



# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

Volume 6

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Issue 3

## A History of Madison Lutheran School

By Judy Maginnis Kuster (class of 1958)

Madison Lutheran School, located first in Eastside English Lutheran Church and later at 1001 Jennifer Street in Madison, Wisconsin, began in 1942, as a "Synodical Conference School." It was supported by several Madison area Lutheran churches in the Missouri (now LCMS), Wisconsin (now WELS), and "old Norwegian" Synods (now ELS). It closed in 1965.

In February 1, 1927, Eastside Lutheran School (WELS) opened in a house on Fair Oaks Avenue. The first teacher was Mrs. William (Renata) Beschnett from Good Thunder, Minnesota, and the school served 21 children, grades 1-4. The following fall, the upper grades were added, enrollment was 59 students, and an additional teacher, was hired. Grades 1-4 moved from the original house to another and an annex was added to the church building on the corner of North Street and East Mifflin for the upper grades. In 1930, the lower grades were also moved to the church site where the school continued to serve children primarily from Eastside English Lutheran Church until 1942. The school now

consisted of two rooms. The floor level of the upper room—grades five

through eight—was the same as the floor level of the narthex, nave, and sacristy. It had tall windows on one side. The opposite side was separated from the nave by two folding doors which had to be opened on Friday afternoon to accommodate Sunday's worshippers and then closed on Monday morning to accommodate the week's scholars. The room was pleasant. ... The floor level of the lower room—grades one through four—was ... about one-half above the outside ground level and one-half below the outside ground level. It also had access to the outside through windows that were much closer to the ceiling than the floor. (Personal correspondence: Morton Schroeder, February 2001.)

In 1941, Morton (Salty) Schroeder was called to this school. Esther Buchholz had been teaching there since 1936.

Holy Cross Lutheran Church (ELS, organized as a daughter congregation of Our Saviour's in 1926) opened a Christian Day School on Milwaukee Street a few blocks away from Eastside English, in September of 1927 with 32 children in grades 3-6. The pastor at the time was Erling Ylvisaker. The first teacher was Miss Harriet Maakestad. From 1931-1935 the teacher was Mr. Emil John. He was followed by Mrs. Ada Sievert, Naomi



Birkholtz, and Rev. Raymond Branstad. The pastor from Our Saviour's in 1927 was S. C. Ylvisaker and from 1930-1946 was Adolph M. Harstad.

Morning by morning he (Harstad) and his Model A Ford made the rounds to pick up children and transport them to Holy Cross Christian Day School. At the close of the school day they had to be returned home and again he was on the job assisted at times by members and the pastor of Holy Cross.

In the 1930's some children from Immanuel Church attended this school.

On August 3, 1942, Holy Cross was unable to fill staffing needs for the upcoming school year and Rev. Ylvisaker approached Eastside to request whether their students could be added to the Eastside Lutheran School. By this time, Holy Cross Lutheran School was also serving children from Immanuel and Our Saviour's

On August 11, 1942, a meeting was held with members of Eastside English, Our Saviour, Holy Cross, and Immanuel, "for the purpose of discussing a joint Christian Day School." The meeting was chaired by Rev. Theophil Mahnke, pastor of Eastside, and Maurice Young from Eastside kept minutes. This minutes reflect the following were present: From Eastside—Edward R. Boldt, Henry von Hoersten, Morton A. Schroeder, William Hackbart, Theo Mahnke, A. C. Harbort, Maurice G. Young, and Clayton Hale. From Our Saviour's—F. A. McGinnis [*sic* F. H. Maginnis], L. O. Larson, Benjamin Torgeson, Roy. J. Nelson, A. M. Harstad. From Immanuel—H. O. Hemecke [probably H. O. Heinecke], F. C. Brandhorst. From Holy Cross—E. Ylvisaker, Andrew Dahle, Severt P. Shelvik.

Shortly after this initial meeting, the Madison Lutheran School was formed by East Side (WELS—Rev. Theophil Mahnke), Holy Cross (ELS—Rev. Erling Ylvisaker), Immanuel (LCMS—Rev. F. C. Brandhorst), and Our Saviour's (ELS—Rev. Adolph Harstad) congregations. Classes met in Eastside English Lutheran Church on North Street. 112 students

were enrolled. The principal for the 1942-43 school year was Rev. Theophil Mahnke. The first teachers serving the new combined school were Morton Schroeder and Esther Buchholz. This was not the first time they had "worked together." Esther Buchholz was Morton Schroeder's teacher at Trinity Lutheran School, Bay City, Michigan. Schroeder reports that he still has his report card for the term 1928-1929 when he was in Grade II.

