



# FLASHBACKS

*Promoting the Ministry of Memory*



The Official Newsletter of

## *The Commission on Archives and History, Wisconsin Conference, The United Methodist Church*

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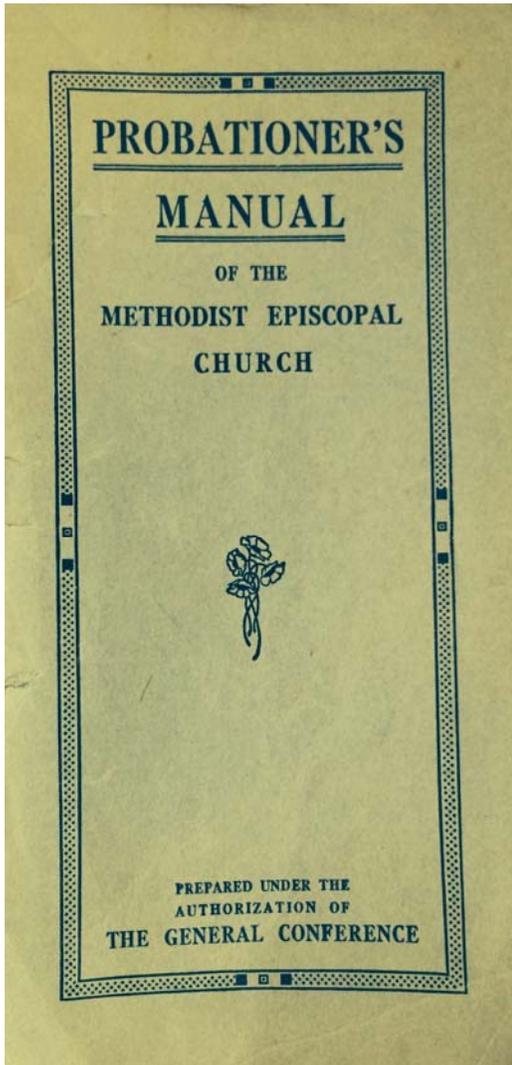
### *Archive Retreat:*



On October 24-25, 2013 participants gathered at Pine Lake Camp to celebrate and remember the history of camping in our Conference. We listened to wonderful presentations by Nancy Deaner, Brad Sherman, Laura and Chip Hutler on the importance of our Conference's camping ministry and how the definition of "camping" has changed through the years. Nick Coenen and Joanne Hornby shared some of the history of Pine Lake Camp and Judy Vasby told us about the unique history of the Lake Ripley camp, which is a mission of the Cambridge: Willerup UMC. Later that night we were treated to a one-man play illustrating the life of John Wesley, written and performed by Sandy Kintner. The next morning we enjoyed the local history

workshop given by Bev Maser and Lynn Lubkeman. However, the highlight of the gathering was a re-enactment of a nineteenth-century camp meeting. Lois Olsen first provided historical background on camp meetings in Wisconsin. Then our re-enactment took place in a tent on the shores of Pine Lake—led by the Rev. Dan Dick. We were treated to stories of Lundy Harris and excerpts from a sermon given by the Evangelical preacher Rev. John Lutz in the 1850s. In addition, Barbara Dick led us in several hymns using the call and response form that was common at the time. Fortunately this special experience was videotaped. The Commission hopes to have excerpts available on our website in the near future.

## *Confirmation:(A followup)*



General Conference Manual, 1912

In this issue of Flashbacks, I continue the inquiry into the evolution of "Confirmation" within the United Methodist tradition here in Wisconsin. It will be remembered that beginning in 1916, the M.E. Discipline contained a "Form for the Receiving Children as Members of the Church After Required Instruction Has Been Given." In this rite, the youth "confirmed" the vows of their baptism, but there is no laying on of hands. In 1932, the Discipline was changed such that the candidates were instructed to kneel so that the pastor could lay on his hands and ask the Holy Spirit to confirm them. Presumably, it was their baptism that was being confirmed, although the Discipline leaves this unanswered. Then in 1964, the Discipline was radically changed and the rite of "Confirmation" was created and separated out from Church "Membership." The new "Rite of Confirmation" brought back the renewal of baptismal vows along with a profession of faith and a promise to live a Christian life. Only after the applicants had been confirmed were they then admitted into church membership using a separate rite.

