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1920 ~ 1980

"TOGETHER" ARTICLE

(The following article was photographed from the August, 1961 issue of "Together".)

Second Longest Pastorate in Nation

For 40 Years He Served Iowa Church

When the North Iowa Conference was adjourned in Sioux City the second longest pastorate in The Methodist Church came to an end.

It was in 1920 that the Rev. A. Otto Bishop was appointed to supply the Minerva Wesley Chapel—a picturesque white frame church about 10 miles northwest of Marshalltown. Now, 41 years later, he has retired from his single pastorate. The only Methodist pastorate in the nation that is longer is that of the Rev. Ralph W. Sockman at Christ Church, Methodist, in New York. Dr. Sockman—one of the nation's best-known ministers—has been at Christ Church in some capacity since 1911 and senior minister since 1917.

One of the first things Mr. Bishop did when he arrived at Minerva 41 years ago



Mr. Bishop feels at home in this pulpit.



The Rev. A. O. Bishop and the church he served continuously for the past 40 years.

Mr. Bishop moved to Marshalltown in 1909 upon being graduated from the former Leander-Clark College in Toledo. After a few years with an automobile company he decided he would like to enter the ministry.

He was too old at the time to complete the work for full membership in the Annual Conference so he went to Minerva as what The Methodist Church knows as an "accepted supply"—a status he has maintained ever since.

Now 76 and a bridegroom of about six weeks, Mr. Bishop and his wife will move to her former home in Springfield, Mo.

The new Mrs. Bishop is the former Mrs. Fred Gilbert—a long-time friend. Mr. Gilbert—also a Methodist pastor—died near the time of the death of the first Mrs. Bishop.

The wedding ceremony was read the same day this spring that Mr. Bishop was discharged from the hospital after

a 70-day recovery from an automobile accident—his longest absence from his pulpit in the 40 years as pastor.

Unlike many open-country churches, the Minerva congregation has continued to grow. Mr. Bishop remembers there were 28 members when he took the train out from Marshalltown for his first sermon—now there are 135.

SPECIAL ENHOLDE

By the middle of August some 2,000 Methodists from all over the world will be in Oslo, Norway, for the World Methodist Conference. A number of these will be from Iowa which has an unusually close tie with Norwegian Methodism. In these pages next month will be several special articles and pictures on this subject.

A. O. BISHOP

The story of A. O. Bishop, related below, is what knowledge I have of him and what others have told me. There was so much that took place between 1920 and 1961, it would make a book in itself. We have tried to just hit the highlights.

A. O. Bishop was married in 1911 to Calla Hodges, lived in Marshalltown, and came to Minerva Church in 1920 as a Supply Pastor. Before hard surface roads and cars, he would come up on the train and stay all night in people's homes. After cars became popular, he and Calla would come out on Sunday morning for Sunday School and Church. People would invite them for Sunday dinner. That became a tradition to carry on until his retirement in 1961.

Bishop had the second longest ministry in one church in the history of United Methodist Conference. Mr. Bishop's salary at the beginning was \$400 a year. As the church was made up of farm people, his congregation would supply them with farm produce. In later years, his salary was increased to \$600 a year with his congregation giving him what was called a "pound party". This consisted of meats, canned goods, and vegetables in season.

The women of the church were the main finance of the church and were known at that time as the Ladies' Aid. The women were not all members of the church. A good many of them lived in the Minerva Community and took part in all activities. In the late '20's and '30's they had many ice cream socials held on the town square. That was where Herbert and Jessie Nichols lived and always the Minerva band would play. People came from far and near to play in that band. Whenever anything was going on, they always had the band play. They had a building in the town of Minerva, the band hall, where they gathered and did their practicing.

Many improvements have been made at the church. The interior had "Nu-wood" on the walls, new pews, pulpit, light fixtures, carpeting upstairs, and many new pieces of furniture. Most of this was made possible by donations and memorials left in memory of loved ones.