When it became apparent that the faculty was grievously overworked—yes, almost overwhelmed—part-time teaching help was engaged. This third room was located in the church basement, then called by Eastside's members "the church parlors." (personal correspondence: Morton Schroeder, February 2001).

An informational meeting of the parents and interested members was held on Friday, October 16, 1942, for the purpose of forming a Parent Teachers Association (PTA).



Teacher Morton Schroeder

Monona (LCMS) joined the Madison Lutheran School association in the fall of 1942. St. Paul (WELS→LCMS), and Mt. Olive (LCMS) congregations later joined in the project, and in 1945, the Madison Lutheran School Association purchased the Harvey School at 1001 Jennifer Street on April 27, 1945, for \$10,500 as well as additional lots for the playground for \$4500. The total cost was \$17,816.95. In documentation from the Fidelity-Phenix Fire Insurance Company (undated) it states

This school was originally called the Washington Irving School. It was completed in March 1905 at a cost of \$25,751.17, according to School Board Records. The name was subsequently changed to the Harvey School. The

Board turned the building back to the city on August 12, 1941. The Common Council proceedings of April 27, 1945 show the building and site was sold for \$10,500.

Enrollment was 100. Another school in Madison, the Doty Street School was built by the same architect. The Doty Street School is now an office building and still stands a few blocks from The Square by Lake Monona in Madison.

Dedication services for the new school were held at 10:30 a.m. on August 26, 1945.



*Class of 1949*

*left to right, kneeling: Robert Sievert, Roland Reinholtz, Betty Kruse (deceased), Jean Larson, Louis Milsted, Richard Meyr  
left to right, standing: Phillip Noth, Norma Hehneke, Sherman Zimmerman, Shirley Guitzkow, Lucille Arneson, Anne Harder, Beverly Reddman, Joan Bradley, Donna Hillestad, Beverly Rongve, Richard Gaabbei, Richard Maginnis, Dahal Stiegman, Mr. Morton Schroeder*

The school was governed by a school board which consisted of the pastors and two elected members from each of the congregations. The Articles of Incorporation are dated April 12, 1946 and the By-Laws of Madison Lutheran School are dated July 1, 1946. Madison Lutheran School celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1952. An undated article “Services at Three Churches Sunday To Mark 25th Anniversary of Madison Lutheran School” appeared in one of the Madison newspapers. The 25th Anniversary Book printed in 1952 explains how Madison Lutheran School was funded:

Madison Lutheran School is financed by the contributions of the members of the seven Synodical Conference congregations in Madison. The school budget is presented to all of the congregations. When the budget has been adopted, the total is prorated to the congregations according to the communicant member-

ship of the congregations. The proportionate share of each congregation is included in the regular budget of the congregation.

Students also came from other Madison congregations besides the seven “Synodical Conference” churches that supported the school, including Bethel, Calvary, Luther Memorial, St. John’s, Lake Edge, Grace, Peace, Our Redeemer, St. Luke’s Episcopal, and Trinity Lutheran Church.

Although I remember bringing lunch some days in first and second grade, we also enjoyed a hot lunch program which cost \$1.00/week. In 1957-58 the cost of hot lunch was raised to twenty-five cents per meal. At that time the average meals served daily was 265. The school was also a member of the National School Lunch Program. Milk was furnished in the Special Milk Program at a cost of two cents per day.

Bussing was started sometime during the 1950’s at a cost of \$1.25/week for the first child in the family and \$1.00/week for each additional child.

Children with special needs could not always be accommodated at Madison Lutheran. The school was not accessible. Minutes reflected that some children were transferred to other schools where special needs could be better handled, although the classroom teachers did provide tutoring services. Children who didn’t speak any English were also enrolled occasionally in the lower grades, including from India and Norway. Speech therapy services were available in the 1950’s, at times provided by one of the teachers, at other times provided by a clinician coming from the University of Wisconsin. The minutes also reflect that the school did not tolerate repeated harassing (bullying) of younger children by older students. Occasionally children with serious behavior problems were asked to leave.

