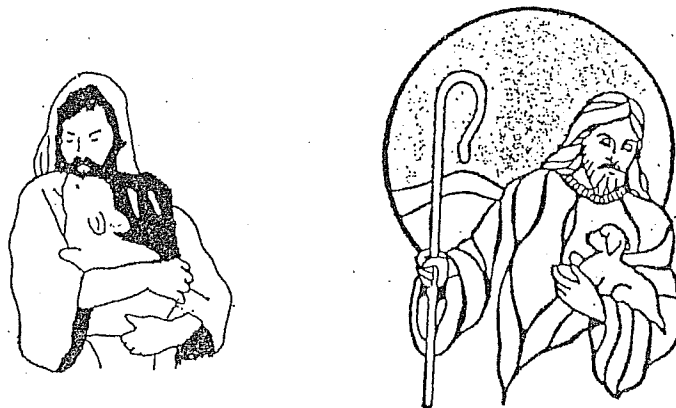


A Brief History of
Shepherd of the Hills

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Lansing, Michigan

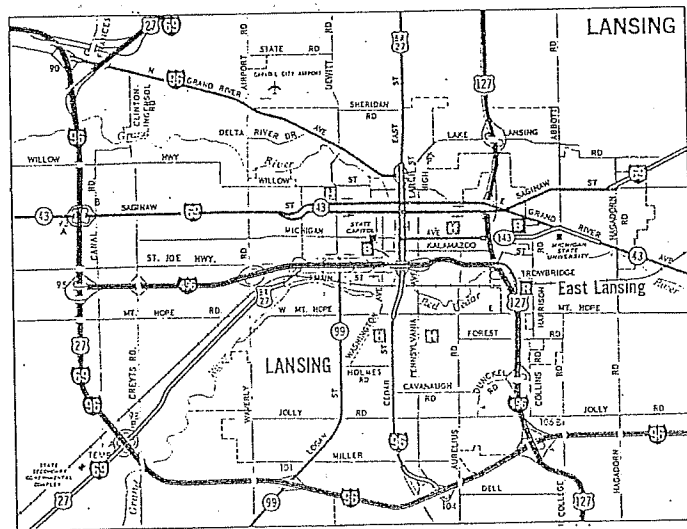


April 1991
Gregory Sluke

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11531 M. Seminary Drive. 65W
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This is by no means a comprehensive history of Shepherd of the Hills Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is hoped that this brief history will not only provide the members of the congregation and other interested parties with a sketch of the church's beginnings, but that a general picture of the beginning stages of development which a congregation passes through will be gained.

Shepherd of the Hills was organized in July of 1975 and incorporated in October of the same year. Pastor Richard Hennig of Williamston, MI assisted a small group of God's faithful in beginning a Mission Congregation on the west side of Lansing, the State's Capitol. It was founded "with much enthusiasm on the part of the District Mission Board Exploratory Pastor and the nucleus" of believers¹. It began as a mission congregation in the Southwest conference of the Michigan District in the Wis. Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



¹ Report by Pastor Oelhafen of the DMB

In the Beginning

After an examination of the Lansing, Mi area, the District Mission Board determined that the best location for a new mission church would be on the west side of Lansing. The Dewitt and Okemos areas had been considered, but neither looked as promising as the area to the west. Early in 1975 the DMB arranged a Sunday night meeting at the Hilton Hotel located on West Saginaw Highway in Lansing. The area WELS churches were notified of the meeting and their members were encouraged to attend. Among those attending this first informational meeting who later became members of Shepherd of the Hills (SOTH) were: Mr. and Mrs. Al Hansen, Mr. and Mrs. Doorn Tower, Mr. and Mrs. Don Otto, and Mr. and Mrs. Crenshaw. The DMB, after seeing that interest existed, granted exploratory status and arranged to have Pastor Richard Hennig of Williamston begin exploratory services. Those who attended this meeting could hardly have realized that they would be the core of what would someday be a thriving congregation.

