



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 at Pine Lake Camp Oct 24-25 2013:



Are you nostalgic about your early camping days? Interested in learning more about the history of the many camps that have been part of The United Methodist Church heritage in Wisconsin? Eager to participate in a reenactment of a Methodist Great Awakening camp meeting? If so, come and join third annual Commission on Archives and History's "Ministry of Memory" Archives Retreat. While the

retreat will have a special focus on camping, there will also be workshops on helping to preserve your local church's precious history. Join others from across the Conference as we focus on the special history of camps and camp meetings in Wisconsin and reflect on this aspect of our past history. We will have displays of photographs and memorabilia highlighting the history of camps from the Evangelical Association, United Brethren, and Methodist backgrounds. Come and share your memories and also hear more about the history of these camps. Relive the experience of a camp meeting in a reenactment led by the Rev. Dan Dick. Take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about preserving your local church's history and records with Conference Archivist Lynn Lubkeman. Attend a hands-on workshop with other local church historians to share your successful strategies for highlighting your church's history.

Full details and registration information are available by contacting the Archives at 888-240-7328, archives@wisconsinumc.org, or visit our website at www.wisconsinumc.org/archives or on the Camping website www.WIUMCAMPS.org/archivesretreat.

Confirmation: (A perplexing history)

The Countryman

Subscription, \$1.25 per year.

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY

THERON G. STONE, PUBLISHER.

Entered at the Postoffice in Sun Prairie
as second-class matter.

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 1914.

CONFIRMATION IN THE GERMAN M. E. CHURCH

A class of six girls and one boy was confirmed on Easter Sunday in the German M. E. church: Clarence Otto, Angeline Otto, Adeline Krugman, Isabelle Krugmann, Cara Casper, Frances Shenk, Edna Hohlbach.

The service was opened with a march by Miss Ella Muser, the organist of the church. After the examination of the Catechism and confession of the articles of faith before the congregation, the confirmation took place. The parents of the children united with the class in taking the Holy communion.

Rev. B. B. Zeuner the pastor of the church was assisted by the former pastor Rev. Robt. Drescher, while the choir of Sun Prairie was assisted by the Windsor choir in furnishing the music. The girls of the class were beautifully dressed in white and the church was nicely decorated with ferns and flowers. The beautiful day in connection with all helped to make this service a full success and will be long remembered by the class and the congregation.

John Wesley, the spiritual father of American Methodism, never proposed a doctrine of confirmation. In 1784, when Thomas Coke left for the colonies, Wesley sent along a short pamphlet entitled "The Sunday Service of the Methodists of North America" in which he hoped to define the mode of Methodist worship. Taken largely from the liturgy of the Anglican Church, it was not a good fit for the frontier and quickly fell into disuse. However, it is of note that Wesley omitted from his instructions the Anglican Office of Confirmation. Moreover, on more than one occasion Wesley attacked the Catholic doctrine of confirmation, calling it "an abuse" and saying "Christ did not institute Confirmation; therefore it is no sacrament at all." While the Church of England had traditionally held that confirmation was a completion of baptism, Wesley held that the promise and vows made by the parents were the infant's and no further ratification was necessary. Lastly, Wesley rejected the Anglican notion that confirmation was a prerequisite for receiving the Lord's Supper. For Wesley, baptism sufficed. And, as far as membership in Wesley's Societies was concerned, Wesley's sole requirement was that a person "be a believer in Jesus Christ".

The tradition that developed among early American Methodists was that baptism was considered the regular door of entrance into the church membership. There was no membership rite, let alone confirmation rite, included in the Discipline. Infant baptism was vigorously encouraged and it presumably granted the child some sort of relationship with the Methodist Church, but it wasn't clear exactly what that was. In practice, what occurred was that either a seeker of the faith or someone raised in the church served a period of probation under the tutelage of a class leader. If found

acceptable, the class leader would recommend the person to a preacher who would then enter them on the rolls as a full member. However, preachers regularly checked their roles for backsliders, who were summarily expunged, so in a sense Methodists were always on probation.