Everyone was saddened by the death of Calla in 1959.

When Bishop came in 1920, there were 20 families as members. When he left in 1961, there were 135 members. As you can see by the roll, most of these members are families of the founders of the church.

WHEN I ENTERTAINED THE BISHOPS

The old mother hen on a Saturday morn
Stood by her chicken coop sad and forlorn.
She was thinking of her son plenty large for the platter.
Daughter chick looked and says "Mom what is the matter?"
Daughter dear, tomorrow the Bishops come to dine
And I know the housewife will slay this son of mine.
She'll dress him and fry him a golden brown
And serve him to the Bishops from Marshalltown.
But we shouldn't be angry and sad my dear
When we think of the good the Bishops will do this year.
And I know the Lord will bless me for giving this son of mine
To grace the table when the Bishops come to dine.--Jessie Nichols

PASTORS

Mr. Bishop baptized our children, married a good many of them and has baptized their children.

Mr. Bishop married the second time to Mrs. Gertrude Gilbert of Springfield, Missouri. Mr. Gilbert died about the same time as the first Mrs. Bishop. They were friends of long standing. Upon his retiring, he moved to Springfield, Missouri, but came back for special occasions such as weddings and deaths. At first he was greatly missed, but time has a way of healing and changing things.

Now from 1961 to 1980 we have had several ministers. Our first was Rev. O'Toole. At this time we shared a pastor with Albion. Albion had a parsonage where he lived. Rev. O'Toole was there from 1961-1963. Not too many changes were made at this time. New pulpit furniture was added.

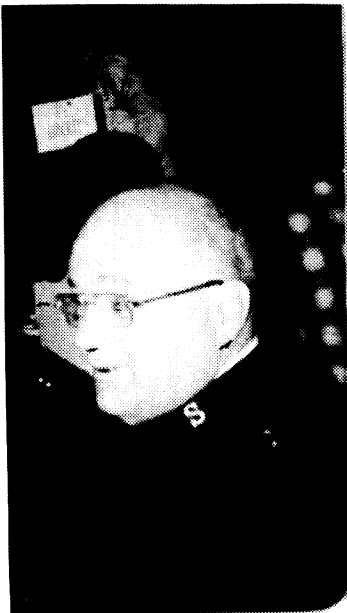
Leonard Baldwin and wife Carol, newly married, came next. Leonard was still going to school so had to spend most of his time in school.

Dwight Garrington was next. He served the two churches for one year. He had been with the Salvation Army before going into the ministry, and since has returned to the Salvation Army Services.

At this time our school system changed. Our children were sent from Clemons to State Center. We asked to go with the State Center Church because of our youth going to school in State Center. Charles Mahaffey was pastor there at that time. He was just finishing his schooling at Drake in Des Moines. He was ordained at State Center. It was a very impressive service.



LLOYD MUSSER



DWIGHT GARRINGTON

Times keep changing, we wanted to modernize our basement. With a fund that was left to the church by a long life member of our congregation, Mrs. Grace (Elliott) Maxfield, we started plans to make our basement larger. The ladies, known now as the United Methodist Women, raised money, and with volunteer help, added another 16' by 40' to the basement. We modernized the kitchen with two double sinks, a much needed hot water heater, and restrooms. Up to this time, our restrooms were outside. All of this took place in 1968 and 1969.

In 1970, Rev. Mahaffey left us and went to Cedar Rapids. Then Rev. Irvin Wilkens came to take over both churches and because of poor health, he left in 1973.

Lloyd Musser came then and stayed until his retirement in 1977.

Now Kermit Gladfelder is our minister with a membership of 64.



