

100 YEARS OF GROWING IN JESUS AND TELLING OF HIS LOVE: A HISTORY OF
EASTSIDE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Over the last century, Eastside has seen significant spiritual, physical, and numerical growth. This paper reflects on the Lord's undeserved grace, beginning with the rapid population expansion on Madison's east side that necessitated the church's founding. It highlights the faithful Gospel ministry of the pastors and teachers who led the congregation through the challenges of the Great Depression and shifts in the city's landscape.

It details the physical development of the church and school, including the initial chapel on East Mifflin and North Streets, the bold relocation to Independence Lane in the 1960s, and the subsequent building expansions required to house a flourishing ministry. The history also explores the unique era of Madison Lutheran School, a joint educational effort between local congregations, and the eventual re-establishment of Eastside's own school, which continues to provide a Christ-centered education today.

Finally, the paper examines the vibrant church programs, from the long-standing Eastside Christian Women to innovative outreach efforts like Soccer Bible Camp and Science Camp, that have fostered community and shared the Gospel with the Madison area. While modern statistics might suggest a numerical decline, this thesis argues that the true measure of Eastside's growth is found in the proclamation of the Gospel and the persistent growth of its members in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (2 Pet 3:18 NIV).

On September 28, 2025, the words of 2 Peter rang in everyone’s ears, and the brass, organ, strings, and piano sounded out in perfect harmony. The congregation of Eastside Lutheran Church listened intently to Pastor Peter Schlicht’s sermon, “100 Years of Growing in Jesus and Telling of His Love.” It was a message of growth, instead of falling. For a church to be around for one hundred years, growth must happen; otherwise, the world and sin will lead to temptation and eventually to falling away from grace. Yet this growth isn’t primarily financial or numerical, but growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. It's growth that immerses itself in the undeserved love of God, and that explores the next facet of the gospel that keeps a church faithful and strong.

Over the last one hundred years, Eastside has grown spiritually, physically, and numerically. The Lord has graciously blessed Eastside and its members beginning in 1925, all the way to 2025. Blessed with pastors, teachers, and faithful members. Blessed with beautiful buildings and additions, a flourishing school, and a steadfast church. Thanks be to God for the undeserved grace poured out on Eastside Lutheran Church and School, and for the growth they have seen over the last one hundred years. This paper reflects on that grace and growth.

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

In 1910, the population of Madison, WI was 25,531, and in just ten years, the population rose to 38,378, an increase of 50.3%.¹ This rapid increase in population led to the rapid expansion of Madison's east side. In the 1920s there were only two churches: "a Missouri Synod congregation, Immanuel, and a Norwegian Synod Congregation, Our Saviour's, but both were near the center of the city."² Rev. Theo. Thurow, a pastor in Sun Prairie, surveyed the east side of Madison in 1925 and found that the area was ripe for a church. The east side of Madison was where the manufacturing plants were located. As the city expanded, as more jobs were available, and the population grew, it became quite obvious to Pastor Thurow that there was a need for a church.³ The recollection of the founding day makes this clear.

On October 1, 1925, an organizational meeting was held at the home of Mr. Charles Strohbusch, 2644 E. Dayton St., Madison. Those present were the following:

1. Pastor Theo Thurow (Sun Prairie)
2. Mr. Lorenz Hackbart, Secretary pro tem
3. Pastor Schoeninger (Leeds), Chairman pro tem
4. Pastor Gotthold Thurow (Waterloo)
5. Mr. Michael Layman
6. Mr. Adolph Rohde
7. Mr. Herbert Seekamp
8. Mr. Charles Strohbusch
9. Mr. H. O. Wernick

The Rev. Theo Thurow presented the results of his canvass. What these results were is eloquently indicated by the following three excerpts from the minutes of that first

1. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931), 1180.

2. "History of Our Congregation: Silver Anniversary," Eastside Congregational File, Synod Archives, 3.

3. "History of Our Congregation," 7.

meeting: Moved by Rev. Theo. Thurow, seconded by Strobusch that a Lutheran congregation be organized. Motion carried without dissenting vote.

Moved by Rev. Gotthold Thurow, seconded by Hackbart that the Constitution be adopted. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Hackbart, seconded by Rohde that this congregation apply for membership in the West Wisconsin District of the Joint Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and other states. Motion carried without dissenting vote.⁴

In a single meeting, the church's founding fathers set them on a path of confessional Lutheranism.

In doing so, they committed themselves to several articles of faith. The current constitution reads,

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority of all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of scriptural doctrine. They are:

A. The three ecumenical Creeds

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

B. The six Lutheran Confessions

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

This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. No doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with the Holy Scriptures and these symbolical books. All controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.⁵

4. "History of Our Congregation," 4.

5. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Constitution and By-laws* (Madison, WI, 2021), art. II.

These articles of faith, which have been in place since 1925, have been the guiding principle for all the work Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church has done.

It should be noted that the name of the church to begin with was not Eastside Evangelical Lutheran church, but rather Eastside English Evangelical Lutheran Church. One short history gives this reason for the name: “It was thought desirable to make a clear distinction between this new church and the old well established St. John’s Lutheran church ... which at that time was popularly called ‘German Lutheran Church.’” The name of the church was later changed to Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church at the voters' meeting on January 21, 1963. The reason given for this change was that it was felt that English made the church appear to be a part of the English Synod, which was a part of the Missouri Synod.⁶

The Pastors and Vicars

Eastside would likely have failed if not for the pastors who faithfully served the congregation. These gospel-focused men proclaimed the grace of God and helped the church grow in their knowledge of God. Their continued efforts have made sharing the gospel to the east side of Madison not only possible but thriving. Here are the men who have led this congregation over the last one hundred years.

1. Pastor Gervasius W. Fischer 1925-1934
2. Pastor Theophil H. Mahnke 1935-1946
3. Pastor Reginald A. Siegler 1946-1954
4. Pastor Karl G. Bast 1954-1980
5. Pastor Paul S. Soukup 1980-1990
6. Pastor David A. Kipfmiller 1981-1987
7. Pastor Glen F. Schmiede 1988-2016

6. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Eastside Church and School History* (Madison, WI: Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2000), 2.

8. Pastor Harold E. Wicke 1989-1992
9. Pastor Kenneth A. Gast 1990-2007
10. Pastor Mike Novotny 2007-2014
11. Pastor Nathan Berg 2015-2024
12. Pastor Peter Schlicht 2017-2023
13. Pastor David Horton 2024-Present
14. Pastor Nathaniel Walther 2025-Present

These pastors were all different in their personalities, but there was one thing that united them all: a love for the gospel.

It's this love for the gospel that encouraged growth in the congregation. Over the course of one hundred years, Eastside has seen incredible growth in church attendance and membership, in finances, and in school enrollment, due to the work of these pastors. These amazing men worked hard for this congregation, but even they went through hardship. Pastor Fischer struggled in the 1930s. In a letter to Mr. Buuck, he wrote about his struggles. "In regard to my house rent. Due to the low rental paid by synod, I could not hold my house, and am now renting at 2314 E Mifflin. The rent is \$35.00. Are these rentals paid before salaries, or will I have to borrow money to advance this rent? We are now two months behind in rent.... I have been working hard to get my people to contribute more."⁷

Only a month later, Pastor Fischer took a call to a church in Peshtigo, Wisconsin.⁸ As a mission congregation in Madison, Eastside's pastor received his salary from the mission board.⁹

Yet not every year was a year of growth for Eastside, at least numerically. One quick look at the membership rolls in the first twenty-five years of the church's history shows a rapid increase in membership from just fifteen members in 1925 to 670 members in 1942. Followed by

7. G. W. Fischer to Mr. Buuck, letter, October 2, 1934, Eastside Congregational File, Synod Archives.

8. "History of Our Congregation," 8.