Shortly after the Civil War, a membership rite was added to the M.E. Discipline. This was part of the transition of Methodism from a frontier religion to a settled church and meant that although baptism was still considered a prerequisite for membership it wasn't sufficient. During this time, the probationary period began to include formal instruction and catechisms were developed. However, there was no distinction made between adults and youth as far as a pathway to church membership was concerned. In 1916, the M.E. Discipline recognized the growing practice of bringing youth into church membership and a "Form for the Receiving Children as Members of the Church After Required Instruction Has Been Given" was included. Thus, a distinct path to church membership was carved out for youth, separate from that for adults. The recommended age for the administration of this rite was "no younger than twelve." The text recited by the minister includes the line: "having arrived at the years of discretion, desire now to ***confirm*** (*au. emphasis*) the vows of their baptism and enter upon the active duties and the full privileges of membership in the Church of Christ." Here the word "confirm" appears for the first time in the M.E. Discipline under the guise of remembering the applicant's baptism. Notice the applicant is the one doing the confirming and isn't called on to kneel and the minister doesn't lay on their hands. So, while there was no "rite of confirmation" as such in the Methodist Discipline, there was a ritual associated with youth membership which appears to begin to be associated with "Confirmation". Indeed, as early as 1914, there are articles published in the Sun Prairie newspaper that referred to young people (average age 12) in the German M.E. Church being "confirmed". Inspection of the membership records reveals that this service was the first instance that a group of youth joined their congregation *en masse*. Interestingly, the services occurred on Easter Sunday. The tradition of youth uniting with the church on or close to Easter continues today.

In 1932, a change in the "Order for Receiving Members Into the Church" in the M.E. Discipline was made and the candidates (both adults and youth) were instructed to kneel and "the Minister laying his and upon the head of every one severally," said: "The Lord defend thee and his heavenly grace and by his Spirit ***confirm*** thee in the faith." Here, we see the applicant is no longer doing the confirmation, but presumably it is the Holy Spirit. This notion of the Holy Spirit working through a rite is in conflict with the Wesleyan doctrine of assurance, but that's a topic for another day. However, note that the need to confirm previous baptismal vows is no longer invoked. It is also at about this point in time that Sun Prairie newspaper articles begin to report that the youth were "confirmed" and then "received" into the church as two separate events. Given the lack of guidance from the Discipline it is hard to know what these "confirmation" ceremonies entailed and this historian is left to wonder. Anyway, this is where "confirmation" rested within the Methodist Church Discipline until 1964 when a radical change took place 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 are confirmed were they then admitted into church membership using a separate rite.

Apparently, the Discipline was just catching up to what had become accepted practice, at least in Wisconsin. Interestingly, at the Archives there is a collection of educational material from the middle of the 20th century supposedly to be used in “confirmation classes,” however, that particular word does not appear in these writings. Instead the material is labeled for use in “preparatory” classes. As a historian, I can’t help but wonder how widespread the tradition of “confirmation” in Methodism was before there was a Disciplinary basis. Was it more common in communities such as Sun Prairie where the religious landscape was dominated by the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Church and the Methodists didn’t want to be out done? Perhaps with some more digging in the Archives, I can begin to answer the question.

Sandy Kintner – Conference Historian

Local Histories



The following are two excellent examples of the type of writings that realize a ministry of memory and can stimulate interest in a local congregation’s history. First, from the Willerup UMC newsletter in Cambridge, WI an article by Judy Vasby and then an article by Hazel Matzke written for the newsletter of the Juda UMC. – the Editors

History Speaks for June 2013.

By Judy Vasby

Sunday, June 13, 1937

A note in the Sunday bulletin said, “The church congratulates most heartily Mr. and Mrs. Allen Gilberts. May their married life be a blessed life and may God be their leader and guide.” It was from a Willerup Church bulletin donated to the Archives by the Friesens when they left for

Ohio recently. Jean is the daughter of Allen and Marion Gilberts who were faithful members here starting before their marriage.