A. O. & MRS. BISHOP
(After 1920)

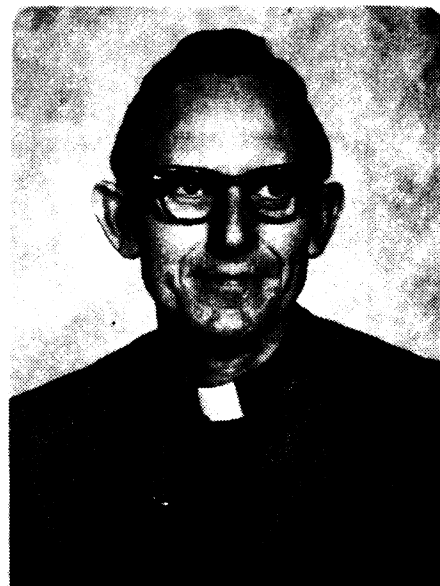


CHARLES MAHAFFEY



IRVIN WILKENS

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DUANE O'TOOLE

The wives of pastors from 1960 were: Louise, wife of Rev. Duane O'Toole; Carol, wife of Rev. Leonard Baldwin; Neoma, wife of Rev. Dwight Garrington; Vera, wife of Rev. Irvin Wilkens; Leora, wife of Rev. Lloyd Musser; and Pat, wife of Rev. Charles Mahaffey.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

Members who lived in Minerva Community from 1921-1961, joined the church, and later moved away.

Mr. and Mrs. Ollie Barker, 1921--Lillian, Mildred, Raymond, 1921
 Mrs. Clinton Brace, 1922
 Mrs. Marian Clemons, 1932--James, Bobby, Dick
 Mr. and Mrs. William Elliott, 1921--Orval, Pauline, 1923
 Eva Eurom, 1932
 Nellie Eurom, 1932
 Gladys Fisher, 1922
 Thomas and Ada Kennard, 1920--Mary Lou
 Gilbert and Martha Maxfield--Ruth and Alice Maxfield, 1922--Clifford, Doris, James, Fred, 1923
 Frank and Bee Moninger, 1934--Martin, Gwendolyn, Mary, Hannah, 1934
 Mrs. Stacy (Frances) Nichols--By letter 1934
 Stacy Nichols, 1934
 Emmett Sinclair, 1922
 Evelyn Tune, 1932
 Lucille Tune, 1932
 Iver, Harry, Ann, Lillian, Judson Veren, 1922
 Mrs. Gertrude Wilson, 1921
 Bernice, Leonard, Willard Wilson, 1921
 Ray and Eileen Bailey, 1923--Gladsen
 Doris (Brace) Sullivan, 1923
 Mrs. Metha Cox, 1933--Marion, Lucille, Leon, Mildred
 Edith (Hennis) McKelvey, 1933
 Margaret (Hennis) Campbell, 1933
 Ray and Fern Hutchinson and Family--Worked for Iver Veren--Robert Lee, C. Raymond, James Charles, Ronald Edwin, Donald Erwin
 Kenneth and Jane Brewer and Family--Worked for Iver Veren
 Mrs. Perry Hatcher, 1923--Wilbur and Lillian
 Early and Eva Elliott--Leonor and Viola--Moved away
 Art Dewitt--Moved away
 Richard and Joan Witt--Mark and Jean--Transferred out
 Harvey Coil and Family--Worked for Joe Hall
 Eddy and Jean Breed--Worked for Joe Hall--Moved away
 Zeno and Clara Finch (deceased)--Ronald
 Harry and Lena Butler (deceased)--They were not members, but Lena belonged to Ladies' Aid
 August and Agnes Hennis--10 Children
 Donald and Pearl Hennis--Harold, Howard, and Raymond--Lived home place
 Leland Hennis (deceased)
 Mrs. Leland (Mary) Hennis (Worked in church)--Bennie Lee, Dale Richard, Mary Kathleen, and Judith Annette
 Ruth (Veren) Schoenhair, 1933--Daughter Iver Veren
 Mary Lou Weuve, 1933
 Ruby Reece, 1933
 Marjory Reece, 1933
 Bernice Reece, 1933
 Arlene Reece, 1933
 Jessie May Reece, 1933
 Donald McClean, 1933--Son of Phill and Lucille (Goecke) McClean
 Vernon and Olive Lycke, 1927--Dale, Joyce, Irene, Carl, 1927
 Ronald Collins, 1934--Son of Emma (Goecke) Collins
 Charles Hodina (deceased)