9. "History of Our Congregation," 21.

a decline to 604 members in 1946.¹⁰ One historian thinks that this is due to quick turnover in the congregation: “Many members fail to develop a feeling of really belonging to the congregation, attendance at services, at communion, and at business meetings is sporadic.... if 25 attend the business meetings, it is considered good.”¹¹

To keep up with the rapid expansion of the congregation, the decision was made to call a second pastor to serve Eastside in 1980. With the rise of a new building, a larger school, and the increase in attendance, a second pastor seemed fruitful for the congregation, and to this day has continued to have two pastors serving the congregation.

Eastside also had the opportunity to participate in the vicar program. The vicar program enables seminary students to gain practical experience in a real congregation. The vicars serve under a supervising pastor, learning how to serve in a congregation, how to lead, and how to teach. This valuable experience plays a large role in the training of future pastors. Eastside had eleven vicars.

1. Vicar Geoffrey A. Kieta 1991-1992
2. Vicar John Roebke 1992-1993
3. Vicar James Turriff 1993-1994
4. Vicar Jon P. Hartman 1994-1995
5. Vicar Aaron Frey 1995-1996
6. Pastor Carl H. Mischke 1996-1997
7. Vicar Daniel Sims 1997-1998
8. Vicar Joshua Sternhagen 1998-1999
9. Vicar Mark Rohrback 1999-2000
10. Vicar Jonathan Leach 2000-2001
11. Vicar Peter Korthals 2001-2002
12. Vicar Wade Johnston 2002-2003

10. “History of Our Congregation,” 6.

11. “History of Our Congregation,” 7.

In 1996, Pastor Carl Mischke, retired pastor of thirty-two years and synod president for fourteen years, filled in as a pastoral assistant. The reason for this was a tragic one. Jason Brucker, who was assigned to serve as a vicar during the 1996-97 school year, was called home to heaven as a result of a car accident while he was doing the Lord's work during the summer before coming to Eastside.¹²

East Mifflin and North Streets

For the first few months, services were held at 2644 Dayton Street. Mr. Charles Strohmusch's house was the only house large enough to fit those first few members, and his house was used until December 6, 1925. Over the course of those two months, work had begun on a chapel. "The Mission Board had purchased three lots on the corner of East Mifflin and North Streets."¹³ The initial building had enough room for two hundred people, and on December 13, 1925, services were held in the basement of the building for the first time.¹⁴

Just two months after that first service was held in the basement, the entire building was completed. The dedication of the chapel building took place on February 14, 1926.¹⁵ For a while, Eastside celebrated its anniversary in February because of the dedication.

As Eastside rapidly grew in its first couple of years, it was decided that an expansion be added to the existing chapel. The reasoning for the expansion just a year after the original

12. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Our Church History 2025," unpublished manuscript, August 2025, 3.

13. "History of Our Congregation," 8.

14. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 3.

15. "History of Our Congregation," 8.

building was complete was twofold. First, the rising church attendance on Sundays was beginning to fill up the chapel, and extra seats would be much appreciated. Second, the addition of grades 5-8 in the school building, alongside increased enrollment.¹⁶ The annex's addition allowed for the chapel to comfortably seat 300 people.¹⁷

Worship services at the Mifflin and North Street Church were unusual compared to their modern-day practice.

It has adopted a system of combination service by which the regular church service is combined with the Sunday school period. This service which begins at 10 o'clock brings the entire congregation, both young and old, to the church service, and permits the entire congregation again to be present at the Bible discussion. During the S.[S. period? (indecipherable)] the adult congregation remains in the church proper while the teachers with their respective classes go into their rooms. The opening service, which is the common service, is for all, but each department has its own closing service.¹⁸

Only a few years later, by 1934, they had moved to two services at 9:30 am and 11 am. The reason for the change in services was growth: "the attendance is too large for one service."¹⁹

Eastside's rapid growth was causing the congregation to quickly need a new space. Also, with Holy Cross being nearby on Milwaukee Street, it began to feel like it was time to relocate. A large majority of members were convinced, and soon the church council was asked to search for a new site.²⁰

16. "Church to Be 3 Years Old During Month," *The Capital Times*, December 30, 1928.

17. "History of Our Congregation," 9.

18. "Church to Be 3 Years Old."

19. Fischer to Buuck, October 2, 1934.

20. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Our Church History 2025," 4.

Independence Lane

The church council began looking for a new location for Eastside English. They looked further east, and “on July 1, 1960, the congregation entered into a three year contract with Mr. and Mrs. Peter Lukken.”²¹ This land for the new church was an eight-acre plot fronting on Independence Lane, just north of E. Washington Avenue.²²

This was just the beginning of a huge undertaking to build a new, bigger church, with an attached school. Beginning with the easter season in 1961, Pastor Karl Bast and the congregation began an intensive stewardship program to raise funds for the new building. They made a colorized pamphlet with some of the plans for the church included to help encourage the congregation in this endeavor.²³

Shortly after the purchase of the land, phase one of the building program began. “Mr. William Dye of John J. Flad Associates was employed as the architect in February 1961. At the same time, Mr. Thornton Wilcox was engaged as counselor for our building fund campaign.” The congregation put together the money for the project, and in 1963, they approved the architect's plan. With enough money in the building fund, the congregation started seeking construction bids. Vogel Brothers Building Company won the bid.²⁴

They planned the groundbreaking ceremony for September 15, 1963. The following week, Vogel Brothers Construction Company began work on the excavation. The pamphlet, made to summarize the building project, documented the progress,

21. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 4.

22. “An Early Beginning,” pamphlet, n.d., Eastside Congregational File, Synod Archives.

23. “Arise and Build,” pamphlet, 1961, Eastside Congregational File, Synod Archives.

24. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 4.

Soon footings and foundation began to take shape, and members could see before them the general layout of the structure. They were especially impressed by the size of the church proper when compared to the modest dimensions of the old chapel. The nave alone measures 93 feet by 42 feet, and the overall length of the building is 150 feet. Offices and a work room on the south side of the nave extends the width of that portion of the building to 58 feet. Early in January of this year the steel work began to shape up. Seven steel trusses, rising to 35 feet at the peak, gave members an early view of the graceful curve the roof was to take in final form.

A few months later, they held a special Cornerstone Laying service on Easter Sunday, March 29, 1964. After that, the interior work began with the building being sealed off from the weather.²⁵ The dedication of the new sanctuary was on June 21, 1964. The building on East Mifflin and North Streets was used all the way up to the dedication of the Independence Lane location. The following summer, 1965, the parsonage was complete, and the school opened that fall of the same year.²⁶

Only twelve years after the new church was built, the growing congregation ran into a problem: space. They needed more space, and in 1976, they began phase two of their building program. The addition added more rooms and an activity center. “On October 16, 1977, the phase two building was dedicated.”²⁷

Eastside was blessed by God with a beautiful building, zealous members, and generous donors. Beginning in 1960, they had begun paying off the mortgage, and with all the growth in the congregation by September of 2000, they made their final mortgage payment. In their seventy-fifth anniversary service on October 1, 2000, they burned the mortgage.²⁸

25. “An Early Beginning,” 3.

26. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 3–4.

27. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 4.

28. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 5.

To this day, Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, as it was now called, has operated out of this building. The eight acres of land provided ample space for the students to run around, and for the church to run its summer programs. “Eastside has also been active in starting congregations and schools in nearby communities so that the gospel continue to be spread.”²⁹ In 1997, a core group from Eastside started Risen Savior in McFarland. Pastor Daniel Sims, a former vicar of Eastside, was assigned there from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.³⁰ Today, Eastside’s “current membership is right around 600 souls with a Christian Day School with an enrollment of over 100. The Lord has blessed us with a dedicated staff, 11 full-time teachers, and two pastors.”³¹

Despite all this, the pastors, vicars, locations, and members. A quick look at the statistics would show that Eastside is not growing but rather dying. They went from having 1500 plus members in the 1980s to just six hundred in 2025; the line on the proverbial graph just continues to drop.³² Yet, according to their anniversary theme, they claim otherwise.

