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## Port Hope's St. John Lutheran School closes after 133 years

By John Bonke

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Port Hope's St. John Lutheran School has closed its doors due to low enrollment. Photo by John Bonke

**PORT HOPE** — Port Hope's St. John Lutheran School is closing due to declining enrollment after 133 years of offering a Christian education, most recently to K-8.

"Throughout the years, thousands of young people have entered our doors and left with a firm foundation rooted in our Lord Jesus Christ," the school released in a statement.

The first school was erected in 1883 by German Lutherans, who began settling in the area in the 1860s. During these years, attendance often exceeded 100 students. A new building was constructed in 1952 and was added on to in 1981.

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The school has had 44 teachers since being founded. Ernest Mossner taught for 40 years, Louis Fink for 27, Dan Buchinger for 18 and Harold Wolf for 14. Andrea Landenburg has served as preschool teacher for the past 17 years. Paula Cepelcha has dedicated herself to St. John ministry as principal and teacher for 12 years. Former students, Suellen Emerick and Clara Gust, returned to teach for 19 and 17 years, respectively, the school said.

Recently, Port Hope St. John employed a preschool teacher, a grade school teacher and two aides, as well as, a school secretary. In the 2015-2016 school year, there were four students in preschool and six students in grades K-8, but only two indicated that they would be returning for the 2016-17 school year.

The school is located within the North Huron School District, which serves the Port Austin and Kinde area.

Students may also choose to attend other schools, with those closest being Harbor Beach Community Schools or Zion Lutheran School, also located in Harbor Beach.

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