

‘WE are the end-product of our history. ☒

FLASHBACKS

Revealing glimpses of our creative past

Official newsletter of the
UNITED METHODIST, HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

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MILWAUKEE BEGINNINGS

MOVING WITH THE CITY:
First Methodist-Milwaukee
by Dennis Pajot

(Note: All streets in this article will be called by their modern name except Spring Street and Grand Avenue. which both refer to West Wisconsin Avenue.)

At the northwest corner of Tenth and Wisconsin one has a view of the imposing Court House, overshadowing the bustling freeway which dominates that part of the city. Once the grandest of all Methodist churches in Milwaukee stood here. But not only was the building itself huge and majestic, the history of the congregation is full of interest and highlights of the City of Milwaukee. Tearing it down as one of the saddest stories of “Architectural murder” that occurred in Milwaukee in the 1960s and 1970s. The story starts 170 years ago. In June 1835, the first Methodist sermon in Milwaukee was preached by the Rev. Mark Robinson, in the log cabin of Dr. Enoch Chase. This was at the mouth of the Milwaukee River, which at that time was somewhat south of its present location, in what we now call Jones Island.

The Methodist congregation consisted of about fifty members in 1837, when land for a church building was acquired. This was just north of Broadway and Wells (the Plaza East Parking structure now stands here.) However in 1837, a severe financial depression struck throughout the United states, which almost threatened the village of Milwaukee with extinction.

Services were now held in an abandoned auction room and then at the carpenter shop of Leverett Kellogg. This was on the southeast corner of North Water and East Clybourn Street.

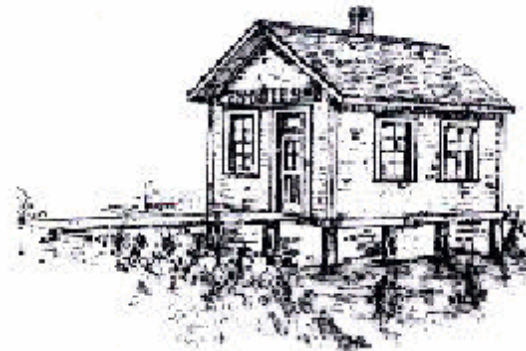


The Enoch Chase cabin (1835)
The first church building (1841)



(The spot is now underneath the 1-794 westbound freeway lanes.) The shop was on a swamp and elevated by poles.

Carpenter Shop of W. A. and I. S. Kellogg



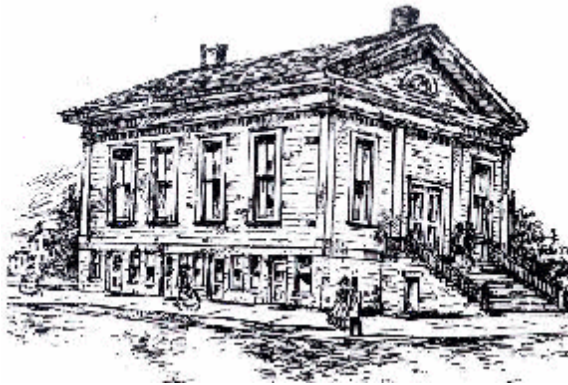
Finally on May 28, 1841, the first Methodist Episcopal Church erected in Milwaukee was dedicated on the lot off Broadway and Wells. There was seating for 200. It was in this church that, according to the Milwaukee historian, John Gregory, that in 1843, Samuel J. McComas opened a high school. Milwaukee not being incorporated as city, it was not uncommon. Schools opened in other churches and other buildings, including one in the

courthouse.

As the congregation grew (now at 177), it was decided to build a new church. Milwaukee was still divided between the east (Juneau town) and west side (Kilbourn town) and a large rivalry existed. The west side parishioners won the right for the new building to be built on their side of the river. On July 3, 1844, a lot was purchased on the northwest corner of North Plankinton and Spring street. (Mo's Irish Pub is now situated here.) Soon there after construction started on a brick edifice, facing North Plankinton. It was dedicated June 21, 1845, having 102 pews and seating 600.

Second Church Edifice, northwest corner of West Water and Spring streets (Grand avenue Dedicated June 21, 1845

This building was expensive: the lot was \$1,447 and



the structure \$10,000. To defray costs, the lower portion of the building was rented out. Four stores, with entrances on Spring Street, occupied the ground floor. A broad flight of stone steps on the Plankinton Street led to the church proper.