They are right, though. Because growth can’t only be measured based on numbers on a page or a line on a graph. Recall 2 Peter 3:18, Paul doesn’t say, grow in number and size and finances, but rather grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. How do you measure growth in grace and knowledge? Maybe you could write a program that attempts to quantify growth in grace and knowledge, but this is not a math paper. Maybe it would be better to look at the people who have been attending Eastside for the last fifty, twenty-five, ten, five, and three years. Find

29. Eastside Lutheran Church, “Our Story,” <http://eastsidelutheran.org/church/what-to-expect/our-story/>.

30. Risen Savior Lutheran Church, “About Our Church,” <http://risensaviorlutheran.org/about-our-church>.

31. Eastside Lutheran Church, “Our Story.”

32. WELS Yearbook, “Eastside Lutheran Church,” <http://yearbook.wels.net>.

the veterans of the congregation, ask them how their faith has grown, despite pastors moving on or retiring, ask them about the community they have formed, and discuss what they think are the shortcomings of the church. See how much they care about the place they worship and serve, see how much they love the good news of the gospel that is proclaimed daily in the church. Eastside is growing, even if it is not visible on a web page or a graph.

THE GROWTH OF THE SCHOOL

East Side English Evangelical Lutheran Church was only a church for a few months. “The first pastor, Gervasius Fisher, and the congregation believed strongly that such a school would be a worthwhile missionary undertaking.” Just a year after the founding of the congregation, there was a motion to start a school on February 1, 1927; the motion passed.³³ However, in that year, many held a very pessimistic view of opening a school; one history notes, “there had previously been a feeling that the public schools of Madison were of such a high caliber that a parochial school would be unable to compete with them.” The thought was also that students would be at a disadvantage if they wanted to go on to further education. Pastor Fischer campaigned hard, and the school, including only grades 1-4, met “in a house on Fair Oaks Avenue, furnished by Mr. Clyde Gallagher.”³⁴

The work done by Pastor Fischer and the congregation would lead to many exciting opportunities for ministry. Mrs. William (Renta) Beschnett was called by the mission board to teach these grades. It was a little odd to begin a school year on February 1, but they still had twenty-one students enroll, “almost all of them from families who were not members of our congregation.” One reason given for this was the fact that the school was in a “handy” spot,

33. Eastside Lutheran Church, “Our Story.”

34. “History of Our Congregation,” 9–10.

making it easy for these families to get their children to school. The school was also working as an evangelism tool, with four families joining the church in the first year.³⁵

The evidence of a successful school and the impending annex to the church building encouraged the congregation to add the upper grades to the school. Interestingly, the lower grades moved to a different house, courtesy of Mr. Gallagher, after finding water seepage at the first house, while the upper grades held their classes at the church. The enrollment jumped to fifty-nine students. The congregation worked out a deal with the mission board that they would cover one salary while the board would cover the other. Miss Hulda Herzog and Miss Esther Sydow were called to be the teachers of the lower and upper grades, respectively. However, East Side went through some challenges with its teachers. Miss Herzog left after two weeks of teaching, and Miss Sydow was released at Christmas 1927. The congregation called Mrs. Faye Amo as the lower-grade teacher, and Pastor Fischer took over the upper grades after Christmas.³⁶

The school stayed split between the church and the house until the fall of 1930, but those few years were a constant source of irritation, “especially the problem of transporting the children and the teachers back and forth. At a special council meeting of May 12, 1930, the final decision was reached to move the lower grades to the Church site.” The basement of the annex was used as the second classroom.³⁷

An article in *The Northwestern Lutheran* detailed the hardship the school went through during the depression. The synod’s funds were running low, and it seemed like the school would need to close. Until a Dr. Martin Luther College graduate agreed to teach at the school for \$25 a

35. “History of Our Congregation,” 10.

36. “History of Our Congregation,” 10–11.

37. “History of Our Congregation,” 11.

month. However, in the depression, the \$25, already a meager amount, was impossible for the congregation to cover. The school getting ready to close, was saved by one man who wanted his son to attend the school. This man wasn't a member of the church, but he wanted his son to get a Christian education. He agreed to pay the tuition of \$25 a month, and he sent his son to the school. With that man's want for Christian education, Eastside's school was able to remain open.³⁸

The school has been running since 1927, and has gone through much growth, including location, size, name, fellowship, and called workers. Eastside Lutheran School is proud to have played a role in all of their called workers' ministries and is grateful for the many years of service given to the school by those listed below.

1. Mrs. William (Renata) Beschnett 1927 (Feb.-June)
2. Miss Hulda Herzog 1927 (Two weeks in September)
3. Miss Esther Sydow 1927 (Until Christmas)
4. Mrs. Faye Amo Ratell 1927-1930
5. Miss Fischer 1927-1928 & 1930-1931
6. Miss Erna Gehm 1928-1929
7. Miss Margaret Schmeling 1929-1932
8. Mrs. Karl Natter 1930-1931
9. Miss Ruth Wisch 1931-1933
10. Mr. Victor Lehmann (Principal) 1932-1937
11. Miss Wilma Genz 1932-1936
12. Mrs. Esther nee Buchholz Hillmann 1936-1967 (Acting Principal 1950-1951)
13. Mr. Winfried Stoeckli 1937-1940
14. Mrs. C. Edward Pettingel 1940-1941
15. Mr. Morton Schroeder (Principal) 1941-1950
16. Mrs. Bette M. Schroeder 1943 (January-June)
17. Miss Gertrude Stoeckli 1943-1944
18. Miss Marjorie Lillegard 1944-1949
19. Mr. Elmer Behrens (Principal) 1951-1973
20. Mrs. Marjorie Schwefel 1961-1971
21. Mrs. Eleanor Lester 1965-1982
22. Mrs. Grace Frutiger 1967-1975
23. Mrs. Gary Saatkamp 1968-1970

38. R. A. Siegler, "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary," *The Northwestern Lutheran* 38, no. 4 (February 21, 1951): 60-61.

24. Mrs. Lois Lauth 1970-1971, 1973-1974
25. Mr. Donald Gosdeck 1971-1981
26. Mrs. Carol Korth 1972-1999
27. Mr. Grant Gentz (Principal) 1973-1987
28. Mrs. Mary Cuff 1975-1976
29. Mrs. Anne Heller 1980-Present
30. Miss Joyce Lohmiller 1976-1977
31. Miss Jill Buehner 1977-2017
32. Mr. Roger Ehlke 1978-2003 (Principal 1987- 2003)
33. Mr. Richard Korth 1979-2011
34. Mrs. Elaine Priebe Bening 1981-2004
35. Mrs. Paula nee Heyer Thusius 1982-1985
36. Mrs. Ruthann Mickelson 1984-2002
37. Mrs. Sue nee Gorz Bussian 1985-1991
38. Mr. Brian Maurice 1987-1993
39. Mrs. Amy Maurice 1987-1993
40. Mrs. Carol Becraft 1989-2020
41. Mr. Robert Moldenhauer 1990-1991
42. Mrs. Jane nee Zimmerman Mose 1991-1997
43. Mr. Michael Plocher 1993-1997
44. Mr. Michael Wilde 1993-2009
45. Mrs. Amy nee Rusert Frey 1994-1997
46. Mrs. Jane nee Schlenvogt Dew 1997-2001
47. Mrs. Kristin Nedow 1997-2005
48. Mrs. Eileen Karow 1998-2002
49. Mrs. Sandra Corlett 1999-2003
50. Mrs. Jennifer nee Kohlstadt Boll 2001-2010
51. Mrs. Alicia nee Greschner Campbell 2002-2008
52. Mrs. Rebecca nee Olson Buth 2004-2007
53. Mr. Scott Monroe (Principal) 2006-2012
54. Mrs. Erin nee Lowery Krebs 2006-2007
55. Mrs. Sarah nee Howell Sakaji 2007-2010
56. Mrs. Kim Novotny 2008-2009
57. Mrs. Tammy Monroe 2009-2012
58. Mr. Philip Dretske 2011-2017
59. Mrs. Rachel nee Struck Kass 2011-Present
60. Mrs. Beth Schmiede 2011-2021
61. Mr. Andrew Dais 2012-2013
62. Mr. Benjamin Rank 2013-2024
63. Mrs. Tracy Rank 2013-2024
64. Mrs. Alyssa Scharrer 2014-Present
65. Mrs. Jenni Berg 2015-2024
66. Mr. Kip Wilson 2017-2024
67. Miss Marie Laich 2017-Present
68. Mrs. Emily Everhart 2017-2024
69. Mr. Eric Duve 2021-Present