The First Meeting

On April 17, 1975 a pastor and 5 laymen met to discuss the beginnings of Shepherd of the Hills Evangelical Lutheran Church. The meeting was held at the Hansen residence. Those present were Pastor R. Hennig of Williamston, Al Hansen, Mike Hansen, Hank Houghtaling, Don Otto, and Doorn Tower. The meeting opened with prayer and discussion began as to where worship services would be

held. For approximately three months they had been having services in a room at the Hilton hotel. At the suggestion of Doorn Tower, the Board Room of the C. W. Neff Elementary School in Grand Ledge was selected as the site. The second item of business was a discussion of the probability of mission status being granted to this group gathered around God's Word. If it was granted, it was decided that three things would then need to happen. A. a home would have to be found for the new pastor. B. the group would have to incorporate as a non-profit organization, and C. a name would have to be selected for the congregation. The next item of business centered around the reimbursement of the temporary pastor and his wife. According to mission board rules they couldn't pay him a salary. Consequently, it was decided that the pastor's wife would receive \$37.00. (This amount was arrived at because "it was the custom for congregations to pay visiting pastors \$25.00/ service and pianists \$12.00"². Also covered were his travel expenses.) The fourth item of business was the election of Al Hansen as Chairman pro-tem and Doorn Tower as secretary pro-tem. Next, they agreed to begin summer services at 10:30 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. The final item of business was a family barbecue scheduled for June 8 at Al Hansen's house. Thus, history was born as the first business meeting of the group had been held.

² Minutes of meeting held on April 17, 1975.

The Naming of the Group and it's first Pastor

By the next meeting on May 14th the Congregation decided to call itself **Shepherd of the Hills**. "Several names for the congregation were suggested, discussed and considered. However, a unanimous ballot was cast for 'Shepherd of the Hills'"³. Although the record stated that the decision was unanimous, oral history yields another story. It seemed that two names were suggested for the church: "Gethsemane", and "Shepherd of the Hills". When the vote was tallied, it was a tie. The second vote found one of the members giving way to 'Shepherd of the Hills' and hence its present name. SOTH was officially established as a Mission Church of the WELS and could now receive transfers of membership.

By early June the congregation was preparing for the Seminary Graduate that had been assigned the call to serve as this groups first pastor: Dean Anderson. Candle holders, a Cross, collection plates, hymnals, and a communion service was ordered along with bulletins and offering envelopes to prepare for worship. A shepherd was coming, now all that they needed was the hills.

A Home for the Shepherd

The subject of obtaining a parsonage and land for a building site was also first discussed at the May 14 meeting. The WELS purchased the property that the present church is located on in December of

³ Minutes: May 14, 1975

1976 from Sun Realty of Lansing. The city itself was expanding westward and it was felt that this was a very good location for a church. The purchase price was \$42,500.00.

But where would this new Shepherd live? The congregation was much too small to think of building a parsonage. Yet, there were many in the congregation who wanted to ensure that this mission got off the ground on good footing. An offer was made and accepted on a home at 8631 Wintergreen. It is located in the Wintergreen Heights subdivision, 3 miles east of Grand Ledge and was purchased for a price of \$38,000.00. Until the parsonage was available for the pastor and his family to live in, a furnished apartment was located.

Where Worship?

For the first three years of their existence they held worship services on a regular basis at Neff Elementary School in Grand Ledge. However, soon after the congregation's inception an alternate worship site was proposed. The Seventh Day Adventist Church had offered its church as a worship facility for SOTH. After careful consideration, the congregation voted to remain at their present locale. Services were held in the Board Room of the school. This was not the typical worship setting. I remember it as an average size classroom. The board of directors used it to hold their regular meetings. I can still remember coming to the small gathering at Neff school as a teenager. My family had

recently moved to the Lansing area and was "church shopping". We visited a number of churches in the area, but weren't overly convinced that any of them was the right one for us. We came to the small gathering at Neff School thinking this would not be the typical church, and it wasn't. I remember sitting in the "classroom" on folding chairs. There was a table covered with a white altar cloth in front of the room. On the table was the polished brass cross with matching candle holders. In the background was a chalkboard. The Pastor looked very much like most pastors appeared. He had a black gown on. The Hymns were familiar. They were sung from the Lutheran Hymnal with the accompaniment of a piano. This was not your average church. However, the one thing that sticks out in my mind more than anything else, was the way we were greeted. It was with warmth, a smile and a genuine concern from the members of this family. That's what it seemed to be to us - a family of believers. God's love was not only proclaimed from the front of the *church*, it was seen in the lives of those present. They made us feel welcome and needed. Here was a church where everyone mattered.