Rev. A. John Amundsen was pastor on Sunday, June 13, 1937 of the “Scandinavian Methodist Episcopal Church “(now known as Willerup United Methodist Church). The service began with a *doxology*, which led into the *Call to Worship*, a group prayer asking for mercy and to have participants’ transgressions blocked out. Prayer seemed to be a strong element in the service, because next came *Silent Prayer*, a hymn, *the Apostles’ Creed*, then more prayer followed by *The Lord’s Prayer*. Then the choir sang an anthem. After that came a *scripture reading* (no verses cited) and the *Gloria Patri* (a traditional congregational sung response that gives glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost). At this point came announcements and the giving of *tithes and offerings*. A hymn preceded the sermon (no title), and then came another prayer, a hymn and the *benediction*.

But the day wasn’t done. Epworth League would meet at 7 p.m., and the *Evening Evangelistic Service* was to start at 7:45 with Rev. Fred Stair speaking.

The rest of the week the members could look forward to:

The Ladies Bible Class at 2:30 on Tuesday with the Men’s Brotherhood Society at 8 pm.

Junior League on Tuesday at 7 p.m. with Prayer Meeting at 8.

And Choir practice on Friday (no time given).

To pay for the bulletins, ads were sold, and they were printed on the back cover! The ads promoted everything from banks to clothing to cars to hardware to food to ice.

At the end of the printed announcements came a poem about putting one’s trust in God and serving Him. And the final thought for the week is still a theme at Willerup today:

The living God still lives, and the living Word IS a living Word, and we may depend upon it.

That deserves an “Amen!” seventy-six years later.

The Historical Corner: Hazel Matzke

During the middle 1800s and early 1900s camp meetings were a big part of the religious revival in this country. The first camp meetings were probably held spontaneously with little preparation. As they grew in popularity the meetings became more organized and buildings were erected. Often the first building was a tabernacle, then a dining hall, followed by cabins and other amenities.

Several camp meetings sites were located in Green County. According to the booklet *Juda Facts and Figures*, "The first camp meeting in the area, perhaps in the county, was held by the Methodist Episcopalians just west of Juda in 1841. Camp meetings have been a part of the Methodist religion almost since its inception in the United States. Those attending this 1841 gathering were largely Methodists, Baptists or Christian Church members as they were the predominating sects among early settlers in this area. Later that same year a five-day "basket meeting" was held at the meeting place. (*The Methodist Episcopal Church in Juda was not established until the early 1850s, so this camp meeting may have been held at the Methodist Episcopal Church located on Richland Road, west of Juda*).

The booklet also states: "*The first tent revival meeting took place in the grove where the Baptist Church now stands. These revivals were popular in the eastern states but people not from there were intrigued with this type of worship service and came from all over the county. Baptism was in the "big springs" just west of town on the "short cut" into Juda.*" These meetings were held by Rev. Patton, who came to Juda in 1845.

Two other publications, *Wisconsin Conference. 1840-1969* and *Goodly Tents* give information on several other camp meeting sites Green County:

1857. Camp meetings were held in Green County on the Monroe Circuit. "Nine tents were crowded with people. This was the first meeting of this kind held in this vicinity. Still it was not a new experience for most of our friends. Most of the people took an active part in the service and after several led in earnest prayers a wonderful victory was won. Sinners broke down and cried to God for mercy, some of them found consolation and were very happy among God's people, as a result of the great mercy of God" In 1899, Rev. John U. Elmer (pastor at the Monroe Evangelical Church) leased 10 acres of land to the Madison Campground Association, 2 miles east of Monroe in a wooded area, called Elmer's Grove. A second lease was signed to cover the period of 1914-1929. (On a 1902 plat book this area was located at the corner of Richland Road and Greenbush Road). Sometime after 1857, twelve camp meetings were held in German Valley near New Glarus on the Juda Circuit.

1860...The first camp meetings in Clarno Township were held opposite of where the Staver Church now stands. Ministers came from the Cedarville area and meetings lasted for two weeks. (The church is located in the southwest corner of Clarno Township).

In *The History of Green County*, 1884 it states "The first religious services in Clarno Township were held at the house of Matthew Wells by Rev. Robert De Lap, a Methodist preacher. The first camp meetings in Green County were held at the same place." (No date was given for this event).