- 70. Mrs. Brittni Carran 2022-Present
- 71. Mrs. Jessica Kuchta 2024-Present
- 72. Miss Mandy Treder 2024-Present
- 73. Mrs. Alyssa Schroeder 2024-2025
- 74. Mrs. Heather Walther 2025-Present

From the fall of 1930 to the spring of 1942, the school operated out of the church and annex. In 1942, East Side and the other churches in the Synodical Conference located in Madison began a joint school, aptly named Madison Lutheran School.³⁹

Madison Lutheran School

The idea of a joint school in Madison had begun in at least 1930. There was considerable discussion when the school moved from the Gallagher house to the chapel building. In the minutes from the April 1, 1930, school board meeting, there was mention of a joint school with Holy Cross, an ELS church that started in 1926. Despite the discussion, nothing happened until the annual congregational meeting in January the following year. In that meeting, “it was resolved that Plans for a joint school with the other Synodical Churches in Madison be approved.”⁴⁰

An agreement had been achieved, but nothing came from it. Some reasons for this are the Mission Board and the depression, because of the finances and the debt of the congregation, which told the congregation they would not allow any steps to be taken without the board’s say so. This led to a stop in progress for the joint school until 1938. East Side’s School Board asked

39. “History of Our Congregation,” 11.

40. “History of Our Congregation,” 11–12.

for permission to meet with the boards from Holy Cross and Our Saviour's. This meeting never happened, as Holy Cross declined the meeting.⁴¹

Fast forward four more years, and it was finally time for this joint school to happen. Holy Cross had started its own school in September 1927. The school was filled with students from Holy Cross and Our Saviour, and in the 1930s, some children from Immanuel (LCMS) also attended. When August 1942 rolled around, a "teacher at Holy Cross Lutheran School was married during the summer of 1942, and the school was unable to call a replacement."⁴² Pastor Erling Ylvisaker reached out to Eastside to see about sending their students to Eastside Lutheran School.

On August 11, 1942, members from the four churches, Eastside, Holy Cross, Our Saviour, and Immanuel, met together to discuss a joint school. Pastor Theophil Mahnke of Eastside chaired the meeting.⁴³ Eastside officially allowed this move in a special congregation meeting on September 27, 1942.⁴⁴

After that meeting, Madison Lutheran School was formed, and the classes were held in Eastside's building. In that first school year, 1942-1943, 112 students were enrolled, and Pastor Mahnke served as principal. Morton Schroeder and Esther Buchholz, the teachers at Eastside, took on the challenge of teaching to a class that had doubled in size over the summer.⁴⁵

41. "History of Our Congregation," 12.

42. Morton A. Schroeder, "A Time Fit to Remember: Recollections of Madison Lutheran School," <http://judykuster.net/pers/madluthschool/history/historysalty.html>.

43. Judy Maginnis Kuster, "A History of Madison Lutheran School," *Oak Leaves: Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society* 6, no. 3 (February 2003):1-2.

44. "History of Our Congregation," 11.

45. Kuster, "History of Madison Lutheran School," 2.

Mr. Morton Schroeder had written an article about his memories of Madison Lutheran School. He tells of his graduation in 1941 from Dr. Martin Luther College and his first call. He had a large amount of responsibilities: “to teach the upper grades five to eight in accordance with the prescribed course of study, play the organ for divine services, take an active part in the work of the Sunday School, direct the choir when called upon, and assist in the work of the school and church as occasion may arise.” All of that on \$70 a month for nine and a half months. On that \$70, he had to cover his room and board. A couple took him in that first year; they fed him, cared for him, yet the depression was still on their minds, and they were very conscious of money. Interestingly enough, he held three calls in two years due to the joint school. He stated, “Madison Lutheran School became a legal entity sometime between March 16, 1942, when I received my *second* call to teach at Eastside English, and October 26, 1942, when I received my *third* call, this one to teach now at *Madison Lutheran School*, Madison, Wisconsin.”⁴⁶

The enormous increase in students “placed unforeseen and tremendous strains not only on Eastside's two-person faculty but also on Eastside's modest physical facilities,” according to Mr. Schroeder. In his article remembering Madison Lutheran School he wrote,

Esther Buchholz -- who was *always* called Miss Buchholz, even by her principal -- found herself trying to teach 40 children in grades one through four; I was faced with 72 in grades five through eight. The upper grades room of Eastside *school*, which had been built on to the church when the school was opened, was an integral part of Eastside's *church*. Trying to “hide” some 25 to 40 desks to make room for Sunday services was bad enough; trying to do the same for 70+ was well nigh impossible. The playground, which had a hard time satisfying the needs of 50 children, simply could not accommodate twice that many active youngsters.⁴⁷

46. Schroeder, “A Time Fit to Remember.”

47. Schroeder, “A Time Fit to Remember.”

Fifty of the students that year were from Eastside. The faculty was stretched thin trying to teach that many students all at once, so they converted the rest of the basement into a classroom. Even with the extra space, the overcrowding and the less-than-ideal building made teaching hard.⁴⁸

In the fall of 1942, Monona, an LCMS church, also joined the association.⁴⁹ A special Congregation meeting was held on April 18, 1943, where “the church council was authorized to participate in bids on the former Harvey School at 1001 Jenifer Street.”⁵⁰ On April 27, 1945, the purchase of this building was completed, and the former Harvey school building became a school building once again in the fall of 1945. The congregations purchased the building for \$10,500 and purchased a few surrounding lots for a playground for \$4,500. The total cost for the school and the playgrounds was \$17,816.95.⁵¹ Judy Kuster quotes an anniversary book that explains how the school was funded and financed,

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 membership of the congregations. The proportionate share of each congregation is included in the regular budget of the congregation.⁵²

48. “History of Our Congregation,” 12–13.

49. Kuster, “History of Madison Lutheran School,” 2.

50. “History of Our Congregation,” 13.

51. Kuster, “History of Madison Lutheran School,” 2.

52. *The 25th Anniversary Book* (Madison Lutheran School, 1952), quoted in Judy Maginnis Kuster, “A History of Madison Lutheran School,” *Oak Leaves: Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society* 6, no. 3 (February 2003), 3.

During this time, “two other synodical conference churches entered into sponsorship of the school.” This brought the total number of Lutheran Churches participating in the school up to seven.

1. Eastside English Evangelical Lutheran Church
2. Holy Cross Lutheran Church
3. Immanuel Lutheran Church
4. Monona Lutheran Church
5. Mt. Olive Lutheran Church
6. Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church
7. St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

The school was directed by a joint school board made up of a pastor and two members from each of the seven congregations.⁵³

That year, a dedication service was held on August 26, 1945, and one hundred students enrolled for the first school year at the new building. According to Kuster, “the articles of incorporation are dated April 12, 1946, and the By-Laws of Madison Lutheran School are dated July 1, 1946.” Other Madison congregations supported the school as well.⁵⁴

As the school grew in size from 1927, the faculty also grew. The first year could be handled by one teacher, but when the upper grades were added, a second teacher was needed to handle the work. When the school became Madison Lutheran School and the number of students grew, a third teacher was added in the middle of the school year. A fourth and fifth teacher were added to the faculty in 1946 and 1950, respectively, as enrollment continued to increase. The chart below shows the increase in enrollment.

Feb.-June, 1927 ---	21
1927-28 -----	59
1934-35 -----	67
1936-37 -----	50

53. “History of Our Congregation,” 13.