The school provided some innovative programs. For example, German was taught four periods/week in the first grade starting the fall of 1954. The music program at Madison Lu-

theran was also very strong. Students from the upper grades were also invited to be helpers/mentors for students in the lower grades: helping with playground duties, correcting tests, etc.

Doctrinal disagreements between the three Lutheran synods supporting Madison Lutheran School in the 1950's led to a break in "fellowship" with each other in the early 1960's. Board minutes from the 1950's foreshadowed the storm ahead. January 25, 1954: "Board discussed what should or could be done in case of the dissolution of the Synodical Conference." November 30, 1954: "Synodical problems were discussed. Rev. Ries suggested that we all offer prayers asking guidance." July 25, 1955: "Report on Synodical relations." With the break up of the Synodical Conference, the school could no longer function as it had for nearly 20 years. In February 1961, Mt. Olive withdrew from the association. To resolve the problem of churches from three Synods no longer in doctrinal fellowship

with each other, Immanuel (LCMS) bought the school in March of 1961 and planned to maintain it as Madison Lutheran School. A take-over date was scheduled for June 30, 1962. Rev. Alfred Zielsdorff was Immanuel's pastor. Other students were welcome to attend as "tuition students," and churches from the other synods were still supporting students. A letter from the Immanuel Lutheran Church Board of Parish Education to the pastors of the Synodical Conference Churches in Madison explained registration for the 1962-63 school year. The board suggested that

each congregation conduct its own registration of pupils. ... Immanuel Congregation has approved the following tentative budget figures as a guide for congregations and individuals in estimating costs for the next school year:

Based on a continuation of the present enrollment, requiring ten teachers, the Budget has been estimated at \$60,000. Assuming that there are 275 pupils, this is an annual cost of approximately \$218.00 per pupil. If only nine teachers are required, the Budget has been estimated at \$56,000, or \$224.00 per pupil with an enrollment of 250 pupils.

... A large drop in enrollment, of course, would increase the per-pupil cost, but we are confident that there is a strong desire within each congregation for the kind of Christian Education that a Christian Day School provides for our children. We hope to make improvements in the school operation, but no drastic changes are contemplated, and we expect that most of the present faculty will remain.

In the spring of 1963, Immanuel called Fred Bartel to become the next principal of Madison Lutheran. The former principal, Elmer Behrens, would remain as the eighth grade teacher for the 1963-64 school year. Bartel arrived in June. That summer all the classrooms in Madison Lutheran were repainted by Immanuel's members, and Immanuel members' enthusiasm for the school was high.

In November 1963, Rev. Zielsdorff died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Immanuel called Rev. Luther Otto, who came in December. The next month, in January, 1964, Pastor Otto met with principal Fred

Bartel to inform him that he felt Lutheran schools were a thing of the past and that it was his intent to close Madison Lutheran and begin the new LCMS concept of the weekday school, with Bartel becoming Immanuel's Director of Christian Education. The children would attend public school and the church would hold classes (Bible History, Catechism, Biblical Geography, Singing) two days per week (4:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.) and also Saturday mornings from 9 until noon. In the



spring of 1964, Immanuel called an associate pastor, Rev. George Lobien who supported the senior pastor in the new educational format.

In January 1965, Pastors Otto & Lobien presented the new idea at an open congregational hearing. The MLS principal, Fred Bartel who did not hold this view, presented the Christian Day School concept as it was carried out in Madison Lutheran School. The Madison Lutheran School program was favored by the majority of the people at this hearing. At the subsequent annual voters' meeting a week later, Immanuel voted in favor of continuing the present MLS program.

Eastside (WELS) voted to relocate their church from North Street with plans in their building for an attached school. At a congregational meeting on January 18, 1965, Eastside voted to open their own school September 1965.

"The 1964-65 school term [at Madison Lutheran] finished with a competent and dedicated staff who worked well together," reports the former principal, Fred Bartel.