The city of Milwaukee was one of the church's first tenants. The city had been chartered on January 31, 1846. Solomon Juneau was inaugurated here as the first mayor. The first Common Council met in the basement. It was also the office of the first city clerk which was located in the lower portion of the building. It was also in this building that Milwaukee's first large choral presentation was given. On July 2, 1851, Franz Joseph Hayden's "The Creation" was performed.

In 1844, Milwaukee had eleven churches: one each Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregational, Unitarian, Universal, Methodist, Baptist and three German Lutheran.

In 1849, a split in the Spring Street Methodist congregation occurred over the use of the church rooms on Sunday afternoon. Some withdrew from the church and organized a Wesleyan Church on the east side of town. Early the next year, the Wesleyans disbanded and most returned to the Spring Street church. However, some joined the new Methodist Society on the south side (Walker's Point) the beginning of Asbury Church, soon to be housed at

6th and Bruce.

About this same time, some of the east side members of the church found it advisable to start a church east of the river. They started on Jackson Street just north of State Street. This congregation in 1858 built a structure on the northwest corner of Kilbourn and Van Buren. In 1904, they constructed the beautiful church we know today, Suimmerfield, at Cass and Juneau.

While in the building at Plankinton and West Spring Street, the Leahy Riot took place, no doubt more excitement than most pastors care for in their churches.

In the local newspapers of April 5, 1851, was a notice that the Reverend Edward Leahy, formerly a monk in France, would "with divine permission speak on Sunday afternoon at the Free Congregational Church on Broadway. At 7:30 pm, he would speak at the Methodist Episcopal Church on Spring Street. A lecture by Leahy, scheduled for Monday night at Gardiner's hail, was to be for men only. It was to be "Upon certain practices and doctrines imputed to the Catholic priests". In other words, secrets of the confessionals. Many reading between the lines believed Leahy was going to make dreadful revelations of what females said inside the confessional. One local paper denounced Leahy and fanned the flames of the city.

The Milwaukee Sentinel and Gazette of April 8, reported "our city was disturbed on Sunday night by an outrage of unusual character and violence". What happened was in the morning, Leahy spoke at the Congregational Church without incident. At the close of the service, he announced that his sermon at the Methodist Church that evening would be on the doctrines of repentance and penance.

At the Methodist Church, a large crowd attended, nearly one third females. Leahy opened his sermon/lecture with the remarks that on his way to the Sabbath School that afternoon, he had been attacked by a number of Irishmen and was nearly killed. At this point someone at the rear door yelled out, "They were right". Shortly after, a large noise was heard and many men, "mostly Irishmen", ran into the church, armed with sticks and clubs, and began striking right and left, and headed for Leahy.

The pastor of the church ordered the assailants back and directed the men in the congregation to stop this. A big stone was hurled at the pastor, just missing him, and crashed against the wall. The audience, of course, began to disburse quickly, with many of the women being lifted through the second story windows onto Spring Street, by the aid of piled-up dry good boxes, wagons and ladders. Inside the church, pews and benches were tom up as defensive

weapons. Several windows were smashed

After a time of fighting, in which several people were rather seriously injured, Dr. W. W. Lake, a doctor and local preacher, drew a revolver and ordered the intruders to withdraw. Soon, the mayor, the sheriff, and other city authorities arrived to attempt to quell the disturbance. Order was restored and Leahy, unharmed, was escorted back to his room at the United States Hotel. A crowd followed, throwing stones at him.

The Sentinel condemned the actions of the mob, and the following day, the citizens' "Law and Order Society" met to discuss the situation. On this day, a card signed by the city's clergy and some of the laity of the Catholic Church was sent. It condemned the outrage and promised to "make good" the damages done to the Spring Street Methodist Church. Later the city contributed \$150 to pay for the damages to the church.

For the Monday night meeting, the Catholic priests of St. Peter's and St. Gall's asked the Irish Catholics to stay away from the area. The mayor directed the fire companies to stand by, ready at their houses, and the military to be in readiness. Leahy's lecture was well attended and there were no problems. Perhaps a steady rain downpour drowned any desire for revolt by the mob. One report a few years later, states: "The clever monk, however, had accomplished his purpose and left Milwaukee with full pockets to create similar scenes elsewhere." Leahy went on to lecture in other Wisconsin cities until in August, 1852, he was arrested for murder. In April 1853, he was convicted and sentenced to life in prison at Waupun. However, in 1860, he was pardoned and announced more lectures. I could find no reports of these, but on May 10, 1873, the Sentinel reported he had returned to the Catholic Church.