54. Kuster, “History of Madison Lutheran School,” 3.

1942-43 -----	112
1946-47 -----	151
1950-51 -----	180
1954-55 -----	218

The number of students from Eastside slowly dwindled once the school moved to the Harvey building. This was in part due to the distance involved to get to the school, and this would remain in their minds for the next few years.⁵⁵

Madison Lutheran School had many interesting programs in its life span. The teachers, all quite young, were willing to try new things. Mr. Schroeder stressed the importance of reading and literature in the school,

All the teachers worked closely with the Madison Public Library to provide rapidly revolving in-classroom libraries. Letters received from authors -- August Derleth, the Sage of Sauk City, Eric P. Kelly, who won the Newbery Medal in 1929 for his *The Trumpeter of Krakow*, and Laura Ingalls Wilder, who wrote the classic "Little House" books -- were read to the students and shared with them by means of bulletin boards.

German was taught by one teacher who was proficient in the language to both first and second graders, four times per week. "Upper-grade girls attended 'home ec' classes and upper-grade boys attended 'manual arts' classes at within-walking-distance public schools."⁵⁶ They had a great music program and a mentoring program for the older students to help the younger ones. The duties of the mentor program included "helping with playground duties and correcting tests."⁵⁷ The school had a newspaper called *The Echo* in which students and faculty wrote. During World War Two, students and teachers took part in many activities as well. Mr. Morton Schroeder recalled,

55. "History of Our Congregation," 13–14.

56. Schroeder, "A Time Fit to Remember."

57. Kuster, "History of Madison Lutheran School," 3–4.

When the United States was being introduced to the possible civilian hardships of war, faculty members served on local ration boards. When World War II became a reality, it did its patriotic thing: the students cultivated a Victory Garden....When President Harry S Truman, running on his own in the election of '48, visited Madison, the 7th and 8th grade students were hustled off to the university campus to see him. Their reactions to him, his visit, and the circumstances surrounding the visit were published in the *Madison Capital Times*.⁵⁸

Madison Lutheran School not only provided educational programs for its students but also cared for their everyday needs.

The school provided hot lunch for its students. To begin with, the school started with a milk program; the milk was two cents a day. Once the Wisconsin Synod allowed the milk program, Madison Lutheran School jumped into a hot lunch program and became a member of the National School Lunch Program.⁵⁹ Mr. Schroeder remarked, "The food was not always 'hot.' On alternating days, the students were served cold sandwiches, either peanut butter or jam, and warm ('hot') soup/broth/chili/hot dish. The students augmented the one kind of food by carrying in their lunch bags/boxes the other kind."⁶⁰ Kuster remembers paying one dollar a week for hot lunch, and in 1957-58, the price increased by twenty-five cents. Madison Lutheran School served around 265 meals each day.⁶¹ They had one paid cook, who was then supported by the mothers of the students.⁶²

In retrospect, the school was well run and operated smoothly. Even during the 1950s and 60s, when doctrinal differences between the three synods involved in Madison Lutheran School

58. Schroeder, "A Time Fit to Remember."

59. Kuster, "History of Madison Lutheran School," 3.

60. Schroeder, "A Time Fit to Remember."

61. Kuster, "History of Madison Lutheran School," 3.

62. Schroeder, "A Time Fit to Remember."

began to widen. Board minutes from January 25, 1954, stated, “board discussed what should or could be done in case of the dissolution of the synodical conference,” and again in November of 1954, and July of 1955. The conclusion, when the synodical conference broke apart, was that the school would no longer function as before.⁶³

Mt. Olive was the first to leave the group, and in 1961, “Immanuel Lutheran offered to buy out the other congregations.... Eastside accepted with the stipulation that our children be accepted as tuition students until we would have our own school ready to operate.”⁶⁴ Immanuel provided tentative numbers for the cost of tuition in a letter sent by the Immanuel Lutheran Church Board of Parish Education. “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.”⁶⁵

In January of 1964, Pastor Luther Otto met with the principal of Madison Lutheran School, Fred Bartel, to discuss closing the school in favor of a new “weekday school.” This concept would send the students to public school, and three times a week, the church would hold biblical classes. A year later, Pastor Otto and his associate Pastor Lobien presented the idea at an open congregational hearing. Fred Bartel presented the other side, keeping the school the same. The majority sided with keeping the school the same, and at the annual voters meeting a week later, Immanuel voted to continue operating the school in the same way. Eastside voted to open

63. Kuster, “History of Madison Lutheran School,” 4.

64. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, “Our Church History 2025,” 6.

65. Immanuel Lutheran Church Board of Parish Education to pastors of the Synodical Conference Churches in Madison, letter (date unknown), as quoted in Judy Maginnis Kuster, “A History of Madison Lutheran School,” *Oak Leaves: Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society* 6, no. 3 (February 2003): 4.

their own school at their new location in September 1965, in a meeting on January 18, 1965.

Madison Lutheran School was officially closed in June of 1965.⁶⁶

Present-day Eastside Lutheran School

On September 7, 1965, Eastside opened its own school again for the first time in twenty-three years. The new church building on Independence Lane included four classrooms for students.

The school opened with grades 1-8, with many former teachers from Madison Lutheran School teaching.⁶⁷ The teachers were Elmer Behrens, Marjorie Schwefel, Eleanor Lester, and Esther Buchholz.⁶⁸ In 1973, Eastside added a kindergarten program.⁶⁹

Staying true to its Madison Lutheran School roots, the school continued to move forward with its education. The school remained progressive in its classrooms, updating and refining its curriculum. “In the Spring of 1966, it was decided that we updated our education system to better adapt to the high school level. This was the beginning of our middle school along with maintaining an elementary school. In August 1998, we took steps and started preschool classes for 4 and 3 year old children.”⁷⁰ The dedication of the school to its students and parents is evident in all the work Eastside has done.

66. Kuster, “History of Madison Lutheran School,” 4-5.

67. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 8.

68. Kuster, “History of Madison Lutheran School,” 5.

69. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 8.

70. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 8.

In the Fall of 2000, it came to the Board of Education's attention that some parents were struggling to get their children to school and also get themselves to work. The Board of Education made progress and eventually started a child care program. This program allowed, "some of these children come earlier than the scheduled school time, and those children are watched until school starts, and the same after school, the children are watched until a later hour."⁷¹ The childcare program, along with the preschool, moved into a new addition to the school constructed in 2005.⁷²

Eastside also provided for its students after they had finished school in the elementary and middle schools. They made scholarships available "in the 1970s to those students who went into the preaching and teaching ministry at our synodical schools, along with those who chose to attend Lakeside Lutheran High School in Lake Mills." In 1981, Eastside requested to join the Lakeside Lutheran Federation and was accepted. This decision was made due to the high volume of students attending Lakeside Lutheran High School. In joining the federation, tuition costs were lowered for the Eastside Alumni.⁷³

Today, Eastside's school ranks as one of the best grade schools in the Madison area.⁷⁴ The curriculum for the school remains comparable to any public school, with one significant difference: "The **Christian** school has as its goal to prepare for the life to come as well as for

71. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 8.

72. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Our Church History 2025," 7.

73. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 8.

74. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Spreadsheet Comparing Report Cards, 2020–21 School Year," unpublished document, 2021.

this life.”⁷⁵ Enrollment at Eastside Lutheran School for the 2025-26 school year sits at one hundred total students in K-8, and twenty-one in their early childhood ministry.⁷⁶

Eastside also includes a robust set of extra-curricular activities for its students. These include both athletics and fine arts, including choir, band, interscholastic sports, band lessons, music competition, science fair, forensics, spelling bees, visual arts fair, fine arts fair, and handbells.⁷⁷ All the extra-curricular activities provide the student with many ways to grow in the things they are passionate about, and a chance to grow alongside their classmates in a Christian environment.

Eastside offers many sports to its students. They have three seasons of sports, some coed. The sports Eastside is currently offering are volleyball (girls), soccer (coed), cross-country (coed), basketball (girls), basketball (boys), cheerleading (girls), softball (coed), and track (coed). The school offers this explanation for its different levels of sports,

The child will develop the fundamental skills at the B team level through active participation. It is our goal to give all team members at the B team level a chance for meaningful participation in all games and practices.

