

TOP STORY

Closing a chapter at Highland

By COLE SHORT

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Lois Smith of Hillsboro has been a member of Highland Lutheran Church near Cummings for more than 80 years. The rural church will close following a service Sunday, Oct. 2.

Cory Erickson

Rural CUMMINGS – Lois Smith has a treasure trove of memories from Highland Lutheran Church. The 89-year-old Hillsboro woman started attending Sunday services at the quiet country church 3 miles northeast of Cummings 85 years ago after her family moved to the area.

Growing up, Smith went to parochial classes in the summer at Highland, married her late husband, Norris, inside the historic church and had her three kids, Kristi, Mark and Craig, baptized there.

So count Smith among Highland's longtime parishioners who will be saddened to see the once-bustling rural church permanently shut its doors after a special Holy Closure service Sunday, Oct. 2.

"When it came time to vote on closing the church, everyone voted in favor," Smith said Monday while poring over a folder filled with old newspaper clippings about the country church.

"It's sad to see it close, but it was the only decision to make. We all knew it was time."

In the beginning

Highland Lutheran Church was built in 1895, although the congregation traces its roots to 1879 – two years before the nearby unincorporated community of Cummings was founded.

A group of settlers met inside Ole Lilleberg's home in Ervin Township on Dec. 8, 1879 and established the heavily Scandinavian-sounding "Høilands Norsk Evangeliske Lutherske Christelig Menighed."

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