In small ways we worked together and grew together. For example, before each service the tables that were set up for the board meetings had to be taken down. Afterwards, they would need to be set up again. Everyone chipped in and helped before and after the services. Looking back I now realize this was an excellent opportunity for promoting fellowship. Our family was soon convinced we wanted to become a part of this assembly. We had been

to some beautiful churches in the area, but there was something about this church where the Word of God could be easily seen in the lives of the members. Instead of choosing the church with the beautiful stained glass windows, we ended up in the church with the ABC's printed across the front of the "chancel". The congregation worshipped in this facility until 1978.

The First "On-Site" Worship Facility

During the beginning years of SOTH, the Synod's preferred first building for a mission outpost was a 'modular chapel'. In October of 1975 Immanuel Lutheran Church of Lansing established a memorial fund to purchase a portable chapel. It specified that SOTH congregation would be the first occupant. By the summer of 1978 the congregation was planning to rent just such a chapel from the Wis. Synod. This type of facility was determined to be the best alternative under the circumstances. Some caution was used by the DMB in expending funds to SOTH because of the shared time ministry⁴. Realizing the limitations of one man serving two churches, they opted for a slow growth approach. The idea was to put up something right away to build some community identification. In this way, the chapel would give them immediate recognition and also serve the members adequately until they could grow into

⁴. Information from conversations I had with Pastor Norman Burger in March of 1991. From its beginning, SOTH was under a dual parish arrangement with Hope Lutheran Church in Portland. This dual parish arrangement will be dealt with later in a separate section.

something bigger. It was located on a six acre site in Delta Township, just west of Grand Ledge. This property was purchased earlier in 1976.

Due to some delays, the chapel wasn't finally on location until October of 1978. And even then, it wasn't until after Thanksgiving that the congregation was able to have their first services in their new chapel. In fact, it was Christmas Eve when worship services first began. "We held our first services in our new chapel on Christmas Eve, even though the over head lights and some other fixtures still are not installed."⁵ By January the sign was constructed in front of the building and the finishing touches were being made on the chapel itself.

To me the chapel looked like an extra wide "house trailer" from the outside. The interior was long, open and white. There were long windows approximately 1' x 3' along the sides allowing for ample light to enter the building. The entrance was at one of the sides near the end, and opened into a small narthex. In the narthex there was a window to the left as you entered and doorway just on the other side of the window which lead into the 'nave'. At the head of the nave was the altar. The worshippers sat on folding chairs on either side of the center aisle. All in all, it was a very adequate worship facility and allowed the congregation to establish a sense of 'permanence' and recognition in the community.

⁵ DMB report, December 1978.

An Organ

An organ for the chapel was discussed in the march 1977 council meeting. A church in Monroe had a used one which was available for use and being seriously considered. Evidently it was not the caliber desired because the congregation decided on another. In the May meeting of that same year, four used organs were available for purchase and it was decided to buy a 1971 Conn for \$850.00 from Martin Music Company.

Outreach from the Beginning

The congregation held an evangelism Sunday on March 1 and placed numerous advertisements showing the new location of the church in the local paper. Chapel dedication was May 6, 1979 at 2:30 pm. The chapel dedication was well attended with 111 present for the afternoon service. A picture and article appeared in the May 12th, 1977 Grand Ledge Independent. In June the congregation was involved in a canvass of the local area by the pastor and a vicar. The following are the results of the original canvass:

Out of 693 homes visited, 145 were not at home (21%). Of the remaining 548 contacts the following was discovered:

Catholic	32.8%
Protestant	43.6%
Lutheran (WELS)	2.9%
Other	9.1%
Unchurched	12.9%
Non-Christian	1.2%

This ends the first phase of the congregation's development under the pastoral leadership of Dean Anderson. In April of 1979 he

received a call to serve St. John's in Riga, MI. In May he departed and Pastor Richard Hennig from Williamston was the vacancy Pastor.

The Second Shepherd Arrives:

It wasn't until July of 1979 when Pastor Donald Sutton, a seminary graduate, accepted the call to serve Shepherd of the Hills. Ordination and installation was held on July 8th at 3 pm with fellowship following. Pastor Sutton came with a continued emphasis on evangelism and outreach. In the fall of 1979 the congregation held an evangelism Sunday with instruction on how to evangelize.