Those who desire to continue to develop their skills at a more competitive level will have the opportunity to do so on the A team when they are eligible to participate on the A-team. Because the focus of the A team is competition, coach(es) may play players as they see fit.

Eastside has an athletic director who is in charge of scheduling games and holds its student athletes to a Christian standard on and off the court.⁷⁸

75. Eastside Lutheran Church, “Curriculum,” <http://eastsidelutheran.org/school/curriculum/>.

76. WELS Yearbook, “Eastside Lutheran School – LES,” <http://yearbook.wels.net>.

77. Eastside Lutheran Church, “Curriculum.”

78. Eastside Lutheran Church, “Athletics,” <http://eastsidelutheran.org/school/athletics/>.

One special privilege the school gets to share each year is the season-ending basketball tournament, aptly named the Eagle Tournament. The week leading up to the tournament, the classes compete in spirit week and cap it off with a pep rally to cheer on and pump up their basketball teams as they head into their home tournament. The tournament is really two tournaments held at the same time, one for the boys and one for the girls. Seven other Lutheran schools are invited to the tournament each year, often from outside the Badgerland Lutheran Athletic Conference. In March 2025, Eastside hosted the 47th annual Eagle Tournament, meaning the very first one was held sometime in the 1970s after the gymnasium was added onto the school. As for 2026, the members of Eastside were faced with a dilemma. Would they host the 48th Eagle Tournament, or postpone it till next year? The school does not have enough students in the upper grade to fill an A-Team boys or girls roster. After some debate, the congregation came to the conclusion that the Eagle Tournament has always been about more than basketball. The Eagle Tournament has been about fellowship with other schools and congregations of the WELS. They spend the weekend together watching basketball and on Sunday morning gather in the sanctuary to worship as one. For that reason, Eastside decided to host the 48th Eagle Tournament in 2026, despite being unable to field teams.⁷⁹

The school has grown immensely since its inception in 1926. They went from the lower grades to adding upper grades, to joining other synodical conferences churches in a joint effort school, to building their own school building with a fully staffed school. Enrollment numbers may have dropped from the 1990s, but really enrollment numbers are not how you measure growth in a school. As stated in other places in this paper, growth in not merely outward.

79. Eastside Lutheran Church and School, "Son of God, December 28, 2025," *Church Bulletin* (Madison, WI: Eastside Lutheran Church and School, 2025), 13.

Eastside's school has graduated and confirmed many students, with a top-tier education from top-tier educators. They have some veterans on the faculty who bring years of experience in teaching, as well as new faces who bring fresh ideas to the school. Despite Eastside having to cut positions from the staff occasionally, they bring spiritual growth and educational growth to their students and faculty.

CHURCH PROGRAMS

Eastside, throughout its history, has been able to support some amazing programs. Some of these programs started almost immediately with the church, like the Ladies Aid, now called Eastside Christian Women, and the Choir. Other programs like Soccer Bible Camp and Science Camp were started later in the congregation's history. Needless to say, none of these programs are able to happen without members of the congregation who are passionate about Jesus, their church, and sharing the good news of God's amazing love.

Eastside Christian Women

Formerly known as the Ladies' Aid Society, Eastside Christian Women was organized at the beginning of the congregation. By 1950, the Ladies' Aid provided time, labor, and money when the need arose in the congregation. Sometimes this was for payments on interest or other debts that were due.⁸⁰

In 1954 and 1955, the Ladies Aid met every second Thursday of the month, except for July and August. Their mission was fourfold: "1) To promote the spirit of fellowship among the women of the Congregation; 2) To promote the work of the Church; 3) To win souls for Christ; 4) To further Christian knowledge by discussion of religious topics." They had many different

80. "History of Our Congregation," 25.

projects that they worked on as well. The altar committee, for instance, took care of the chancel area, swapping out paraments and adding flowers to the altar. They had several fellowship events as well, an annual get-together in October, and an ice cream social in June. In April, they had a meeting with women from other area congregations. The Ladies Aid also handled other responsibilities; they would arrange farewells and receptions, make donations, and cheer the sick. During this time, the membership dues were \$3 per year.

Today, the Eastside Christian Women have several committees that do work for the church as needed. Those committees are Altar/Banner, Flower, Funeral, and Tree Decorating.⁸¹

Choirs

Eastside organized a choir very early on in its life. However, in November 1933, the choir started singing the introit and gradual in regular services. This action was quite progressive at the time and was met with skepticism from other congregations.⁸²

The purpose of the choir is obvious: to share the good news of God's love in song.

Eastside is truly blessed with talented singers and has had many choirs over the past one hundred years.

Adult Choir/Chancel Voices; Children's Choir/Junior Choir; Singers for Christ (a mixed group from several congregations-no longer active); In His Presence (a men's group also from several congregations-no longer active); Christian Day School children of all grades; and Sunday School Children. Soloists also aid in introducing new hymns or liturgical canticles or in singing special anthems in parts.

81. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Our Church History 2025," 12.

82. "History of Our Congregation," 25.

Included with the choirs are the many instrumental groups that beautify the worship services, “Senior Bells/Chancel Bells; Junior Bells; ERASE (Eastside Rhythm and String Ensemble); and various individual string, brass, woodwind, guitar, and percussion ensembles.”⁸³

Church Council

Eastside was blessed with pastors and teachers ready to share God’s word, but the congregation played a large role in the growth of the church. While pastors ministered to the souls of the congregation, many other people in the congregation handled the everyday business of running the congregation. This group of people has served on the church council or on one of many committees.

When the congregation was organized, “it was decided that the council was to consist of six members elected by the voting members of the congregation....The six council members were to choose from their number a president, secretary and treasurer. In January of 1926, another officer, the financial secretary, was added.” One-third of the council would be elected each year. In 1932, the constitution was altered for the congregation to elect six trustees, three school board members, and three finance board members. In 1933, the election of officers of the congregation settled into a comfortable pattern, where officers were elected each year in June. When Madison Lutheran School began in 1942, the council elected two of its members to serve with the pastor.⁸⁴

It wasn’t until March 7, 1949, at a congregational meeting, that the congregation limited terms for its officers. The minutes from that meeting said,

After some discussion a motion was made, seconded and carried that the congregation adopt a policy that a council member should serve no more than a maximum of two

83. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, “Our Church History 2025,” 12.

84. “History of Our Congregation,” 16–20.

consecutive terms and that he should not serve on the council again for a period of at least three years after termination of his office.

The reasoning given was for more members to become involved in the everyday work that was carried out by the congregation. The 25th anniversary history pushes back against this decision, in part due to the average lengths of the council members' service.

An examination of the list of officers brings out the fact that the average length of time in office is relatively short. Of the seven Preseidents our congregation has had...the average...is only a little more than three and one-half years. Of the six Secretaries...the average is only a little more than four years. Of the ten Treasurers...the average is only two and one-half years. The eight Financial Secretaries...the average is only slightly more than three years. And finally, of the fifty-seven members of our congregation who have been on the Council...the average tenure of office is not quite five and one-half years.

Limiting terms to six total years hardly seemed necessary, and due to the fast turnover mentioned earlier in this paper, the opinion was that some longer-term council members would help with stability and continued work for the church.⁸⁵

In 2021, the church restructured its council, going from a coordinating council of many boards to a leadership team. The By-Laws lay out what that structure looks like,

The administration of the ministry of the congregation will be conducted on the basis of four levels of organization:

1. Voters (Over-all policy and direction setting)
2. Business and Spiritual Teams (Administrative and spiritual policy setting and coordinating level)
3. Standing Committees (Operational policy setting and management)
4. Project committees, Coordinators, etc. (Initiating, and expediting the work)⁸⁶

This structure has led to cleaner communication in the congregation and contributes much to the growth of the congregation.

85. "History of Our Congregation," 20–21.

86. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Constitution and By-laws*, 11.