After Madison Lutheran was closed for the year, in June 1965, at Immanuel's quarterly congregational meeting, under new business a motion was made and seconded to close Madison Lutheran School for good. The majority of the school parents were not at the meeting since it was summer vacation for their families. The motion carried, and with very little discussion, MLS was closed. Subsequent to the decision to close the school, 30 to 40 families left Immanuel Church and joined Eastside or Holy Cross. Eastside opened their school in the fall of 1965. Teachers included Elmer Behrens, Marjorie Schwefel, Eleanor

Lester, and Esther Buchholz, former teachers at Madison Lutheran. Children from Holy Cross attended Eastside until Holy Cross opened their own school in 1971. Fred Bartel writes that he "never did hear anything more about the weekday school concept — anywhere." Mr. Bartel shared this hymn verse in a personal correspondence, January 2001:

*God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.* [W. Cowper, *ELH* 434]

Today there is no longer one Madison Lutheran School. There are several Lutheran Schools in the Madison area supported by various congregations (Holy Cross-ELS, Our Redeemer-WELS, Eastside-WELS and St. Andrew-WELS). It is further reported that an LCMS church is planning on opening a new school in a few years.

Most of these schools can trace their history through Madison Lutheran School which served the Madison Community from 1942-1965.

#### References

- 100 Years From A Gracious God 1887-1987—a history of OSLC [Our Saviour's Lutheran School]
- Immanuel's 75th anniversary Booklet (printed in 1978).
- History of Eastside
- Box of minutes and miscellaneous papers from 1942-1962 provided by Norman Marozick and now in the ELS archives in Mankato, MN.
- Correspondence
  - Ruby Hougan, January 2001
  - Fred Bartel, January 2001
  - Oscar Ahlbrect, February 2001
  - Morton Schroeder, February 2001

*Judith Maginnis Kuster is an associate professor in Speech-Language Pathology at Minnesota State University, Mankato*

**Read more  
about it!**

**Early history of Madison Lutheran School** (an article by Morton Schroeder, written February 2001).  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster2/fun/MLS/salty.html>  
**Students** (partial list) who attended Madison Lutheran School—over 1000 names—is available on the Internet at:  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster2/fun/MLS/students.html>  
**Teachers** (partial list) who taught at Madison Lutheran School is available online at  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster2/fun/MLS/album/teachers.html>  
**Pastors** from the seven Synodical Conference churches from 1942-1965 is available online at:  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster2/fun/MLS/pastors.html>  
**Class of 1949** home page: <http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster2/fun/MLS/1949/1949.html>  
**Class of 1958** home page: <http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster2/fun/MLS/mls.html>

## Anniversaries: Churches and Schools of the ELS

*(Please inform the editors of errors and omissions.)*

### 1853: 150 years ago

#### Den norske Synode

The Norwegian Synod was founded.

### 1858: 145 years ago

Paint Creek Lutheran Church, Waterville and Waukon, IA, divide into East and West congregations.

Norseland Lutheran Church, St. Peter, MN, organized as Nicollet Lutheran Church.

### 1888: 115 years ago

Emmaus Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL, organized.

English Lutheran Church, Cottonwood, MN, organized as The Norwegian Lutheran Congregation.

### 1893: 110 years ago

Parkland Lutheran Church, Tacoma, WA, organized.

### 1898: 105 years ago

St. Petri Lutheran Church, Grygla, MN, organized.

### 1903: 100 years ago

St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Detroit, MI, organized.

### 1918: 85 years ago

The “Little” Norwegian Synod (now the ELS) organized at Lime Creek, IA, refusing to join the merger of most Norwegian Lutherans in 1917 for doctrinal reasons.

Lake Mills Lutheran Church, Lake Mills, IA, reorganized.

First Shell Rock Lutheran Church, Northwood, IA, reorganized.

Somber Lutheran Church, Northwood, IA, reorganized.

Center Lutheran Church, Scarville, IA, organized.

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Albert Lea, MN, organized.

### 1923: 80 years ago

Saude Lutheran Church, Lawler, IA, joined the ELS.

Jerico Lutheran Church, New Hampton, IA, joined the ELS.

Our Savior Lutheran Church, Amherst Junction, WI, joined the ELS.

Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church, Cottage Grove, WI, established a Christian Day School.

### 1928: 75 years ago

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Belview, MN, organized.

Manchester Lutheran Church, Manchester, MN, joined the ELS.

Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, MN, joined the ELS as Bethany Lutheran Church.

Concordia Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI, organized.

Emmaus Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, MN, established.

It later merged with Fairview to form King of Grace in Golden Valley.

### 1933: 65 years ago

River Heights Lutheran Church, E. Grand Forks, MN, organized as Bygland Lutheran Church near Fischer, MN.

### 1938: 60 years ago

River Heights Lutheran Church, E. Grand Forks, MN, joined the ELS.