On the morning of January 14, 1854, a fire started in a building where the chemicals and drugs were stored near the Spring Street Church. The church and several other structures were destroyed. As a temporary place of worship, the church rented Young's Hall at the northeast corner of Broadway and Wisconsin, then at the Summerfield Church, and thereafter in a residence on Third Street.

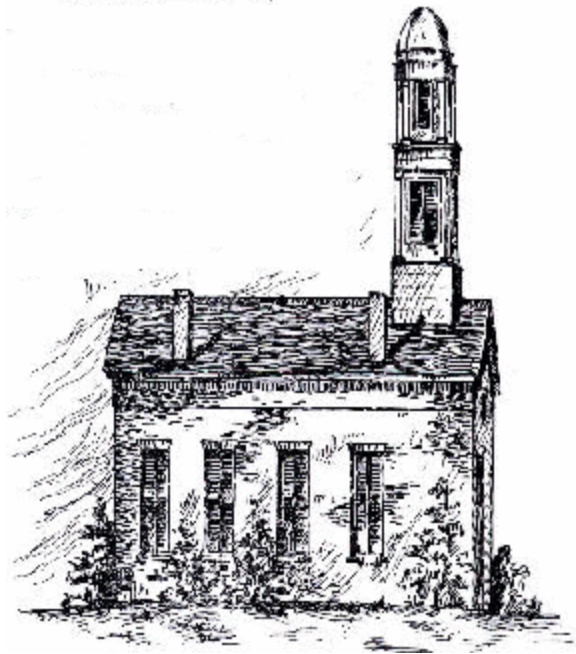
The Spring Street Church then moved into the Free Congregational Church on the northeast corner of Second and Spring Street, where Howard Johnson now stands. After some debate of joining forces with the Summerfield Church on North Jackson, the Free Congregational Church was purchased for \$7,200 in late 1854. This building, which faced Spring Street, was made of brick, with a high wooden steeple, painted white. It had eighty-four pews on the ground floor and four in the gallery. The congregation was now called Spring Street Methodist Episcopal Church.

Third Church Edifice

Spring Street Methodist Episcopal Church, northeast corner Spring and Second streets

On July 4, 1861, a large fire started by careless young celebrants with firecrackers in the hay at a nearby livery stable. High winds quickly spread the fire. The Methodist Church, as well as the American House and other buildings, burned to the ground. The congregation took up quarters over John Ogden's carriage repository on Spring Street, half a block east of the fire scene.

Ogden's Carriage Repository



Plans were started to build a new church on the same lot of only 65 X 100 feet, where the church had burned. It was decided to build a church of 80 feet in length, again with the lower portion to be rented out. Edward Townsend Mix was given the job of designing the building. The famous Mr. Mix was the architect of several buildings that still stand tall in Milwaukee: the Mitchell Building, the Grain exchange on east Michigan Ave. the Milwaukee Club, the Alexander Mitchell Mansion (Now the



Wisconsin Club on 9th and Wisconsin.) In addition, he designed the beautiful churches just north of downtown: All Saint's Cathedral, Immanuel Presbyterian and St. Paul's Episcopal.

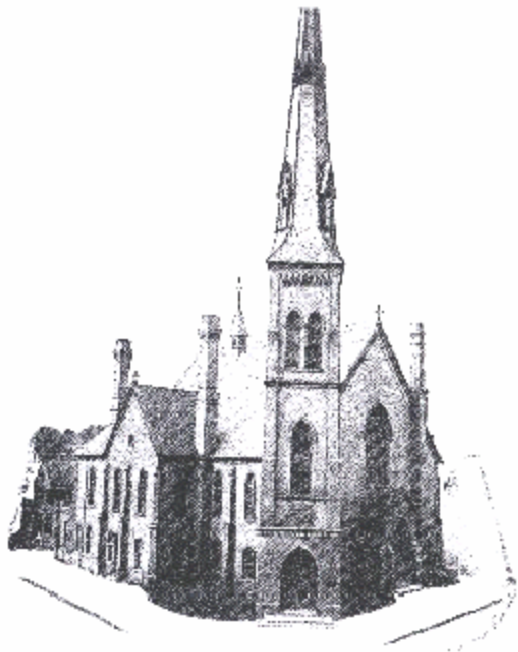
The new Methodist Church was completed and dedicated on January 24, 1864 at the cost of \$9,510.04 (Including building, fixtures, and paving of Second street.) Two stores were located on the lower lever. It was decided that the income from these stores should be set aside to purchase a library for the church and the planting of Sunday Schools in the city.