The landscaping was being completed on the property and the seeding was done before winter set in. In the spring the congregation realized it needed a lawn tractor. "The members have been hard at work trying to turn our wilderness into a church lawn."⁶

The congregation started its first choir in March of the same year. It made its debut on Maunday Thursday. By April of 1980 the average Sunday attendance had reached a milestone, crossing the 50 person barrier. In the summer of 1980 the congregation began its first Vacation Bible School. This turned out better than anticipated for the first one the congregation undertook.

⁶ Pastor Sutton, DMB report, April, 1980.

Another building on the Property

The DMB suggested the purchase of a building suitable for housing the new lawn tractor. The congregation began constructing a garage in June of 1980 with labor and some materials donated by the members. It was, and is presently being used to store the lawn tractor and other materials. Before the building was erected the tractor was stored at the parsonage and had to be ridden the mile or so to the church when the lawn needed cutting. The DMB felt this was not only an unnecessary burden but would be dangerous travelling on the highway to the church.

In the fall of 1980 (September) the District Mission Counselor, Rev. Robert Hartman met with the Council to help organize for a self-study of the congregation and the setting of goals and objectives. "He talked about the development of an evangelism program, stewardship program, projecting for future facilities, etc."⁷ In connection with the congregations self-study, the Council, at its February '81 meeting authorized the discussion of the possible relocation of the parsonage from 8631 Wintergreen to the present church property. These were the reasons for the relocation:

- "1) a relocation might free the congregation from the seemingly never ending repairs to a comfortable, but not-so-well constructed present parsonage;
- 2) a relocation might serve as a deterrent to vandalism at the church site; (A number of the windows were broken in the chapel)

⁷ Voters Meeting, October 8, 1980.

- 3) relocation in the near future appears financially advantageous to our congregation because of Burt Burtraw's offer to build a house at cost.

It was also thought that a parsonage built on this site could be used for temporary educational and fellowship space."⁸

The Beginnings of a Permanent Worship Facility: W.E.F.

Since March 1981 the congregations building committee was studying the possibility of selling the present parsonage and building on the church site. A number of pro's and con's were cited. After much discussion, the congregation decided that relocation would not be advantageous. During these discussions a decision was reached that the first priority with reference to the site would be in regards to a permanent facility for worship, education, and fellowship. (A WEF unit)

In May of 1981 the congregation was planning it's next Vacation Bible School "with vigor". The members made approximately 450 calls canvassing the local neighborhood and passing out VBS fliers. Vacation Bible School turned out to be a great success.

In October of 81 just when things seemed to be settling into place for the congregation, Pastor Sutton received a call to Urbana, IL. After prayerful consideration he decided to return it and remain at Shepherd of the Hills.

⁸ Council Meeting, March 1981.

In the new year 1982, the congregation had a two Sunday emphasis on evangelism. The program was entitled "Putting Your Faith in Words". It was designed to help members explain to others what their relationship with Jesus means. Other presentations of this same program were planned in February and March to allow all of the members an opportunity to attend one of the presentations. By March, over 50% attended.

The district mission board gave the congregation permission to plan the new WEF unit. They began interviewing architects to draw up plans and by April had their first planning meeting. The WEF unit was modeled after Redeemer Congregation in Big Rapids, Michigan. It is the first unit of a master site plan which includes three buildings. Building extensions were planned for the east (a chapel) and the north (educational wing). The facility was designed for the greatest amount of flexibility, providing a permanent structure that was easily adaptable in the future. The building committee set the goal of the July congregational meeting to present this outline to the members. "The SOTH Building Committee was very pleased with the functional and expansion aspects of the plan and therefore elected, in accordance with synod policy, to adapt that plan to their needs."⁹ By October the Synod's Board of Trustees approved their request for funding and authorized Shepherd of the Hills to proceed with bidding. Construction was hoped to begin in the fall. And on Nov. 30, 1982 construction began on the new house of worship. "WEF project:

⁹ Chapel project description.