Zion Lutheran Church, Tracy, MN, joined the ELS.

### 1948: 55 years ago

Richland Lutheran Church, Thornton, IA, joined the ELS.

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Hawley, MN, joined the ELS.

### 1953: 50 years ago

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Bagley, MN, organized.

Bethany Lutheran Church, Princeton, MN, organized.

Calvary Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI, joined the ELS.

### 1958: 45 years ago

Scarville Lutheran Church, Scarville, IA, re-established its Christian Day School.

### 1963: 40 years ago

Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IA, organized.

St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Lengby, MN, joined the ELS.

### 1968: 35 years ago

Faith Lutheran Church, East Jordan, MI, joined the ELS.

Faith Lutheran Church, Hillman, MI, organized.

Peru Mission established.

### 1973: 30 years ago

Wayfarer’s Chapel Lutheran Church, Fillmore, CA, organized.

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Riceville, IA, joined ELS.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Brewster, MA, organized.

Bethany Lutheran Church, Port Orchard, WA, joined the ELS.

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Iola, WI, organized.

### 1978: 25 years ago

St. Luke Lutheran Church, Mount Vernon, WA, joined the ELS.

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Yelm, WA, joined the ELS.

### 1983: 20 years ago

Trinity Lutheran Church, Sebastian, FL, organized.

Grace Lutheran Church, Piedmont, MO, joined the ELS.

### 1988: 15 years ago

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Grass Valley, CA, organized.

Peace Lutheran Church, Jefferson City, MO, joined the ELS.

Grace Lutheran Church, Weston, OH, joined the ELS.

### 1993: 10 years ago

Peace Lutheran Church, South Lakeland, FL, organized.

### 1998: 5 years ago

Hope Lutheran Church, West Jordan, UT, joined the ELS.

St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Williamsburg, IA, joined the ELS.



Announcing the  
Seventh Annual Meeting  
of the  
**ELS Historical Society**

Saturday, June 14, 2003  
Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church  
2642 Church St.  
Cottage Grove, Wisconsin



**Friday, June 13**

- 10:00 am - Chartered Bus leaves from Mankato, traveling to Madison on scenic highway 14 from LaCrosse to Madison – *(Bus trip includes a commemorative medallion.)*  
6:00 pm - Approximate arrival in Madison/Koshkonong area.  
Overnight in area motel.

**Saturday, June 14**

- 9:00 am - Registration & Coffee  
9:30 am - Opening Service  
10:00 am - Welcome and  
Historical sketch of the Old Norwegian Synod and the Reorganized Norwegian Synod. – Erling Teigen  
10:45 am - Historical Society Business Meeting  
11:00 am - The Beginnings of the Synod at Koshkonong – George Orvick  
with reminiscences by some Koshkonong residents.  
12:00 noon - Luncheon at Koshkonong Church  
*Cost: The noon luncheon will be served at a cost of \$7/person at the church.*  
1:30 pm - Bus tour of the historic sites – sites of the first two services, Koshkonong Churches, Seminary site in Madison, old Our Savior's Church in Madison, Holy Cross, first ELS mission congregation  
3:30 pm - Bus Trip back to Mankato

For further information, contact Erling T. Teigen, [eteigen@blc.edu](mailto:eteigen@blc.edu), or 507-344-7325 (office) or 507-388-8327 (home), or at the address below

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***Please reserve for noon lunch and bus transportation.***

Visitors: are welcome and invited to attend!

- I plan to attend the Annual Meeting of the ELS Historical Society. Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ luncheon tickets.
- I wish bus transportation from Mankato to Madison  
(6 hour trip, with cost depending on number of reservations)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Please return by May 15 to **ELS Historical Society, c/o Erling Teigen, Bethany Lutheran College, 700 Luther Drive, Mankato, MN 56001**

Oak Leaves  
ELS Historical Society  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

## Renew your membership!

ELS Historical Society

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Send completed form and check (see box below right  
for type of membership and correct amount) to:

ELS Historical Society

6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001

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for publication. Articles maybe edited for style, clarity, or length to al-  
low for publication. Submitted manuscripts will be deposited in the  
archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

### MEMBERSHIP

All membership  
renewals are due **June 1**

**Voting Membership:**

\$10/year: individual  
\$15/year: husband & wife

**Associate Membership:**

\$15/year: individual  
\$25/year: institutional  
\$5/year: student

**Lifetime Membership:**

\$200