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Heritage Horizons

...a memorial book was written in His *presence*, recording those who revered Him
and those who had the highest respect for His name...Malachi 3:16



Editor: Lenore Lang

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"There are

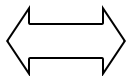
no shortcuts

to any place

worth

going."

Beverly Sills



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Point of View *by Lenore Lang*

In this issue we take you back to note the beginnings of several churches in our North American Baptist denomination. See page 2.

Then, on page 3, we remember a pastor who had a heart for keeping in touch with our beginnings, as preserved in the Heritage Commission.

And finally, again, Berneice Westerman has us travel with her to places we need to go, via her faithful Armchair Traveler. (page 4)

Director's Notes *by Jackie Howell*

The purpose of the NAB Heritage Commission is to collect, preserve, organize, display and make available the historical records and artifacts of persons, churches and other ministries related to the NAB Conference.

We seek to help energize current ministries of NAB by making available real-life stories that demonstrate the power of God and the modeling of His faithful people through the years.

Our project for this coming year is to update and complete the story of the Rochester years—*Sioux Falls Seminary Biographies: Rochester Years 1853-1949*. It will be an update of the 1987 directory, but also add information on faculty, school committee members and trustees. We will organize the stories of the seminary printed in *der Sendbote*, local newspapers, and other sources and including celebrations over the first 91 years before the move to Sioux Falls.

We continue on the journey of writing descriptions of our early churches. As we finish the current NAB Churches that have celebrated 100 years of serving God, we will look at closed churches of this same era. These churches too have been faithful and have a rich history of generations of men and women proclaiming the good news of the gospel in their location. The disappearance of rural communities does not lessen their impact on shaping lives. We praise God for his faithfulness . . . To all generations.

NAB CHURCHES WITH NOTABLE ANNIVERSARIES

120 Years: (1893) First Baptist Church - LaSalle, Colorado

Immanuel Baptist Church - Loyal, Oklahoma

First Baptist Church - Chancellor, South Dakota

Memorial Baptist Church - Parkston, South Dakota

130 Years (1883) Elm Creek Baptist - Lavernia, Texas

140 Years (1873) Redeemer Baptist Church - Oakdale, Minnesota

Shell Creek Baptist Church - Columbus, Nebraska

REDEEMER BAPTIST CHURCH, Oakdale, MN

Churches, like people, have beginnings and histories. Some are more complicated than others, with twists and turns here and there. Such is the case with Redeemer Baptist Church, which was a “daughter” church of a First Baptist church begun, 1849, in St. Paul, Minnesota by a New York pastor, Rev. Parsons. As the city’s population of ethnic groups grew, more churches were needed, so in 1873 the First German Baptist church was started. The church grew in its ministry to its German congregation, outgrowing the building and needing a new location.

That new location in 1891 required a new name, Daytons Bluff Baptist Church, which was dedicated with a final cost of \$16,500 for land and construction. That building housed valuable ministries until 1968 when a new building was constructed (\$297,000) with a name change to Redeemer Baptist Church of Oakdale, Minnesota in the ever-growing east side of St. Paul. But no matter what location, God’s Word has been faithfully proclaimed through the years. The current pastor is Rev. Michael Lerud.

SHELL CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH, Columbus, NE

In 1873 a courageous group of twelve Christians began meeting in homes and schoolhouses, at first calling themselves the German Baptist Church of Elk Creek, Nebraska, changing the name a few years later to Shell Creek Baptist Church. The first church building, costing \$1,338, became a reality in 1883, replaced by a larger building (a good sign indeed!) seventeen years later. In 1893, attentive to the needs of a pastor and family, the members built the first parsonage.

Through the years of course, there were numerous changes and additions to the church building, — an organ, electric lights, updating of the heating system, replacement of the coal room by a kitchen and restrooms, as well as giving the parsonage a new look. In 1947, the members decided to use only the English language in church services, rather than German! No matter what language was used, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached through the years. The current pastor is Rev. Paul Veal.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF REV. ORVILLE METH

By Lenore Lang

“Mr. Archives.” Somehow those words were *the label* in my mind for Rev. Orville Meth, during many of the years when our family was a part of the Seminary community. Of course, I realized that he had been a pastor and a Bismarck chaplain during some of that time, but his keen interest in preserving our denominational heritage caused me to think of him in that way, “Mr. Archives.”