Construction is progressing and the building is enclosed; the roof complete; the furnace and duct work are in and working. The floor will be poured this week. God's blessing of mild weather has been a boon to our project. Contractor, congregation, and architect are all happy with the progress. Even though the facility is incomplete, one can see that it will be a positive factor for our congregation, the synod, and God's kingdom in general."¹⁰

By April of 83 the modular chapel was gone and the work was proceeding as scheduled. By May the WEF unit was complete except for a few corrections or replacements of material. In the immortal words of Pastor Don Sutton recorded for posterity in the May 1983 District Mission Board report, he stated, "It's nice." Dedication for the new WEF unit was held September 18, 1983.

Early in 1984 the congregation became concerned about the dual parish situation. In February a special congregational informational meeting was held. A survey was taken to discuss the division of the dual parish. (See Dual Parish section below)

In the summer of 1984 a travel canvass witness team assisted the congregation in canvassing over 1,000 homes. They found 600 of the 1000 people canvassed at home, and from these developed 85 prospects.

¹⁰ Pastor Sutton, DMB Report, January, 1983.

Vacancy Again

In November of 1984 the congregation passed another milestone averaging in the 60's for weekly attendance. One year later, the congregation grew to an average of 80 worshipers per service for the same month. The Lord had used Pastor Sutton as an effective tool at Shepherd of the Hills. He now saw fit to call him to serve another flock: St. Mark's of Watertown, Wisconsin. Pastor Richard Hennig served as vacancy Pastor once again, beginning in December of 1985. Little did he know that this would not be a short vacancy. By February, the fifth man returned the call to serve at Shepherd of the Hills. "The prospect of a seminary candidate and the length of vacancy weighs heavily on me. The fact of the dual parish seems to be a millstone. We pray for relief!"¹¹ In March the congregation worked through a five step internal analysis and a lot of eagerness was expressed for gaining self support in the light of their present manpower situation. The congregation was now in its fifth month of vacancy.

While Pastor Sutton's departure was painful, it was clearly the Lord's will that he leave. Looking back, there is no doubt that the Lord used this as an opportunity to put Hope and Shepherd of the Hills on their own footing. In April of 1986 the dual parish was dissolved and Shepherd of the Hills became a self-supporting congregation with regard to operating costs.

¹¹ Pastor Hennig, DMB Report, February 1986.

The Third Shepherd Arrives:

In June of 1986 Pastor Norman Burger Jr. accepted the call of God and became Shepherd of the Hills' third shepherd. He was installed on July 6th after graduating in 1984 from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He served for two years at Northwestern College as an instructor and dormitory supervisor. Pastor Burger began at Shepherd of the Hills continuing their tradition of strong evangelism and outreach efforts. In particular, he made a concerted effort to reach out to the students at Michigan State University with successful results.

During the vacancy period between pastors the congregation's attendance dipped to a low of 47 per Sunday. With a full time man at the helm who could devote all of his efforts to Shepherd of the Hills, the congregation soon regained it's previous status. In fact, in November of 1986 the congregation was averaging over 80 worshipers per Sunday.

Of special note is the contracting of a professional artist to draw up a logo for the church in January of 1987. The first drawings were unsatisfactory to the church council. The change that took place over the years is depicted from left to right on the cover page of this document.

Pastor Burger kept the congregation on track centered around God's Word. He saw Bible class as the key to a growing, sound

congregation. He also felt planning and a clear understanding of the congregations purpose and goals was important for its development. Under his guidance a three-phase planning program was instituted by the church council:

"#1. Education in Scripture as to purpose and focus of ministry. #2. Planning and evaluation; set and state our purpose, and our goals to reach (both at home and in the community). #3. Implementation by way of boards in the congregation."¹²

By October of 1987 committees and groups within the congregation developed mission statements and self evaluations. These evaluations resulted in the following statement of purpose for the congregation:

"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. (Mt 28:20)"

The Autumn of '87 saw SOTH in the midst of a Stewardship program entitled "You're Somebody in the Body of Christ". Included in the program were every-member visits conducted by the church councilmen and a four part sermon series based on the privileges of membership in the body of Christ. Talent surveys were also distributed and were helpful as a tool to involve more members in church programs and work, including choir, ushering, office work and charitable services.

¹² DMB Report, May 1987.