By 1867, church membership stood at 274 and 400 were enrolled in Sunday School. At lot at the southwest corner of Fifth and Spring (where the Hilton Hotel now stands) was purchased for \$8,000. The church at Second and Spring sold for \$22,000. In October 1871, the new church was finished. The cost, including the parsonage, was reported at \$60,000.

Fifth Church Edifice , Spring Street Methodist Episcopal Church, corner Spring and Fifth streets (Now West Wisconsin and North Fifth Street) Dedicated 1871

On September 24, 1877, the name of the church was changed to Grand Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church to conform to the change of the Street name from Spring Street to Grand Avenue. The building was enlarged in the 1890's, forcing the congregation to meet at what was formerly known as the Sixth Street Congregational Church, near the southwest corner of Sixth and Grand. It is where the Holiday Inn now stands, formerly the Howard Johnson.

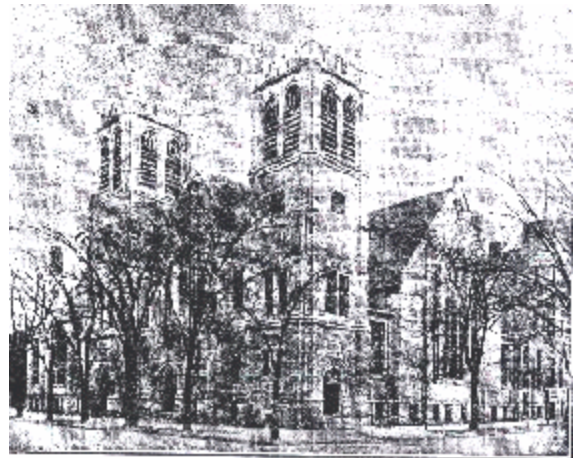
By 1906, there was a prevailing sentiment among the membership of the congregation, that to avoid the encroachments of the business district, the church



should sell the property on Fifth and Grand and move further west. In August, the properties north on Grand Avenue, between Tenth and Eleventh, were purchased for a total of \$268,000. The building of the new church went on with great energy. The new Building at Tenth and Grand was dedicated on April 12, 1908.

Recent M. E. Church, Grand Ave. and tenth St., Dedicated April 12, 1908 by Bishop McDowell

In the 1920's, the names of the street this congregation has been on for so long, again changed, from Grand Avenue to Wisconsin Avenue. On April 5, 1927, the church name was again changed to First Methodist Episcopal Church. The congregation endured two more name changes, this time, administrative. In May 1939, the Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal-South and the Methodist Protestant Churches merged to create the Methodist Church. Then in April 1968, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged to form the United Methodist Church.



In the late 1950's and early 1960's, the Milwaukee Freeway Commission Planning Committee routed the expanded freeway over the Menomonee Valley and northward. At first, the freeway was to run immediately west of the church. The congregation was going to "live with" the freeway. They were committed to serve the downtown area. However, by late, 1963, changes in design to the freeway called for the church to be demolished.

A search for a new location was on; The first site the congregation wanted was on the west side of the Milwaukee River, bounded State and Kilbourn, Plankinton and State Street, where the Milwaukee County Historical Society and open river space is now. However, the County Park Commission rejected the congregation's request, as it wanted to keep this land for a park. Once rejected, the pastor to the church, Ensworth Reisner, stated in reality the site would have cost too much. Beautiful as it would have been, it would be relatively devoid to people. He states, "Thus we are grateful for the opposition of those who with a park, they saved us from a mistake."

In March, 1965, First Methodist obtained an option to purchase the site of the old North Shore Depot between Fifth and Sixth, Michigan and Clybourn. The Freeway Commission was offering a little under a million. In June 1965, the commission awarded \$1,120,000. In August the property at Fifth and

Michigan was purchased for \$1,075,000.

As only about a third of the new lot would be needed for the church building, it was decided the rest would be developed with a forty story high rise apartment building, with shops and a motel on the lower level. There would also be five levels of underground parking holding 771 cars. Between the church and the apartment building would be a two story shopping center. Rev. Reisner said it could be "a little Rockefeller Center." The new church itself was to be designed of precast concrete and stained faceted glass and canopied arches, fifty feet tall. It would face Sixth Street. The final estimate to build the church itself was \$1.5 million.