Born on September 23, 1924, Orville was raised on a farm in the Cathay, North Dakota area. The Lord must have impressed on his heart the desire to become a pastor, because he applied to become a student in the North American Baptist Seminary in 1947 when that institution was still in Rochester, New York.

A young woman named Irma Edinger was raised in the Cathay area as well, and as the Lord would have it, Orville and Irma were married on June 18, 1949, while Orville was still a seminary student. During that very year the Seminary moved from Rochester, NY to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Housing at that time was hard to find, so the newly-married couple bought a trailer for their home. (Irma served as secretary to the seminary president, Dr. George A. Lang, my father-in-law.)

By the spring of 1952, Orville was a seminary graduate and together he and Irma received a call from the Odessa, Washington Baptist church where they served for four years. Two of their three children were born in Odessa: Debby and Daniel.

Other churches followed: Stockton, California, birthplace of their daughter, Esther, then Venturia, North Dakota, Turtle Lake, North Dakota, and Elgin, Iowa. Next the Baptist Home in Bismarck, North Dakota called Orville to be its chaplain, and for fourteen years he faithfully served in that important position, 1972–1986. In 2000 he did some reminiscing of his time there, writing, “During the years of my ministry as chaplain, people would ask me, ‘How can you minister to the sick and aging?’ Well, there are always changes. People come and go. Then there were funerals and weddings. To me, this was my congregation, and I ministered to them as the Lord led me to do. He called me to this place and that was my assurance.”

Since 1982 Orville was included on the NAB Conference Archives Committee and gladly contributed his wisdom to decisions made. He served in various positions, not reluctantly but with wholehearted interest always. He and Irma also contributed financially to ongoing operations.

We as a denomination can be grateful for his life, well-lived to the glory of God and the good of His people.

THE ARMCHAIR TRAVELER

by Archivist Berneice Westerman



.Let us go back in time to 1991. There were new challenges and opportunities when I joined Dr. Dunger at the Heritage Commission: History, Preservation, Organization, Careful handling of fragile material and Rules of handling the material that was produced by others.

Rev. Orville Meth and his wife, Irma, came to our aid in many ways and traveled many miles to help me get my Archival feet on the right road. I wish to share with you some of his contributions to what we have here in the Heritage Commission.

Cathay, North Dakota was his place of birth, and of course the church in which he was a member. There is a very well-written book about that Cathay church, with material from the church records that Orville used and interpreted from German into English.

Here in our building we have five of the stained glass windows that were put into the Cathay church in 1913 — over 100 years ago! These windows were purchased in Luthuania and brought over by Mr. Leitner. Those five windows are now in the Seminary building. (Rev. Leon Bill meticulously prepared them for installation.) The large one of the Good Shepherd is back-lit all of the time and can be seen just by driving by the Seminary building. The other four are in three other places: — at the entrance to the Archives, in the Prayer Room, and two in the area adjacent to the Staff offices.

The family of one of the former Cathay church pastors gave us the money to purchase those windows when they became available, and the others had been purchased by family members whose names are in the windows. (I would still *really* like to get a picture of the church with the window showing, before a near-by tree grew bigger and covered it.)

Orville served as pastor and chaplain. I know of a number of students who came to the Seminary because he encouraged them. In one case, he met a serviceman who came to his office in Elgin, Iowa to ask him, “What time does your service end?” The soldier had a schedule to keep and had to be back to the barracks on time. That same student came to the Seminary and was told by Orville that he should “call me for a key to the house that is reserved for you.” When the man and his wife arrived they found that Orville and Irma had put a crockpot of stew in the kitchen so that the new arrivals would find food waiting for them before they got ready for a night of sleep. I have heard this student call Orville his “father” and know that he was asked to preach the sermon at Orville’s funeral.

While at Elgin, Iowa, Orville encouraged the people of the church to draw up the plans of the Lansing Camp which many people now enjoy and have enjoyed through the years.

Orville was one of the first Lifetime Members of the Heritage Commission and served as our Chairman for a number of years. I appreciated the encouragement that both Irma and Orville gave me by coming to help us get ready for moving and sorting, as well as providing us with items from Laura Reddig’s life in Cameroon. The Medal that Laura was given by the Queen of England is in our holdings. I was present when she received it and so it is special to me also. Only God knows how much Orville Meth meant to us who worked in the Heritage Commission Office!