Building for the Future:

In the spring of 1987 Pastor Burger received a phone call from Pastor Oelhafen of Flint, Michigan. He was Chairman of the District Mission Board at the time and encouraged SOTH to look into building a larger facility because of their favorable looking statistics. However, growth in other areas was considered a higher priority and not much was done right away. Later on, in December of 1987, the building committee was reestablished and met to discuss further expansion in the second phase of the congregations building development. They met again in March of 1988 and throughout the year discussed and explored options regarding building expansion. In March of 1989 architect plans for a new building were in the works and a fund drive was slated for September. There were two sets of drawings created: 3,000 & 4,500 sq. ft. each.

There was also in 1988 an increased push for more lay involvement, leadership, and better communication: among groups and to the leadership of the congregation. These were the goals the church council set for 1988 (Something that was now being done on a yearly basis):

1. Evaluate our service time.
2. Establish a stewardship committee.
3. Implement a financial record keeping system with more checks and balances.
4. Create job descriptions and provide training for church council positions.
5. Establish a calendar of yearly church council responsibilities.
6. Establish a constitution review committee.

7. Organize and expand ushering corps.
8. Encourage and oversee strategic planing by all groups and committees.
9. Explore possibilities of a young mothers' group, daytime Bible class and fellowship committee.

The congregation clearly had its mind focused on where it wanted to be in the future and how it was planning to get there.

Two Services:

The summer of 1987 saw Pastor at an evangelism seminar in Milwaukee where he listened to reports on the benefit for a congregation of going to two services. Pastor Burger researched this further and concluded that his ministry and that of SOTH would be more effective if they did in fact go to two services per Sunday as opposed to one. In the late summer of 1988 the church decided to have services at 8:00 and 10:30. By October the average Sunday attendance had increased by approximately 50%!! This was an astounding increase. Pastor Burger's hunch proved to be correct.

Focus around our Savior's Mission:

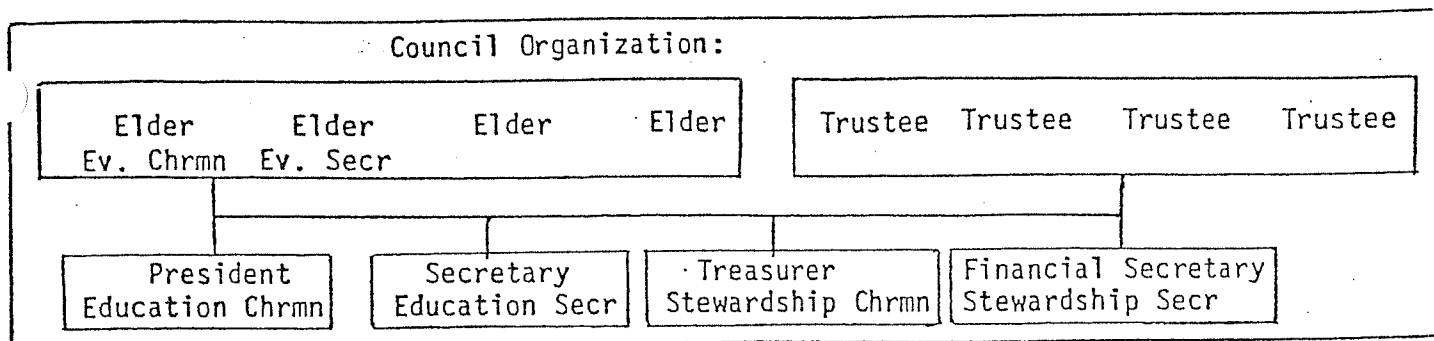
The congregation continued to experience growth. In March of 1989 it averaged 126 worshipers per Sunday. With the congregation over 100 communicant members as well, Pastor saw the main emphasis in long range planning on streamlining the congregational structure. This included a constitutional review, reorganizing the congregational structure and an emphasis on lay ministry to prepare

the congregation for growth. An emphasis was also placed on member assimilation. "Friendship evangelism will be emphasized, however the main focus will be on building around our mission and conducting our ministry better."¹³ By November the reorganization under the new mission statement had taken place. This was the Mission Statement the congregation finally adopted:

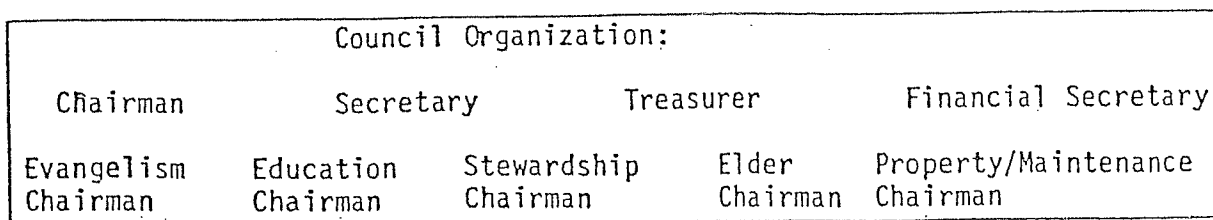
"Believing that God has called us to 'Go and make disciples of all nations' (Mt 28:19), we at Shepherd of the Hills will share God's word through daily contacts and community outreach, while providing a caring and nurturing atmosphere in which to learn more about our Savior and to better serve him."

This was the way the structure of the congregation was revised:

Old Council Organization:



New Council Organization:



¹³ DMB Report, October, 1989.

Plans for the Future:

In 1990 the average Sunday attendance was well over 100 and the present facilities were becoming inadequate to meet the congregation's needs, so they looked to expand. In the council's report to the congregation, President Al Hansen noted this: "We are exited that we are now meeting with Borkholder Builders and working together to draw up some basic sketches of a new sanctuary with nursery and classrooms." The expansion project would allow Shepherd of the Hills to expand its membership, which for so long had pressed its present facilities to the limit. A 'major undertaking in 1991' was planned to involve as many of the members as possible in the building program. A timetable for construction was hoped to be developed so that construction could begin by the Spring of 1991. The congregation has a proposal in for a 4,600 sq. ft. addition. The total cost of the project looks to be between \$240,000 and \$245,000¹⁴.

The congregation has come a long way since its early years. Making the transition from a Mission Congregation to a self-supporting mature congregation takes a lot of hard work, planning, and of course, the Lord's blessings. The congregation has yet to pass into the stage of being a self-sufficient mature congregation. The members of SOTH have been, nonetheless, very diligent in their use of the talents and skills the Lord has provided. From 1989 on the congregation has been seriously involved in carefully planning its

¹⁴ See the architectural drawings at the end of the paper.

future. These plans, goals, and strategies have helped the congregation see where it not only wants to go, but also how it will get there. It is this writers opinion that the continued focus on our Saviors Great Commission and the means of grace will ensure the future for this flock.

According to the congregational membership directory of 1990 this is the congregation's purpose:

Our purpose as a congregation is to serve people in God's world with the gospel, the "Good News" of Jesus Christ, on the basis of the inspired, inerrant Holy Scriptures of God. With this purpose in mind, we have established the following objectives for ourselves:

1. To become a spiritually mature congregation;
2. to provide adequate worship and educational facilities;
3. to reach as many unchurched people in our community as possible;
4. to spread the gospel throughout the world via our mission offerings; and,
5. to eventually build and maintain a Christian Day School for the education of our children."

May the Lord continue the bless his faithful at Shepherd of the Hills!

Dual Parish

From it's very beginning, Shepherd of the Hills was part of a dual parish with Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church of Portland, MI. Hope had been a WELS outpost for ten years and was served by a pastor from the Williamston area. In 1975, a seminary graduate was assigned the dual parish position, and thus began the marriage of

Hope - Shepherd of the Hills. The Synod's Board for Home Missions had proposed a temporary arrangement with both congregations. It was thought that the congregations would not be separated until they reached sufficient size to be self supporting. Both fields were growing and had potential for further growth. Yet, the congregations couldn't help feeling that they were both hampered by the lack of a full time pastor who could devote all of his time and energy toward one congregation.

In April of 1983 during a 'mini-visit' with the members of Shepherd of the Hills, the DMB received indications from some that the present dual-parish setup was hindering progress in both congregations. With a request for mission services from WELS Lutherans in the Greenville area, the Mission board began seriously considering the division. Greenville is located relatively close to Portland. It was thought that a man could serve at Hope and provide exploratory outreach for the Greenville area. Pastor Hartman of the Mission Board reported that the Mission Board felt the "time was ripe". Both congregations "unanimously shared the desire to divide their fields". The DMB approved the request in April of 1984 but the G.B.H.M. denied it.