How then can we get a better sense of how Wisconsin Methodists squared the non-disciplinary practice they called "Confirmation" (undoubtedly borrowed from the Lutherans) and the disciplinary requirements for church membership?

Well, we are fortunate that in the Archives collection there is set of bound Sunday bulletins from Kingsley Methodist Church in Milwaukee. The set begins in 1912 and the weekly notices contained in the bulletins do provide some insight into this question. The first notice of interest appeared in December of 1912 with the announcement: "*Pastor's Training Classes Saturday, January 4<sup>th</sup>. Classes every Saturday for Girls and Boys over 10 years of age. All who expect to take this work should begin together. Boys' class, 2 p.m. Girls' Class 3 p.m.*" Here we see the youth are being trained solely for church membership and not "confirmation." It is notable that the age requirement is quite a bit lower than what is currently considered normal and that these classes were separated by sex. Other announcements indicate that the classes met once a week for 3 months. Short, by today's standards. Then on Palm Sunday, the "*Probationer's class was received into fellowship.*" This will not be surprising to older United Methodists, as the tradition of receiving

young people into Church membership around Easter Sunday has deep roots for many congregations. Interestingly, in March of 1914, we find that the “Pastor’s Preparatory Classes,” are requested to meet at “*Church to have Class Picture taken. All young people expecting to unite with Church on Palm Sunday invited.*” Again, this is another tradition with deep roots. For the next twenty years, the group of young people at Kingsley M.E. church that attended classes prior to joining the Church were referred to in the bulletin as “The Probationer’s Class” or the “Instruction Class” and each Palm Sunday or Easter Sunday they were “received into membership.” Then, on Easter Sunday of 1935, the order of worship included the following: “Reception of the Confirmation Class.” Here the term confirmation is used for the first time, even though the only ritual present appears to be reception into membership. Three years later the pastor wrote, “*The Pastor’s Training Class for young people will begin January 8th at ten o’clock and continue for thirteen weeks. Young people from the age of approximately eleven to fourteen are eligible for membership. We urge parents to encourage their children to join the class and can promise them that when once enrolled, they will enjoy coming. However, we insist on regular attendance and real application to the lesson assigned. It is right here that our Evangelical church have failed in that we have not emphasized sufficiently the training of young people for membership in the Church. Let us all work together parents, Church School teaches and pastor. We will appreciate receiving application for membership in the class soon so that materials may be ready.*” Later that year he wrote, “*On Palm Sunday we will confirm a group of young people who been under instruction and receive them into the church. We Methodists need to lay more emphasis on these occasions and we propose this year to make it a day in the lives of these young disciples.*” Here for the first time we find what appears to be a confirmation ritual separate from church membership. However, in the absence of more information, it isn’t really known what is being confirmed or who is doing it or what the ritual entailed.

Still, this seems the time period when regular instruction of young people was being institutionalized and made more formal in our church, at least in a urban Methodist Church in Wisconsin. Indeed, William Blake in his history of Wisconsin United Methodism gives the years of (1936-1938) as the time when the Wisconsin Conference and West Wisconsin Conference of the M.E. church realized that the General denominational materials for instructing young people were inadequate and both developed their own manuals. More on these efforts next time.

Sandy Kintner – Conference Historian

# Local Histories



## **THE BEGINNING OF METHODISM IN OSHKOSH**

*The following was compiled from documents submitted to the Archives by the historian of First UMC of Oshkosh, Dean W. Sandeman, and from P.S. Bennett's History of Methodism in Wisconsin (1890). The material is used by permission of The First United Methodist Church of Oshkosh, Dean W. Sandeman, historian, the Wesley United Methodist Church of Oshkosh, and the Algoma Methodist Church of Oshkosh. The First United Methodist Church in Oshkosh will soon be celebrating its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There is currently a historical marker at the site of the first Methodist service held in Oshkosh—in a bar-room! The church received a citation from the State of Wisconsin in 1990, recognizing this 1839 Methodist service as the first church service held in Oshkosh. The Commission on Archives and History has added this site to our list of historic sites of United Methodism in Wisconsin. If you know of other historic sites that should be added to our list, please contact the Commission on Archives and History. Some background on that historic site in Oshkosh follows.*