In the meantime, the congregation of 868 members decided it would be temporarily housed in the old Blatz Brewery auditorium at Broadway and Highland (now the site of the Todd Wehr Conference Center of Milwaukee School of Engineering.) The irony of the situation was the Methodist Church's long tradition of opposition to the use of alcoholic beverages. But the Rev. Reisner thanked the president of Pabst Brewery for letting the church use the auditorium and adjoining rooms seven days a week free of charge. The auditorium was fondly called "St. Blatz" by the congregation for three years. The last service was held at Tenth and Wisconsin on January 9, 1966. Moving trucks came the next day. The following Sunday, three hundred attended service at the Blatz auditorium site. Demolition of the church at Tenth and Wisconsin took place in March, 1966.

By October 1966, the new church and surrounding development was not looking good. A prime tenant for the commercial space could not be found. Eventually, the plan was abandoned. In March, 1969, it was decided that First Methodist and Wesley Methodist at North 25th and West Wisconsin Avenue would merge. They would serve the community on 25th and Wisconsin. Plans for the downtown site were abandoned. On June 9, 1969, First and Wesley Methodist merged to form Central United Methodist Church. In 1981, the old building at 25th and Wisconsin was taken down and the new "environmental friendly building" was built on the site. It was dedicated on March 28, 1982.

COMMISSION REPORT

The Commission on Archives and History in the Wisconsin Conference has recently made some changes

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The United Methodist Historical Society is now a committee of the Commission on Archives and History. It is called the Committee on Local Church History. Membership dues are no longer required.

Commission on Archives and History

The Commission meets twice a year. Responsibilities include oversight of the Museum, of Flashbacks and of the Archives material in Sun Prairie. The current chair of the Commission is Sandy Kintner.

Flashbacks

This is the newsletter of Archives and History. It is published three times a year. A copy is sent to each local church historian. Subscriptions are invited at \$10.00 a year for a single person, \$15.00 for a family and \$100.00 for a lifetime subscription. Subscription

fees should be sent to Sandy Kintner, 2337 Hwy T. Sun Prairie, WI 53590

The editor of *Flashbacks* is Lois Olsen. Material regarding the local church or the conference history is always welcome.

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NEIGHBORS IN CHRIST

In the middle of the state, between Waupaca and Wisconsin Rapids, and south of Stevens Point, two of our oldest United Methodist Churches, Almond and Plainfield, have grown and flowered. They each have a distinct history. Both celebrated 150 years of witness in 2005.

ALMOND

The first Methodist Church was started by the Rev. Sheldon Doolittle about 1855. Early services were held in homes and later in schools. In 1858, Daniel Frost gave a log cabin worth \$100 to the new congregation. In 1859, the Rev. R. C. Hunt was appointed to the Almond Methodist Church. In 1859, they rented their log cabin building to the newly formed school district #2 for \$75.00 for the school year.

In 1862, the log cabin building burned down. The school district built a new school and allowed the Methodist congregation to use it for worship services.

A German Methodist evangelist came through the Almond area during the closing years of the Civil War and held evangelistic services. Between 1865 and 1871, under the leadership of the Rev. Daniel Schaffer, a German Methodist Church was organized and a church building was erected on the East German Cemetery grounds. A parsonage was built in 1872, across the road to the east.

In December of 1876, the Almond School was destroyed by fire. By the summer of 1877, the English Methodists again used the new school for its worship services. The English Methodist Sunday School was organized in 1878. A parsonage was built in 1879. By 1880, some of the English Methodists wanted to build a church, On August 10, 1890, the new English Methodist Church was dedicated.

In 1895, a second German Methodist Church was

built three miles south of the village to accommodate the growing German population. A morning service was held at the east church and an afternoon service was held at the north church by Rev. Dilling.

In the summer of 1903, the two German Methodist churches were moved into the village on rollers. It was the only church in the area with two steeples and bells.

About 1912, some of the evening services were held in English. By 1915, young people could be confirmed in English. In 1922, Rev. Feldt was appointed to pastor both the English and German congregations. All services were then in English.

In 1938, these congregations voted to merge. After trying to hold services on alternating Sundays in both churches, it was decided to use the German church because it was larger. The final union of the two was made in 1945. By then, Almond and Plainfield each had their own pastor.

Many of the Grant Methodist Church members joined the Blame church when it closed. In 1961, the Blame Methodist Church closed. Many of their members joined the Almond Methodist Church. This completed union of four former Methodist Churches which made up the Almond United Methodist Church.

On 1978, it was decided to build a new building. It was started just behind the existing building. In February of 1980, the new church, costing \$180,000 held its first services in the new building.