1884... The United Brethren Conference of Wisconsin Conference and the Rock River Conference of Illinois Conference purchased 10 acres of land in Clarno Township, 3 miles southwest of Monroe and 1 mile north of rural Bethel Chapel (the church being located in the town of Clarno near the now Hawthorne Cemetery). 1898 records show that at this camp meeting there were 31 baptisms and 33 people united with the church. The camp was discontinued in 1901 and the land sold. (A 1902 plat book shows the camp grounds located on Bethel Road, just a mile north of Bethel-Hawthorne Cemetery).

With the coming of the automobile and better roads, all of these sites were discontinued, but other camp meeting locations in Wisconsin evolved into permanent camps with permanent buildings. Many members of the Zion congregation will remember attending camping weeks at Camp Witwen (established 1853), Camp Lomira (established 1853), and Camp Lucerne (established 1948).

FROM THE ARCHIVES

✠ *The following is an excerpt from the “Local Church Historian’s Guide” most recently published in 2013 by the Commission on Archives and History. The full guide is available for download from our website at www.wisconsinumc.org/archives. Click on “Local Church Historian Guide”.*

Books Available to Purchase:

The Wisconsin Commission on Archives and History has facilitated the publication of several books. The following books are available and may be ordered from the Wisconsin Conference Archives. Prices include shipping and handling.

1. William Blake, *Cross and Flame in Wisconsin: The Story of United Methodism in the Badger State*, Worzalla Publishing Company, 1973. Hardcover: \$25; Hardcover, autographed: \$30 ; Softcover, \$20
2. Herman A. Block, *Historical Data, Wisconsin Conference, Evangelical Association, the Evangelical Church, the Evangelical United Brethren Church, 1840-1969*, published by Ken Cook Transnational, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1971. Softcover: \$15
3. Anthony J. Farina, *I Must, I Must, I Must: The Story of the Italian Evangelical Church of Wisconsin*. Published by the Wisconsin Commission on Archives and History, 2008. Softcover: \$12.50

4. Sandy Kintner, *Church Building Preacher: The Life of Rev. William Hein*. Published by the Wisconsin Commission on Archives and History, 2007; Softcover: 10.00
5. Lois C. Olsen, *All God's Children: A History of African American Methodists*, published by Lois C. Olsen, Milwaukee, WI, 2007. A history of the African Americans in the Methodist Church in Wisconsin. Softcover; \$10.00.
6. Lois C. Olsen, *Contentment is Great Gain: A Missionary Midwife in Sierra Leone*, published by Leone Press, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1996. Softcover: \$12.50
7. Lois C. Olsen, *Goodly Tents: A History of Camp Meetings in Wisconsin*, published by the Commission on Archives and History, Wisconsin Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, 2002. Softcover: \$10

HOME AT LAST



In the late 1950s, members of the West Wisconsin Methodist Conference Historical Society decided that after a 100 years of carrying their historical documents from parsonage to parsonage, and with no permanent home in sight, and with interest in its Historical Society at a low ebb, that it would be prudent to deposit their materials with the Wisconsin State Historical Society in Madison for safe keeping. All in all, it was probably a good decision. After the merger in 1969 that formed the Wisconsin Conference of The United Methodist Church, the Commission on Archives and History was formed, and one of their first tasks was to collect all the historical materials from the merging Conferences into one place. Thus, started a 40 year struggle with the State Historical Society to have the West Wisconsin materials returned, which finally ended on December 7th,

2012 when Lynn Lubkeman (Conference Archivist) and Sandy Kintner (Conference Historian) arrived at the loading dock of the State Historical Society and took procession of thirteen boxes of historical materials. Sandy had been working on the project since 1998 when he discovered that one of the items in the Wisconsin State Historical Society Archives was the original handwritten minutes from the inaugural Wisconsin Conference that met in Southport, Wisconsin (later Kenosha) in 1848. “When I saw this founding document of our Conference, I felt it was like a child who was lost and needed to come home,” Sandy said. After so many years of effort by Sandy and Lynn, they were very pleased when the returned material was welcomed home to our Conference Archives and blessed by Bishop Hee-Soo Jung and Rev. Steve Polster.



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