The first Protestant settlers in what was to become Oshkosh arrived in the mid-1830s. The first families were those of the Stanleys and the Gallups (Gallops). It is reported that Webster Stanley, who worked for the government moving supplies from Fort Howard in Green Bay to Fort Winnebago in Portage noticed the home of James Knaggs in his travels. Stanley soon made an offer to take the ferry and tavern business from James Knaggs (located at the present day Riverside Park in Oshkosh) on shares. In that same year, after a treaty was signed with the Menominee tribe, Stanley made claim to land on the north side of the mouth of the Fox River. Mr. Gallup and sons joined him in this claim. They jointly built a house where their families lived together. In 1836, Gallup built his own log house. The first permanent residents of what

would become the city of Oshkosh had arrived. They were soon joined by other settlers, including the Evans, Wrights, and Fords. (See Richard J. Harney's *History of Winnebago County, Wisconsin, and early history of the Northwest*, 1880.) It has been reported that Clark Dickerson, who arrived in 1839, began preaching shortly after his arrival—where he “generally would harangue (*sic*) the crowd duly assembled in the ferryman's bar-room”--- and thereafter religious services were frequently held in the settlement. Now, Mr. Dickerson was not an ordained preacher and it is doubtful he was even a licensed local preacher. Years later, it was written that Dickerson was not what would pass to later generations as a talented preacher. “*He was neither handsome in person, elegant in manners, nor eloquent of tongue. His discourse was harsh and dry, as a matter of fact, like many other exhorters where hearts are in the work, though their heads were not born to it. He never looked at his audience. His great broad face beamed with an earnestness truly remarkable, but a large mouth jerked open and shut during his discourse like an automatic fly-trap and tossing his head around, most seriously marred the effect, and was more apt to inspire the genius of fun in the younger people than the lessons of piety. He was said to never have looked at his audience but instead at a long string of red peppers hung over the bar-room stove, and toward it directed his most earnest exhortations. Where those red peppers were to his mind suggestive of the warm place to which his inattentive listeners were consigned has never been revealed.*” (See Reuben G. Thwaites, *The History of Winnebago County and the Fox River Valley, 1544-1877*, assembled from *The Oshkosh Times*, 1877.) In 1840 it was reported that a Methodist preacher, the Rev. Jesse Halstead, preached and held a religious service at Mr. Stanley's house. It should be remembered that Mr. Stanley's house was located at the point where the ferry crossed the Fox River and was also a tavern. Thus, it is fairly certain that the genesis of Methodism in Oshkosh was in a bar room. The Rev. Halstead's circuit included Green, Bay, Brothertown and the Oneida Mission. Later that year, the Rev. Halstead returned and formed a Methodist class in the area, consisting of Ira Aiken, Mrs. Chester Ford, Miss Ann Brooks and Mrs. Electra Wright. (See P.S. Bennett, *History of Methodism in Wisconsin*, 1890.) It was probably the son of Electra Wright, W.W. Wright, in his “recollections of W.W. Wright” who provided this eye-witness account of Clark Dickenson's preaching.

-submitted by Sandy Kintner  
Wisconsin Conference UMC, Historian

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## **CEDAR FALLS METHODIST CHURCH**

*For nearly one hundred years the Methodist Church in Cedar Falls, Wisconsin*

*provided the spiritual nourishment and religious education to the 30 or 40 families who comprised the Community of Cedar Falls, a small community located about 8 miles north of Menomonie. Some of these families, like my own, were members of another denomination in Menomonie. But the Methodist Church and Sunday School was where they first became introduced to their Savior, Jesus Christ. In 1991, the ladies of the Cedar Falls Church United Methodist Women prepared and sold a cookbook. One of their members, Mrs. Lawrence Schroeder, prepared this history of the church.*