We celebrate over 140 years of strengthening the ties that bind us together as a congregation of the church of Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to those who have been a part of our fellowship and have led us to where we are today. We pray that we may continue to be a growing, faithful church in the family of God, sharing the good news of Christ in our day.

PLAINFIELD

On 1855, Charles Hamilton went to Campbell's Corners to hear a Methodist Circuit Rider named Rev. Bassinger. Hamilton invited Bassinger to add Plainfield to his circuit. Services were held from 1855 to 1878 in the little white school house next to where Thelma Bound used to live on West North street.

In 1878, a church was built on the southwest corner across from Barkers garage. A parsonage was purchased in 1887. This house is now the Plainfield House.

In 1898, a Methodist Church was built in Oasis at County Roads A&J, with the help of the Plainfield

Congregation.

On June 11, 1905, the cornerstone was laid for our present church at Plainfield. It was dedicated on November 12, 1905. It cost \$10,000. The mortgage was totally paid by the end of March, 1912. In 1913, they built horse sheds on the church grounds.

In 1933, the Oasis Church was sold and the Hancock Church also withdrew from the Plainfield charge.

From 1940 to 1946, the church shared a pastor with Almond.

In 1947, the church basement was remodeled and the dining room was able to seat 200. In 1948, an outside entrance to the basement was built. In 1953, a rest room was installed.

In 1955, the year of our Centennial, a new parsonage was built. The Ground Breaking and Dedication of the site of the new educational wing of the church was on May 8, 1977. The pastor's study and secretary's office, with a connecting link were included. The Education Unit cost \$192,333.45. The consecration service was held on June 11, 1978. The mortgage burning celebration was held November 13, 1983.

The summer migrant program began using our church in the mid 1980s. In the winter of 1989-1990, a complete renovation of the sanctuary took place. The Dedication and first service held in the new sanctuary was April, 1, 1990. Head Start has used our church from the fall of 1991 to the present.

After over 140 years of strengthening the ties that bind us together as a congregation for the Church of Jesus Christ, we pray that God will lead us to meet the challenges of the future.

The sesquicentennial celebration was held September 11, 2005. The first services were held at Almond at 9:00 am and at Plainfield at 10:30 am. This was followed by a picnic at the Plainfield Veteran's Park.

Material provided by Almond and Plainfield United Methodist Churches.

BETHEL: HOUSE OF GOD

A Small Country church sits all alone
on a sunny ridge not far from home.
A wooden structure dressed in white,
stained glass windows reflecting sunlight.
The lighted cross sends out a warm glow
guiding travelers on paths below.
The founding date proclaims to all,
since 1880 Bethel Church stands tall.

The gathering place for family and friends,

fellowship that never ends.
Our Christian love uniting us all;
together we work to answer God's call.
One hundred years of serving the Lord,
Bethel Church stands proud in just reward
This proud old landmark we've come to know
and from its strength we continue to grow.

Cindy Reynolds-Doyle

A few English families located on farms some two and three miles apart prior to 1880 desired a place where they might meet and worship on the Sabbath Day. They were a staunch type of church going people and thought of the school house about a mile and half northwest of the present church as a place of Worship. This was the humble and earnest beginning of Bethel. The neighbors came through the timber carrying their Bibles with them, Chapters were read and discussed and they found that their meeting was in need of testaments and song books. They appointed Mr. Bond to take charge of sending for them

It was found due to the large attendance and the inconvenient location, that some changes should be made. So the decision was reached to build a church on the prairie at its present site. An acre of land was donated by the Uriah James family. The work was finished about May 20, 1880. Later a vestry was added to the building.

On January 3, 1911 Bethel became a Methodist Episcopal Church instead of a Primitive Methodist Church. The people decided to employ a regular preacher, the first one from Canada was the Rev. John Brereton.

In 1930 Wm Buckingham donated his labor and a kitchen was built on the vestry. Later a hardwood floor was laid in the church and velvet drapes were purchased for the sanctuary. An entry was added to the church and the wood stove was replaced with an oil burner.

In the summer of 1958, the men of the church started to dig a basement under the vestry in order to install a furnace. Upon hitting solid rock, they had to use dynamite. The inexperienced crew blew a few holes in the vestry floor which necessitated additional repairs. New altar rail and altar table were placed in the church at this time, In 1968, a lowered ceiling and new lights were installed in the sanctuary, gold drapes hung at the front, the aisle and channel were carpeted in red and a new organ and piano were purchased.