Again in September of 1984 the congregations petitioned the DMB. While the overall relationship between Hope and SOTH was always a good one, the stress on the pastor and the time required to oversee two congregations took it's toll. "Serving the Shepherd of the Hills/Hope dual-parish is demanding", wrote Pastor Sutton in a

September 1984 Mission report. He wrote that he thoroughly enjoyed working with both congregations and wouldn't mind continuing, were it not for the detrimental impact the situation had on the congregations involved. "It is the feeling of the present pastor that combining two missions into a dual-parish, while it may be financially advantageous to the Synod, is harmful to the congregations and to the pastor." But it seemed the Lord had other plans for Shepherd of the Hills. Their requests in 1984 and again in September of 1985 were denied.

In March of 1986 the congregations were encouraged with the urgency alluded to in a report from the DMB verifying a request that the field be divided and that manpower be granted both congregations. However, an April 23, 1986 letter from Pastor Oelhafen, Chairman of the Michigan DMB read, "The reason [for denial of the request to separate] impacted on funds available and manpower for a separation. If funds and manpower were available for another 5 requests, this one would have been granted! IT WAS THAT CLOSE!" (Emphasis his) Finally, April 30 of 1986 marked the end of the dual-parish set-up and the congregation became self-supporting with respect to operating costs.

Soul Membership:

50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170 180 190 200
/--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][--][-->

- 1975 46*
- 1976 43
- 1977 46*
- 1978 45*
- 1979 50**
- 1980 65*****
- 1981 69*****
- 1982 91*****
- 1983 75*****
- 1984 91*****
- 1985 88*****
- 1986 95*****
- 1987 120*****
- 1988 147*****
- 1989 170*****
- 1990 193*****

Sunday School Attendance:

(Enrollment for Years 75-78)

'75 '76 '77 '78 '79 '80 '81 '82 '83 '84 '85 '86 '87 '88 '89 '90
12 11 9 7 8 8 7 11 9 10 10 13 14 14 12 13

Average Sunday Church attendance:
 (as a % of Soul Membership)

0--10--20--30--40--50--60--70--80--90--100%

1975 27/46=59%.....♦
 1976 29/43=67%.....♦
 1977 27/46=59%.....♦
 1978 33/45=73%.....♦
 1979 43/50=86%.....♦
 1980 40/65=62%.....♦
 1981 47/69=68%.....♦
 1982 54/91=59%.....♦
 1983 49/75=65%.....♦
 1984 62/91=68%.....♦
 1985 54/88=61%.....♦
 1986 61/95=64%.....♦
 1987 73/120=61%.....♦
 1988 79/147=54%.....♦
 1989 97/170=57%.....♦
 1990 104/193=54%.....♦

Average: 64% throughout the 16 years of the congregations existence with a high of 86% in 1979 and a low of 54% in '88 and '90.

Church Officers:

	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Fin. Sec
1975	A. Hansen	D. Tower	D. Otto	D. Otto
1976	A. Hansen	D. Tower	D. Otto	D. Otto
1977	A. Hansen	D. Tower	A. Kurz	A. Kurz
1978	A. Hansen	D. Tower	J. Barnes	D. Otto
1979	D. Otto	A. Hansen	T. Johnson	E. Thayer
1980	W. Moser	D. Hansen	T. Johnson	R. Breiling
1981	T. Johnson	D. Hansen	M. Warmbein	D. Case
1982	T. Johnson	D. Hansen	R. Kebler	D. Case
1983	A. Hansen	M. Walker	R. Kebler	D. Case
1984	E. Thayer	A. Hansen	D. Otto	D. Case
1985	A. Hansen	N. Stroesen- reuther	D. Otto	T. Johnson
1986	T. Johnson	T. Ellis	D. Otto	D. Otto
1987	R. Mckay	S. Kelbert	W. Weaver	G. Sluke
1988	R. Mckay	T. Emmons	W. Weaver	G. Sluke
1989	R. Mckay	T. Emmons	W. Weaver	G. Sluke
1990	A. Hansen	B. Frederick	W. Weaver	S. Kelbert

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