Our church is a very old one story building and holds a lot of fond memories for those who worship here and those who have moved away. Here is how it all came about. A meeting of the citizens of Cedar Falls and vicinity was held at the old school- house in Cedar Falls on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of September 1883. J.B. Hulbert was chosen secretary. The chairman appointed three trustees to take charge of and be responsible for the building, library and other property belonging to the Cedar Fall Sunday School. S.J. Fletcher was appointed for one year, Haldo Erickson for two years and Samuel C. Barber for three years. The old schoolhouse was then offered for sale at auction and sold to Samuel C. Barber for \$60,000. It was to be moved to another lot. It then stood near the present schoolhouse. They remodeled and converted it into a union Church for the use of Cedar Falls Sunday School and benefit of the public. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September the board of trustees met at the old schoolhouse and adopted plans for remodeling the building into a church, part of the money having already been raised by subscriptions. The Board ordered Warren Green to sketch plans and draw specifications, make an estimate for materials and labor to complete the outside of the building. Saturday evening September 29<sup>th</sup> the board met to let contracts to move and remodel the building. The building was moved on the North ½ of the N.W. ¼ of Block (10) in the E.L. Harrington addition to Cedar Falls. Warren Green took the contract for \$190.00 to move the building. He also made thirty seats and a pulpit for the church. In the winter of 1884 – 85, evangelistic meetings were held by Miss Frye. Many members were added to the church. Services were held in the school building as early as 1867. In 1899 the church was rebuilt. The Rostrum was on the north side. New pews and a new organ were added. The Norwegian people helped pay for the church building and improvements and used it for their services, which was in their own language. The Menomonie Church was organized in 1857, by Silas Boles. Cedar Falls was supplied by a minister from Menomonie. Then in 1943 and 1944 we again remodeled our church under the guidance of Rev. Bushendorf. We were being supplied with a pastor from Boyceville at that time. The interior of the building was completely remodeled. The Rostrum was removed from the northern side and is now on the east end. While Rev. Browne was pastor here we completed our entrance. Many memorial gifts have been given by members and friends of our church. Rev. Reece, pastor from Menomonie is now supplying our pulpit. We want to invite all of our friends to join us in our worship services.

*Mrs. Laurence Schroeder*

The church was closed in 1957, after serving the community since 1867. With the building of a new school next to the old unused church, the leaders were faced with a decision about what to do with the building. The problem was solved when in the summer of 1958 a tornado completely destroyed the building. It is reported that the destruction meant that no trace was found except a hymnal which was discovered in a field about 2 miles from Cedar Falls.

By Margaret Gratz  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

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## **BETHLEHEM-BLACKHAWK UMC CELEBRATES SESQUICENTENNIAL**



*Bethlehem United Methodist Church is located 10 miles west of Sauk City and 25 miles South of Baraboo in Sauk County. This beautiful country church is most commonly known as Black Hawk Church because of its proximity to the small, unincorporated village of Black Hawk. For 150 years, they have been actively “growing generations of faithful”*

*through Sunday School, bus tour to Red Bird Mission/Kentucky, entertaining International U.W. students in our homes, Cultural Arts Series, exercise classes, the very first kindergarten in the area, Lord’s Acre Auction/Pork Chop Dinner, Ecumenical worship services, summer Vacation Bible School, suppers, get-togethers, Bible studies and prayer. What follows is a short history of that congregation.*

In the early 1840s, the first settlers in this area were mostly Swiss & German families. Though they were very grateful for the chance to own their own plot of ground, the next couple of decades were difficult times for them as they established their homes and tilled the land. The freedom to worship was very important to the settlers and they were anxious to find a house of worship. The closest place was the Ragatz (Salem/Honey Creek)

Evangelical church which was 5-10 miles away. Many walked that distance to attend services.

Families began meeting to think about forming their own place of worship. Five classes of Troy: Sprechers, Schaefer, Kellers, Beckers and Hemmis, met at Adolph Sprecher's home for the purpose of organizing their own congregation. On March 4, 1864, the Articles of Congregational Inc. was drawn up, adopted, and named Bethlehem Congregation of Troy. Adolph Sprecher offered an acre of land for a church building and Andrew Tarnutzer offered a plot of ground across the Harrisburg Road (now Hwy C) for the parsonage. Due to lack of finances, the building was delayed until two years later. On October 14, 1866, it was dedicated, debt free. The total cost came to \$3,500. Records indicate there were 33 proud members.