Mrs. Charles (Lucille) Hodina--Moved away--Mrs. Raymond (Margaret)
 Wolf, Stanley and Marlys Hodina
 Mrs. Glenn (Virginia) Stephenson
 Wyle and Oleta Webb--Moved away--Mrs. James (Doris Ann) Jones
 Albert Webb
 Henry Mansager
 Kenneth and Rajean Mansager--Worked in Church--Gregory, Douglas,
 Diane Stonewall, Brian
 Orville and Beth Wiemer--Moved away
 Mrs. (Rex) Marian Kay Blanchard--Orval Gene, Cal Glen
 Rex Blanchard and Kay Blanchard--Moved away--Vickie, Wesley
 Vernon and Mable Wolf--Moved away--Raymond (deceased)--Kenneth, Richard,
 Donald
 Melvin and Erma Shipley--Moved away
 LeRoy Applegate--Moved away
 Ivan Stambaugh--Moved away
 Cecil and Fred Wilkens--Moved away--Harold and Richard
 August and Emma Gustafson (deceased)--Emma was a big worker in Ladies'
 Aid--Frank, Mrs. Frank (Dorothy Hiatt) Gustafson (deceased),
 Janice Reece (married and moved away), Mrs. Alice (Gustafson),
 Kaiser (deceased), Karl David, son
 Emil and Cecyle Gustafson--Cecyle also a big worker in the Aid
 Charles and Mildred Brennecke, 1929--Moved away--Marian Jean, Doris May,
 and Frank
 William and Joan Fricke--Joan a worker in Women's Society
 Walter and Arlene Pace--Transferred out--Gaylord and Jaqualin
 Ray Kelessy and family--Moved away
 Don and Sheryl Barkama--Worked for Joe Hall
 Harry Veren (deceased)
 Mrs. Harry (Clara Johnson) Veren--Richard and Lois Moore, Clifford and
 Elaine Frost, Mary Jean and Bill Shore, James and Orell May Sietman
 Julius Bryant (deceased)
 Mrs. Julius (Dorothy Brown) Bryant--moved away--David, Daniel, Leslie
 Leonard and Edna Lister--Transferred out--Richard
 Carl and Nina Ulery (deceased)--Carl, Jr. and (Ella May Jones) Ulery,
 Dwight and (Colleen Rash) Ulery, Imogene and Roger Easton, Joan
 and Richard Perry
 Leland and Alberta (Ulery) Harding--Beverly Ellis, Patty McKinney
 Gary Harding (deceased)--Married to Kay Rhodes
 Kenneth and Edith (Harding) Ulery--Shari and Larry
 Clio Nichols (deceased)
 Mrs. Clio (Eileen Wyatt) Nichols--By letter--Leslie and Pat (Tomlinson)
 Nichols, Brett, Kelly, and Brad
 Shirley (Nichols) Hemphill--Married David Hemphill--Moved away--Todd,
 Tammy and Tracy
 Alfred and Minnie Binford--Marian and Darlene
 Cecil Buschbom
 Mrs. (Cecil) Marian Buschbom (deceased)--Steven and Craig
 Ora (Bud) Whitaker
 Mrs. Ora (Darlene) Whitaker--Kay, Kevin, and Kyle
 Mrs. Gregg (Kay) Bacon--Kevin and Becky Whitaker, Kyle at home
 Frank Goecke
 Mrs. Frank (Genevieve Hall) Goecke (deceased)--Ralph (deceased), Clif-
 ford, Ralph, Raymond, Calvin
 Clifford and Inez Goecke--Susan
 Herbert and LeDonna Bartlett (deceased)--LeDonna was a worker in Womens'
 Society--four children
 Dave Stuckmeyer (deceased)--Run Blacksmith Shop in Minerva
 Mrs. Dave (Edith) Stuckmeyer--worked in church--Alice Scovill,
 Larry and Daryl Stuckmeyer