Bethel United Methodist Church joined Linden, Mineral Point, Rewey, Waldwick and Willow Springs United Methodist Churches in June of 1970 to form the Parish of the Hills. A senior pastor and associate pastor shared the duties of serving the six churches. The main church office, located in Mineral

Point, has been under the direction of Pat Powell, our knowledgeable secretary and guide these past 25 years. Each church maintained its own identity, as well as, uniting in Parish activities. Three representatives from each church serve on a Parish Council which continues to be the governing body of the Parish of the Hills.

Willow Springs, Rewey and Waldwick have since left the Parish. Waldwick and Bethel continue to worship together during January and February at Bethel. Bethel and Waldwick have also shared a parsonage in Waldwick for many years, The decision was made in 1994, to sell the parsonage, as it was no longer needed by the two churches. Bethel's share of the proceeds will go for church restoration and upkeep of our 115 year old building.

The Bethel congregation decided the time was right to move ahead and in 1970, a well was drilled on the church grounds. That even put many a milk can to rest and the job of hauling water was over, with no regrets from anyone. In 1972, a larger entry was built on the building to accommodate the socializing following services. This addition provided a small meeting room which could be heated rather than heating the entire church for small group needs. This area is also used as a Sunday school classroom. A dedication service was held in 1975 to give thanks for this new addition, also the lighted cross on the roof of the church and other memorial gifts.

In 1979, we started preparations and redecorating for our Centennial which was held June 22, 1980. We welcomed the many former pastors and friends who returned to celebrate this joyous occasion. The UMW created large celebration banners which are enjoyed by our congregation to this day. We replaced our old hymnals with the newest United Methodist hymnals in 1989. In 1991 new front doors were installed adding to the beauty of our country church.

Our entire Bethel congregation united in prayer for our fellow member, Manan Whitford, as she underwent heart transplant surgery and was given another chance at life in 1992. We all wish this procedure had been available for another member of our congregation. Keith Whitford, who passed away during heart surgery in 1970. Like a caring family, the Bethel church congregation shows love and concern as we support one another through difficult times.

In 1993, we were saddened to discover the stained glass windows over the entry doors had been broken. Our picnic table also disappeared this same year. Hopefully, that was our first and last case of vandalism at Bethel Church.

One of our fond memories was our annual Chicken Barbecue held each year in July. The Bethel men, women and children put a great deal of time and

effort into serving delicious dinners to 500 people. Due to a decline in church membership able to help, this event was discontinued in 1973. Our church sponsored a student at Garrett Evangelical Seminary each year. Over the years, we've had many student pastors from Garrett serve at Bethel.

Lay Sundays have always involved Various church members planning and presenting the services. Walter McNeill was our dedicated lay leader for many years. Art James has taken on the role of lay leader and for many years has entertained us as Master of Ceremonies at various church functions.

Our Sunday School program has been a very active part of our church. The number of children attending Sunday School has varied from many to just a few. The annual Sunday School picnic held on the church lawn or a family farm, has been an ongoing tradition for many years. The older youth group has been active in the past years n the most recent program being the Tri-Y.

At the recent time our Sunday School program is directed by co-superintendents. A Sunshine Club within the Sunday School began in 1992. Its purpose being to serve others with special needs within our church family and community. Throughout the year, our children make greeting cards, write letters and create colorful art work to send to those who need to be remembered in a special way. Friendly visits are made during the Christmas season and in the spring. During the month of May, the children, with the help from the adults, prepare Sunshine Baskets filled with variety of goodies. Delivering the Sunshine Baskets is a joyous day as the entire group of children along with several parents hand deliver the baskets, singing happy songs and wearing big smiles on their faces. The true reward comes when the children see the smiles they bring to others, sometimes even a tear, as they experience the wonderful feeling of serving others with their gifts of good cheer.

In 1994, the Sunday School planned a special baptismal service. Many youth and several adults received the Sacrament of Baptism. It was a very meaningful ceremony, as all present renewed their vows. Following the service, a delicious pancake breakfast was served by the Sunday school children and parents.

The Sunday school has taken an active part in Laity Sunday by planning and presenting much of the service in recent years. They also participate in the Hanging of the Greens as young and old together dress the church for Christmas. The traditional Christmas program is a highlight as the children dress in costumes to portray the Nativity. The years we have a church family with a new baby, we are blessed to have a live baby Jesus with parents taking the role of Mary and Joseph. The Christmas pageant is a joyful event filled with music, drama and fellowship.

Music has always played very important role at Bethel. Carolyn McNeill was our dedicated music director, choir leader, and church pianist and organist for many years. Under Carolyn's direction, our youth choir was active in presenting musical programs in the area churches, nursing homes, as well as, providing special music for our Sunday morning church services.