Many families befriended the Winnebago Indians who often camped at the Witwen Campgrounds where they trapped muskrats. Owners of the Witwen Roller Mill were glad to pay them, as the muskrats often undermined the building. As more and more settlers arrived in the area, other churches were built. Leland Immanuel built in 1868, but didn't affiliate with Black Hawk Congregation until 1870. Trustees who served in the early 1900s were: Christian Gasser, August Giese and William Albers. In 1909, the Leland congregation voted to dissolve. Mrs. Ione Gasser donated two beautiful altar vases which are currently displayed in our historical cabinet which was built several years ago by Ernest (Bud) Mabie. Because the English speaking people in Harrisburg wanted their own church, Harrisburg Zion was built in 1893 for \$2,000. Members of the building committee were: Henry Schaefer, John Bonham, Adolph Sorg and Frank Schuknecht.

As the Bethlehem Evangelical congregation grew in numbers, a decision was made to build a new church. The building committee: Andrew T. Sprecher, Leonard Schneller, J.P. Witwen, Martin Sprecher, Peter Schneller, John Gasner, Martin Clavadatscher, August Graff and Carl Schmalz, presented a plan on April 13, 1901. A member of the congregation, John Schiess, was chosen as contractor and builder. The cost was \$6,000. The new building of native limestone was dedicated on December 13, 1901. A balcony was added a few years later. The front door key to the 1901 church building was donated by one of the members, Leonard Schneller, grandfather of the Schneller sisters; Cecilia, Adlyn and Mary. It is now in our historical cabinet along with other important, historical items.

Settlers in the Cassell area were also very religious and invited pastors from several different denominations to preach in their school house. Finally, in 1911, they were able to build their own church building for worship. The Black Hawk minister served all four congregations: Leland Immanuel, Harrisburg Zion, Cassell Grace and Bethlehem

Evangelical (Black Hawk). Worship services were alternated between morning, afternoon, evening and always Wednesday evening. Sermons were spoken in German until the 1920s, when Rev. G. L. Bursack was urged to preach his sermon in English once a month. The next minister, Rev. John A. Marks, began preaching one German sermon a month. When more English services were introduced at Bethlehem (Black Hawk), many Harrisburg Zion members returned there. For several years, the Harrisburg church building was used as a social hall for Black Hawk youth. It was torn down some time later. After about twenty years, few families attended Cassell Grace and they decided to dissolve. Some members went to Sauk Prairie, others to Black Hawk.

Congregational families all knelt at the pews for prayer. Families came together for Sunday School and all stayed for worship. In the early days, men sat on one side of the church, women on the other. By 1925, enrollment in Sunday School was recorded at 343, with 32 of those listed on the cradle roll. As the rural area increased in numbers, so did the Bethlehem Evangelical worshippers. There was a real need for Sunday School rooms. It was time to plan for enlarging the present building or build new. But then the Great Depression came. The 1930s and 40s were difficult years for everyone. Even the minister at that time, John A. Marks, lowered his own yearly salary from \$1800 to \$1650. After several meetings, the Conference made the decision in 1946 to merge with the United Brethren. Our Bethlehem Church became the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

In March of 1948, after almost ten years of praying and planning, Trustees Clifford Meyer, Melvin Sprecher and Edward Fuchs, appointed a Building Committee to work on a plan for a new church building: Gust Federman, Roy Fingerhut, W.L. Sprecher, Ronald Schaefer, C.E. Sprecher and John E. Schneller. Architect Edward A. Erdman of Milwaukee presented a plan for a new kitchen, stage and sanctuary with classrooms below. Kraemer Bros. of Plain was chosen as the builder. Members of the congregation helped in many ways, including planting, tending and harvesting 16 acres of corn as a means to raise funds. Ground was broken on March 29th, 1948. A year later, on March 26, 1949, the cornerstone was laid. In May of 1950, the Wisconsin Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren chose our beautiful new house of worship to hold their 94th Annual Session. It was quite an honor to host the week-long gathering. On November 4th, 1956, the congregation joyfully celebrated their debt-free status with a Note Burning Service. Total cost of the project: \$137,333.33.