Sunday School

Eastside's Sunday School played an integral role in its growth. It was started almost at the same time as the church. In the early years, the Sunday school regularly had over one hundred people enrolled. The early history shares that Pastor Fischer used the Sunday School considerably in his missionary work. That is, until the grade school was started. The capital Times reported that it was well organized, and due to the hybrid services Eastside was holding enrollment was 175 in 1928.⁸⁷ The church would consider the role of their Sunday school carefully, fearing it might take the place of church for the children, instead of being another way to get children who couldn't attend the grade school.⁸⁸

In 1954-55, the Sunday School would meet at 9 a.m. in the basement of the Mifflin Street church. Preschool and first grade in one room, the upper grades spread out all over the church, annex, and even the Pastor's office, for their classes. There, the students learned from various Bible stories the amazing gospel news. That school year had 118 students enrolled, and had over 50% show up regularly.⁸⁹

Those who were in grades seven and eight attended Saturday School. This was an opportunity for them to study the chief doctrines contained in the catechism. "All 7 & 8 grade pupils not in our Day School are expected to attend."⁹⁰

Today, Eastside's Sunday school remains very similar, meeting during the school year between the services. Eastside had this to say about their Sunday school, "Our Sunday School

87. "Church to Be 3 Years Old During Month."

88. "History of Our Congregation," 15–16.

89. Eastside English Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Annual Report, June 1, 1954–May 31, 1955," unpublished congregational report, Eastside Congregational File, Synod Archives, 6.

90. Eastside English Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Annual Report." 6.

curriculum is Christ-centered, using age-appropriate materials for each level to offer children an overview of God's plan of salvation in an orderly sequence. Each year, the Sunday School has been blessed with capable and faithful teachers and dedicated helpers."⁹¹

Parent Teacher Friends Group

Formerly known as "The Parent Teachers Society," the Parent Teacher Friends Group is another arm of the congregation. In the 1950s, it met regularly during the school year. "It is made up chiefly of parents, but all who are interested in Christian education are welcome. Problems of education, youth, family, etc., are topics of planned discussions."⁹²

Today at Eastside, the PTF brings parents and teachers together to make them aware of the goals and needs of the school and congregation. They still hold regular meetings, often with a guest speaker, and volunteer their time and money to help with things for the school that the church often cannot financially help with.⁹³

Soccer Camp

In early 2008, Eastside's coordinating council, along with the help of its pastors and evangelism teams, decided to begin organizing a soccer camp. Soccer camp was a completely new idea for Eastside. They had been doing VBS for a while, but with excitement from their new seminary

91. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Our Church History 2025," 9.

92. Eastside English Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Annual Report," 5.

93. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Our Church History 2025," 9.

graduate and some buy-in from the congregation, dates were selected in July, and they came up with a name, “Victory!” From here, massive amounts of effort were put in by the pastors and members to make this camp as professional and well put together as Eastside could muster. New equipment was ordered, neighborhoods were canvassed, and soccer jerseys were created. That first year, sixty-three campers signed up between the ages of five and twelve, alongside twenty-two coaches.⁹⁴

Soccer Bible camp ran for five days each summer from 2008 to 2018. The camp consisted of groups separated by age, with several coaches running drills and playing games. After the first hour, a break was called, and a skills session was demonstrated to the campers, including dribbling, shooting, trapping, and passing. The campers would return to their fields and work on their skills for the next hour. Then a break was called, and the campers sat down with Freezy Pops and listened to a soccer-themed devotion. Then scrimmages were played before parents returned for pick-up. On the last day of camp, the campers played a game against the coaches and enjoyed a picnic style barbeque with the families of the coaches and campers.

The camp was a success for the church and for the community. In the following years, the camp grew larger in size and was run more professionally. During the 2015 camp, the record for most children was set. One hundred forty-five children attended at least one day of the camp. The last camp was held in 2018, when attendance and church interest in the event died down.⁹⁵

94. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, “Our Church History 2025,” 11.

95. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, “Our Church History 2025,” 11.

Science Camp

After Eastside transitioned away from Soccer Bible Camp, VBS was done for a few years. Until 2021, when VBS was changed to Science Camp. Science Camp was an opportunity for children to come and learn about science in the light of the Bible. The first camp was the Human Body. Campers spent a week learning about the body, with different experiments, devotions, and songs. Many volunteers helped put on the event, and it was deemed a success. The one-hundredth-anniversary history paper provides more details,

Oceans followed in 2022; The Rainforest, in 2023; Space, in 2024; and Magnified, in 2025. Elise Saidler planned and executed the program with help from adult and middle school leaders who taught Bible lessons and oversaw crafts. Guitarists and pianists led the Bible-based 11 songs written for each specific topic. Snacks were prepared and served by Eastside's chef and his kitchen helpers. A closing service emphasized the lessons and songs learned. Each child took home a science journal begun during the week to be continued during the rest of the summer.⁹⁶

Eastside's Science camp has been a great innovation in summer camps and has inspired the congregation in their outreach work in the summer.

⁹⁶. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, "Our Church History 2025," 11–12.

CHURCH PROPERTIES

While there was mention of the different properties owned by the church above, as was necessary for sharing the growth of the congregation, there are some interesting stories about those properties that need telling. As a mission congregation, Eastside was funded by the mission board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. The board purchased the lots on Mifflin and North streets and helped pay for the costs of building the chapel and the annex for the school.⁹⁷ In 1925, the mission bought three lots in the eastern outskirts of the city of Madison for \$2000 and built a chapel on them for \$10000.00. This sum was altogether too high for the size of the building, and especially when one sees the flimsy construction of the building.”⁹⁸

On April 8, 1930, the congregation entered into an arrangement to pay \$17,888.00, the total cost of the property. They agreed to “pay \$10.00 per month until 30 percent of the amount had been repaid, at which time the congregation could come into possession of the property upon execution of the mortgage.” This would cause some hard feelings towards the synod.⁹⁹

In 1927, a property north of the church was put on sale. The congregation, apart from the mission board, bought this property, called the Bailey property, for \$3,350.00 on April 28, 1927.

97. “History of Our Congregation,” 21–22.

98. W. Bodamer, “Case #12,” Eastside Congregational File, Synod Archives, 1.

99. “History of Our Congregation,” 22.

They thought that this property might be turned into a parsonage, but it was found unsuitable for that purpose, and instead was rented to the caretaker of the church.¹⁰⁰

As the congregation grew and contributions rose, the congregation was becoming self-sufficient. The synod, seeing this, wanted larger payments on the interest owed on the church. In a meeting on January 7, 1935, Eastside sent a letter to the treasurer of the synod. The letter said, “We cannot pay the interest or don’t intend to, as the members of the congregation feel that the debt was loaded onto us unjustly.” Accounts say that both sides had reason to press their side. The synod had invested much into Eastside, not only for the building, but also for the salaries of a pastor and a teacher. Yet, the congregation was stuck with a building that was built with the cheapest and quickest means possible and was depreciating.

There were several issues with the Mifflin Street Chapel. The biggest one was the heating system. It was a problem for years; the congregation was forced to buy a fourth plot of land for \$3,500. There were three reasons listed: “1, the coal for the chapel and the school had to be carried in because there was not room for a wagon or truck to come to the coal chute. 2. Because the eavetroughs were overhanging on this lot. 3. Because the school children had not enough playground.”¹⁰¹ The heating problem was eventually solved by equipping the church with an oil burner in 1950.¹⁰² The Synod’s increased payments also came at a bad time for the congregation, which no doubt played a role in the back and forth with the congregation. The depression in 1930 hit Eastside hard. “The greatest majority of the congregation are railroad or factory workers most

100. “History of Our Congregation,” 22.