The Bethel United Methodist Women is small in numbers, but a very active, supportive group within our church. Each fall an annual harvest supper and auction is held which is the main money making event each year. The UMW makes quarterly payment to the church budget. A very special lady, Blanche James, who is some 90 years young, donates her beautiful hand-made tatted doilies to the auction each fall. The UMW members have made quilts several times which are also favorites.

In 1976. the UMW staged a play titled, "The Bird in Nellie's Hat" The play produced so much fun, the ladies took the show on the road to local nursing homes and the Schmitt Woodland Hills Home in Richland Center, Mother's Day Banquet and Family Nights with potluck suppers have been sponsored by the UMW over the years.

The first Hanging of the Greens fellowship night at Bethel took place in 1978, organized by the UMW. Each year, a family offers to find a large Christmas tree for the church and new ornaments are added to our collection by the Sunday School Children.

In recent years. the Bethel congregation has enjoyed informal Saturday night church services once a month during the summer. This outdoor service around the campfire takes place on the church lawn. Everyone brings a lawn chair, blanket and potluck dish to share.

Currently, the congregation is undertaking a church renovation including a new roof, exposure of decorative tile ceiling, repairing interior walls and adding new wall paper.

The 125th Anniversary celebration was held on October 9, 2005.

Material supplied by Joyce Fitzsimmons, Historian, and Marian Whitford and Cindy Reynolds-Doyle

PAUL WEBSTER

From the editor: I notice that I haven't written about a missionary for several years. It is time to get caught up on Paul Webster. Originally, an account of Paul and his wife Roxanne was found in *Flashbacks* in January 1999. Since then, Paul and Roxanne spent time in Wisconsin. Paul was the pastor at Ladysmith and Tony

Roxanne left us in December of 2004. Now Paul has returned to Zambia. His most recent news can be found on the Wisconsin Conference home page. The e-mail address is:

www.wisconsinumc.org/missions/WebsterUpdateNov5.htm

Paul's e-mail address in Zambia is pwebster@museas.org.

His mail address is P.O. Box 20219, Kitwe, Zambia (However, if the postal service in Zambia is as bad as that in Liberia and Sierra Leone, mail may never reach him.!))

Paul has been back in Zambia about two months. And there is much to do. I will quote from his letters:

I have learned that our ten year old generator has "given up the ghost." We have need of a generator to run our welder, side grinder, electric drills, skill saws, and other equipment that draws more current than can be handled in our small solar system. I have priced a generator/welder here in Kitwe. It will cost us about \$28,000. It has a diesel engine and also has capability as a small portable welder. It is essential that we buy one immediately as we have a lot of repair work to do on our oxen equipment as we start the planting season....

We are in the process of planting corn, planting gardens, expanding our napter costa rice and Moringa olifera plantings, building a missionary house, getting our water system back working, and building fences for our cattle and goats, etc....

I preached the past two Sundays and last week spoke on the rebuilding of Jerusalem.. Much like Nehemiah, we are faced with years of neglect of the infrastructure. God has called us to coordinate our efforts such that Mujila Falls, will like Jerusalem, become a beacon on a hill and an example of agriculture for the entire region....

December 2. I have been to the site and have found that things have run down a lot since I was last there five years ago. We have some diseases in the cattle to solve and we have no chickens at the current time. Tshala (his coworker) is planting corn and we will soon be planting sunflowers and soybeans. I put in a quick garden and our rabbits and goats are doing well. The moringa looks promising and I have just received plans for planting a forage crop for the cattle.

A quick Anecdote: we are having trouble producing enough seed from the moringa plantation because our workers are cropping it heavily for their family use. Tshala reports that several of the children that looked malnourished have since been gaining weight and look much better.

Another Anecdote: Tshala cleared land near the road

for a large corn field. He sponsored a field day for the neighbors where he showed them how productive the corn would be if properly managed. Since then many others have cleared land along the road and are planting large fields of maize for the first time. I have been leading Bible study at the site and preached impromptu on Sunday. I will be asking the Bishop to give me authority to do the sacraments so that we can offer better Christian support and training on our sites.

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Lois C. Olsen, Editor

St. John's Tower

1840 N. Prospect Ave.

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Phone: **414/347-1745**

lcolsen~execpc.com

Material of historical interest, church anniversaries, recollections, activities of local historical committees and historians, should be sent to her at the above address.

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Flashbacks Editor: Lois Olsen

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