The sanctuary of the 1901 building was now serving as a Fellowship Hall. Many social activities have been held in the Hall: Mixed M's/Young Adults unforgettable 3-act plays, Youth Dinner Theaters and fun-nights with other church groups. Members and the surrounding communities have enjoyed Chili, Pancake and Spaghetti Suppers as well as the very popular Chicken & Dumpling Dinner. In 1969, when the Evangelical United Brethren

merged with the Methodist Church, the Black Hawk Church became Bethlehem United Methodist Church. This is the same year NASA put a man on the moon.

Our Women's Mission Unit has had several name changes: organized in 1910 as Women's Missionary Society, to Women's Society of World Service, to present United Methodist Women. The unit has been recognized by the state for their monetary gifts and mission projects. Our oldest, active member, Marcella Sprecher, just recently passed away at the age of 102 (just a month shy of 103 years)! Members of the Unit chair the 4th of July Celebration in Witwen along with the men who formerly were organized as Brotherhood. In mission, these men and women have also financed a cabin at Lake Lucerne, sent heifers to Greece, held meetings with businessmen as guests of farmers and sponsored youth from the southern states coming to homes of our members in exchange for our youth spending a week in southern homes. Although the Mission Band and Little Heralds are no longer organized, children and youth groups are still very active in mission work: sponsoring a child in India, collecting warm outer-wear for the local school children, financing a well in Cambodia, giving groceries to local food pantries, collecting money for a local Habitat for Humanity build, sending mosquito nets to Mali to help fight malaria, filling quarter containers for Feed My Starving Children, purchasing toys, mittens and equipment for the local Head Start program and supporting UMC camps.

Music has always been an integral part of Bethlehem/Black Hawk Church. About 15 members keep the chancel choir active since their organization in 1938. We've enjoyed 76 years of singing praises to God! Pianists/Organists Nita Enge, Marcella Sprecher, LaNell Jaquish and Karen Schlittler have accompanied the choir and congregation throughout the years.

Our mode of transportation to church certainly has changed over the decades: from walking, horse-drawn buggies and wagons (which required several barns built south of the church), Model Ts, Model As, and big fancy automobiles; to pick-up trucks, mini-vans and energy-efficient smart cars. During biking season, you might even find a motorcycle or two parked in front of the church building.

Over time, changes have been made to beautify our church building. Outdoor, accent night-lighting was given by the Anderson Family in memory of Matt and the Memorial Garden started by Bill & LaNell (Zech) Jaquish serve to remind members and community friends that something special has been happening here for 150 years.

Members and friends sent out from Black Hawk Bethlehem congregation to serve as ministers include: John Schneller, Jacob Schneller, Milton Giese, LaVerne Tooley, Harvey Schweppe, Norm Silvester, Jerome Shenk and John Oliver. John, and retired minister Rev.

Dennis Weis, have chosen Black Hawk United Methodist as their home church. God is good! And we, His people, remain steadfast in our service to the community and world around us...growing generations of faithful for another 150 years and counting.

Bethlehem Black Hawk UMC Church Historian  
Norma Clavadatscher

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## SEE US AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Please drop by our table at Annual Conference to chat and see our exhibit. We will have information about our next Archives Retreat to be held at Pine Lake Camp on October 2-3, 2014. This year's theme will be a celebration of the rich musical heritage of The United Methodist Tradition. We will also have the local church historian guide available as well as old Disciplines and other Conference Archives publications. If you have an interest in the work of the Commission, please stop by. We are always looking to involve those with a passion for UMC history in our Commission's work.

### *Flashbacks is a publication of the Wisconsin Conference Commission on Archives and History*

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**Editorial Board: Lois Olsen, Sandy Kintner, Lynn Lubkeman, Wil Bloy**

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