

April 1977

A question has been raised regarding the necessity of having a congregation at Holden Village. What purpose and function does Fullness of God congregation at Holden Village fulfill which could not be accomplished through some other means (e.g., becoming a part of Chelan Lutheran church)? The preamble to the congregation's constitution, adopted June 24, 1972, states these purposes and functions.

CONSTITUTION  
FULLNESS OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH  
HOLDEN VILLAGE, WASHINGTON

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PREAMBLE

We as Holden Village residents recognize our unity in Christ and our common practice in the Christian faith.

We desire to express our fellowship in worship and work.

We know our spiritual needs.

We are mindful of our Christian privileges and duties.

We wish to observe orderly cooperation.

We want the sense and meaning of belonging to a national church body.

We need a structural outlet for missions and stewardship beyond Holden Village.

For the enrichment of our spiritual lives and for the self-discipline involved, we deliberately choose to stress responsible total stewardship, including tithing.

We choose to be involved in the program and concerns of that national church body which at this time represents the largest number of us, namely The American Lutheran Church.

We recognize and emphasize that Holden Village and Fullness of God Lutheran Church are not identical, that neither derives from the other, that Holden Village is a retreat center and Fullness of God Lutheran Church is a congregation.

We recognize, however, that the existence of a congregation in Holden Village does allow for the Word and ministry of Holden Village to be distinctly related to a local Lutheran congregation.

We hold to the principle that a congregation belonging to The American Lutheran Church also represents The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church in America, with which bodies The American Lutheran Church has pulpit and altar fellowship.

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Following are excerpts from a spontaneous discussion during a congregational meeting Monday afternoon, April 11, 1977, called to respond to questions regarding the necessity of having a resident parish at Holden Village:



It seems to me that the need or desirability of a parish here is really the question of the need or desirability of a parish anywhere. If there is any place where there is a need for a focal point of identity as a worshipping community, this is the place. The transiency of the population and the current questions being raised about Holden's size with its larger scale operation create the need for that sense of identity and purpose for its longer term residents.

People on the staff have been known to say, "Well, we can really get into the Gospel and be a Christian at Holden Village, but Holden Village does not match that parish back home." The very fact of a regular, ordinary, plain old ALC parish tucked away in this Gospel-centered retreat center directs those same people to go out and say, "Yes, commitment to a congregation through the organized institution is something which I can do, in the name of Jesus, with all my weaknesses," going out to be a bodyguard for the Gospel for their parish. This is an important witness that the congregation has in this place for the people who get turned on to the Gospel here.

It seems true from my perceptions of our living here this year that the parish here does serve a kind of cohesive function in terms of the community, which is a fairly tricky thing to do in a community this loose-ended. Those who come here, when they are here on a longer term basis, need a community of faith other than just watching the busses go: it's hard to have a ministry to a parade.

Waiters also have to eat.

I thought before I came, "Why do they need a congregation and a pastor? After all, there are so many pastors up there!" But after living here I see that just having a lot of pastors around isn't helpful. That's as if I were to leave Phillip in the middle of the street and say, "Well, I don't need to worry about him because there are a lots of parents around."

There are plenty of pastors at church headquarters. Why do they need to belong to a parish? It's a requirement of their being at headquarters that they belong to an ALC parish.

Philippians, chapter 2: If there is any incentive to love, any participation, any zeal, any of it, if you've got any of that present, get yourselves together, have this mind among yourselves and hang in there! I kept thinking of that in terms of the need to have a parish in this community.

If we were trying to think of alternatives to a congregation here, one of the main things I would have a problem with is how drastically people, even those who love this place and have been part of it in various ways, don't even know what we're talking about unless they have lived here for awhile. It would be very hard for us to be pastored to by someone who does not live here; it would be impossible. We couldn't possibly be pastored to by someone, say, in Chelan. Geographically it's way out of their range... We have a school here. Even the school district recognizes our need for a school. "A remote and necessary school." We are a remote and necessary congregation!

The whole idea of linking us, keeping us from being an isolated, self-interested group is something that is related to what several people have said. The school and the congregation give us a continuing relationship back to where we are all going. For me it's been a real hope and joy to know that I am being shaped and am part of the shaping of a congregation. At least I have not had a gap during my years of serving the Lord at Holden Village by not being able to be a member of a congregation. A parish is a much more significant identification with the whole life of the church



than simply working at a retreat center. I would hate to have people go out from here somehow with the idea, "Holden doesn't need a church." More than any other place we have been or people we have been associated with, this place needs a pastor and a congregation. So many of us are involved in ministering to people here. When we are drying up or getting sour, without a pastor to recognize some of those signs in us or for us, or just praying for us, I feel we would be in a very much more crippled position.