101. Bodamer, “Case #12,” 1.

102. “History of Our Congregation,” 9.

of them were thrown out of work and at times over 60% of the members were on relief and many still are...that retarded the financial ability of the congregation to a great extent.”¹⁰³

In the same document, it is noted that “the congregation thinks that the debt to the Ch. Ext. Fund us altogether too high. It had nothing to say in creating this debt, as it did not exist then, and the Mission Board paid much too much for the chapel.” Eastside had a lot of other bills to cover at the time, as well, the school, the fourth lot, upkeep, and salaries to pay. The money was already tied up in other things.¹⁰⁴

In a special council meeting of April 29, 1937, they decided to ask the mission board to reduce the debt from \$17,888 to \$8,000. This would bring the debt down to the same value as the property at the time.¹⁰⁵ Bodamer agrees with the congregation’s request, “here we have another of these cases, where a former mission board has saddled upon a mission and an unbearable debt or financial burden, which the congregation later holds to be unjust.”¹⁰⁶

As Eastside continued to grow, it eventually became entirely self-sufficient as of June 1, 1941. “Then the synod agreed to deed over the property if the congregation paid \$3,000 by the end of the year. In a letter dated October 8, 1941, to Mr. C. J. Niedfeldt, R. E. Zimmer sent a check for \$500 to be applied to the \$3,000 balance, and further partial payments would be made until a final payment on January 1, 1942.¹⁰⁷ Niedfeldt wrote a letter to the attorney, Mr. Von Briesen, later in October, asking for a new deed to be drawn up for the Madison congregation,

103. Bodamer, “Case #12,” 1.

104. Bodamer, “Case #12,” 1.

105. “History of Our Congregation,” 23.

106. Bodamer, “Case #12,” 2.

107. R. E. Zimmer to C. J. Niedfeldt, letter, October 8, 1941, Eastside Congregational File, Synod Archives.

which had received a reduction and was making payments.¹⁰⁸ In January of 1942, the church finally became the property of Eastside.¹⁰⁹

Eastside also purchased another plot of land next to the second schoolhouse, provided by Mr. Clyde Gallagher. He offered this plot of land, which was suitable for building a building, but the church felt it could be used for a playground for the students in the lower grades, and purchased the plot for \$325. After the annex was built and the lower grades moved into the basement of the church, they tried to sell this land, but struggled. It wasn't until July 1, 1946, that the congregation sold it for \$275.¹¹⁰

Since the aforementioned Bailey property was unsuitable for use as a parsonage, the congregation ended up renting houses for a parsonage.

Pastor Fischer first lived at 19 North Street, then at 2527 East Johnson Street, next at 222 Fifth Street and not long before he left us he moved to 2314 East Mifflin Street. This has since been the parsonage, though there was much discussion of building or buying. In the fall of 1950 the property at 2529 East Mifflin became available and it was decided to purchase it as a temporary parsonage for \$10,500. It became the property of the congregation on Dec. 29, 1950.

Despite having the pastor taken care of, Eastside didn't have a teacherage. They ended up paying rent for the teachers. When Madison Lutheran School took over the Harvey building, Eastside also owned a portion of it.¹¹¹

As noted above, members of the congregation charged the church council with finding a new location for their church, due to it being too close to Holy Cross and too big for the current

108. C. J. Niedfeldt to Mr. Von Briesen, letter, October 24, 1941, Eastside Congregational File, Synod Archives.

109. "History of Our Congregation," 23.

110. "History of Our Congregation," 22.

111. "History of Our Congregation," 24.

church on East Mifflin. On July 1, 1960, the council signed a contract that purchased eight acres of land for \$24,120 just off East Washington Ave. With the property in their possession, Eastside started phase one of their building plan. They hired an architect, Mr. William Dye, and Mr. Thornton Wilcox as their counselor for the building campaign. Eastside's careful planning and good use of resources, alongside Mr. Wilcox's goal of \$105,000 and his inspiration, made this project successful. The congregation raised nearly \$107,000. The congregation approved the plans made by Mr. Dye, and the congregation broke ground in 1963.¹¹²

By 1964, the first phase of the building was done, the sanctuary was dedicated, and worship services moved to the new location. Alongside this new church and school building was a parsonage building, which was completed the following summer in 1965. The parsonage on Stuart Ct. remains today, empty.¹¹³

In 1973, the congregation purchased a house on Independence Lane for their principal. This remained with the congregation for about twenty years, until in 1992, they sold it to principal Roger Ehlke.

After several years, space was once again getting tight in the school and in the church, and Eastside decided to activate phase two of their building program. This phase was ambitious, increasing the size of the sanctuary and adding more classrooms and a gymnasium. However, the plans were too expensive, and so they were scaled back, keeping the same function, but at a lesser cost. In 1976, this project began working, and in only a year, the massive \$370,963

112. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 8.

113. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 8.

expansion was completed. On October 16, 1977, the congregation dedicated this second phase of the building project.¹¹⁴

As the school and the budding preschool and childcare programs grew, there came a point where the current school space became insufficient for teaching. In early 2002, the church council began work on a new building project. A committee was put together, and a list of needs was made for the expansion. A stewardship program was started in order to raise funds for this building campaign, and by December of 2002, \$541,000 was raised.¹¹⁵

The project was initially planned to add new preschool and kindergarten rooms in their own wing of the building. Also included in the plans were several other updates to the church and school. The boilers needed replacement, the parking lot needed to be resurfaced, alongside a new playground, air-conditioning, accessibility updates, and more. These plans also included an expansion to the church offices and narthex. The plan was to implement the changes in three phases, with the first phase including the preschool addition.¹¹⁶

Fred Klingbeil headed up the building committee. The committee made the list and presented to the congregation five different concepts and plans to execute them. Many hours were spent by the congregation in meetings deciding and debating what concept they wanted to use going forward. Eventually, the congregation landed on a hybrid of two different concepts. At this point, the building committee reached out to a dozen different architectural firms and then narrowed it down to just four. A recommendation came from the council, was voted on by the congregation, and Strang Associates won the bid to make up the plans.

114. Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Church and School History*, 8.

115. Eastside Lutheran Church, "Council and Voters Minutes, 2002–2003," unpublished minutes, Green Binder, Eastside Evangelical Lutheran Church Archive, Madison, WI.

116. Eastside Lutheran Church, "Council and Voters Minutes, 2002–2003."

The goal was to start the preschool in 2004 and finish it in early 2005. The four thousand two hundred square foot addition broke ground and was completed in 2005. While this project was finished in one big swing, the other two phases morphed and spread out over the following years, the total for all of them being just under a million dollars.¹¹⁷ Eastside and its members celebrated the burning of this mortgage on September 14, 2025.¹¹⁸

This new lobby and classrooms serve many purposes today. The two classrooms became the Childcare room and offices, and the preschool room. These rooms were joined together with preschool sized bathroom. The lobby area has a kitchen and serves as an entrance to the gymnasium. This lobby has many functions. Its wrap-around glass windows allow teachers to see students come and go from school. The lobby serves as a concessions stand for basketball games, an area for art and science fairs, and even book fairs. Other times it is used to serve food, as people eat in the gym. There is plenty of storage for the preschool and childcare rooms, as well as an area for the church archives.

God has blessed Eastside with growth in their buildings and property over the last one hundred years. Growth that was appropriate and certainly necessary. As the membership grew, numerically and spiritually, the buildings needed to grow up as well, with a bigger sanctuary and proper classrooms to feed the spiritual lives of its people.

117. Eastside Lutheran Church, “Council and Voters Minutes, 2002–2003.”

118. Eastside Lutheran Church, “Upcoming Special Services,” *Eastside Evangelist* (September 2025): 2.

CONCLUSION

Eastside is not the same church as it was one hundred years ago. You can say that for many different reasons, but one thing hasn't changed: the faith which they profess. The grace of God has sustained them in all their work. It has brought them through the highs and lows that took place over the last one hundred years. Yet, the members, pastors, and teachers all can say that they have grown in that time period. Even though the stats might say one thing, the finances another, and the property another. This church has indeed grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As Eastside Lutheran Church and School celebrates its one hundredth anniversary. We can't help but look back on the amazing things God has done for this once small mission congregation. God has blessed this congregation with incredible growth in many different facets. God grew the congregation numerically, from a meager fifteen members to well over six hundred members. He blessed them with financial growth, from barely scraping by, paying off the loan from the Mission Board, to building a new church building at a cost of more than \$500,000. God has blessed them with a school that helped the church grow immensely. All the while keeping the focus on Christ and his life. And most of all, God has blessed the members of Eastside with spiritual growth, growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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