We keep Holden from becoming an idolatry. Only the congregation could speak to that. Holden is not for itself. There was pressure on Carroll to be a cult leader, a saint. People say, "Holden Village is extra-ordinary." But a parish is an ordinary experience for ordinary sinners, with an extra-ordinary Savior present.

If you don't have some kind of a self-conscious community of faith, you can run the risk of theology emanating from an individual, and that's where you can get into hero worship.

Does theology happen apart from a congregation? There are specific case histories where retreat centers, in the absence of a local congregation, have completely lost their identify with the church, even to the point of becoming non-Christian. I don't think that at a retreat center it's possible to be a theological center apart from the presence of a congregation. We are confessional, so we aren't professional. Theology exists for those within the congregation; the witness is to the world.

The congregation does whave an impact on Holden Village, but I think that the focal point of the congregation is not in determining the nature of this impact, nor its monitoring, but rather a focus on our ministry to the needs of individuals.

If people are strangled here spiritually, suffocating, nothing is going to happen here. There will be feuding, fighting each other in the mountains....

This is a confessional community, not a professional community. The greatest temptation for professionalism is for those people who are here over a longer period of time. In the congregation I can know that I am a failure as a member of the community, and I can confess it openly. But outside the congregation I have the temptation to convince myself and other people that I'm not a failure in this community, and that what we're all doing is right, because, to stay here, I've got to be right. I've got to play games. In the congregation I can recognize something that's very important for me to recognize: the sense of being a failure. Without the congregation it's harder for people to admit that, and, without being able to admit failure, it's harder to get together.

There would be nothing more deadly than to have to live up to our images and the images people expect us to live up to because we are living here. As members of a congregation we are identified with Christ, and we have our hair down. It's very hard for people who live in this closely, no matter how many services we have together, to recognize that, individually, we are sinners.

I can't imagine people, given even a small group of residents here in the fall/winter/spring, living at peace with each other without requiring a responsible pastor to be sensitive to problems before they arise and become a crisis.

There are some concerns that no one else had better talk to me about, but I have a pastor who can do that. I know that my pastor has that authority in my private life. We have some places like that in our community where no one else can freely speak directly.

For me the strongest point of this congregation is that it does break down a cult, and it also breaks down my autonomy. The congregation is the place where Christ is sown; we are fed with His word, His body and blood, and placed in our right relationship with our neighbor, linked with everyone. Our prayers and life rest on the corporate prayer of the congregation.

## PART II - MINISTRY OF THE PASTOR AND THE CONGREGATION

We realize that responsibility for ministry to this community is one for the congregation as a whole, but in order to provide leadership and guidance for all of us in this ministry and to meet our needs as a congregation, we need a pastor. We believe that, in order for the pastor to be effective in this ministry, he/she should not be burdened with Village administrative duties.

Following is a list of areas in which we want our pastor to assume a leadership role:

2. We need a pastor to minister to our individual cares, to whom we can come in confession and who is also confessional.
- ~~2~~ Having authority, our pastor would come to us in concern to address problems that he/she sees developing in our personal lives.
3. Ministry to others is a large and demanding part of our lives in the village. We need a pastor to strengthen and support us in prayer, affirmation and instruction so that we can continue our ministry to others. "Waiters also need to eat."
4. Because of the transiency of our population, we need a pastor to provide continuity of ministry.
5. Because of the nature of this community, and the intensity of experience common here, we need a pastor who will reach out to people, deliberately making him/herself available and initiating conversations. This outreach and attention to community, will come most naturally when the pastor is involved in the everyday non-administrative activities of the Village: being on a dish team and volunteering occasionally to work as a maverick, in the dining hall, housekeeping or unloading luggage, ect. In other words, we need a pastor who will work alongside us and take part in our everyday conversations and activities.
6. We wish our pastor to continually voice our concern that the Gospel be proclaimed in matins and vespers, to encourage involvement in intercession and Bible Studies, to be responsible for the administration of the eucharist weekly, and to organize and facilitate the proclamation of the Gospel in Sunday services.
7. We need a pastor to work with parents in providing Christian education for elementary school-aged children, to ensure that confirmation and Holy Communion instruction for children and adults is offered, and to encourage the study of Greek and Hebrew, when at all possible, for the enrichment of Bible Study for the whole community.
8. We want our pastor to take a leadership role, particularly by example, in the taking and using of leisure time for rest and renewal both inside and outside the Village.