Warren and Bernice Reisinger--Eleanor, Lorna, Juanita, Deloris, Bruce,
 and Nancy
 Eldon and Julia Cooling and family lived in Humphrey house.
 Frank and Fern Vajgrt and family lived in Humphrey house.
 Bill Hauser
 Mrs. Bill (Syble) Hauser (deceased)
 Ben Overman (deceased)--worked for John Goecke
 Mrs. Ben Overman
 W.A. and Angilena Goecke (deceased)--Lucille McClean, John Goecke, Mrs.
 John (Lucille Bryant) Goecke (deceased)--2 children, Douglas and
 Audrey Goecke--2 children--Bill and Chuck
 Mrs. Carroll (Kathryn) Snyder--Steven and Heide
 Dave and Eleanor Miller--Worked for Glen Maxfield--Moved away--4 children
 Rev. Kermit and Rosalie Gladfelder--Pastor and Wife--Fonda, Joel,
 Elaine, and Tom
 Robert and Paula Goecke (grandson of Frank Goecke)--Lynn and Craig
 Earl Weuve, 1922--Joined church
 Mrs. Earl (Florence) Weuve (deceased)--Mary Lou, Earl, Jr., Elizabeth,
 and Janet; Mrs. Keith (Mary Lou) Shearer; Mrs. Jim (Elizabeth)
 Wilson; Mrs. Earl (Janet) Doyle
 Earl Weuve, Jr.
 Mrs. Earl (Monna) Weuve--Davette, Yolanda, William Todd, Kathleen, Anna
 Marie, Thomas George, and Timothy Iver--William Todd and Janice
 Davis, Mrs. Richard (Kathleen) Starn
 Ralph and Ann Eckhardt, 1925 (deceased)--Ralph, Jr, Joan Marie, 1925
 Ernest Goecke (deceased)
 Mrs. Ernest (Minnie) Goecke--Harold, Edna, Earl, Bernice, Francis,
 Louis, Mildred; Earl and Helen (Tigges) Goecke--Ronald, Ellen,
 Steven (deceased) Karen
 Ronald and Mary Goecke--Deanna, Valerie, Chad
 Mrs. Allan (Karen) Hilleman
 Fred and Pearl Goecke (deceased)--Emma Goecke Collins, Virginia White,
 Clarence and Kenneth--All moved away
 Kenneth and Juanita (Bauer) Goecke--Moved away--Kenny Dean, Barbara
 McDowell
 Kenneth was Sunday School Superintendent for seven years
 Juanita was Secretary-Treasurer for seven years
 Peter and Linda (Veren) Schneider--Moved away
 Jack and Sandra Nichols--Moved away
 Thomas and Judith Nichols--Moved away
 Keith and Ruth (Hall) McDonald--Moved away
 David and Kathleen (Hall) Nicholas--Moved away

FARM PRODUCE DAY

Article that appeared in the "Tattler", Clemons School Paper. Written by Fred A. Humphreys in 1943.

The Minerva Church had a Farm Produce Day, Friday, December 3. This has become an annual affair, and the proceeds from this project amounted to \$1,038.48. The members of the community donated grain, livestock, poultry, and cash. The produce was sold and the returns plus cash gifts were put into the working fund of the church. There were eleven hogs donated which were sold and brought a

little over \$400. The fried chicken supper, which the Ladies Aid served, brought a large crowd from Marshalltown and surrounding communities. The evening program consisted of a talk by Jim Chapman, and an orchestra consisting of Henry Humphreys, Clifford Nichols, Clio Nichols, Stacy Nichols, Jr., with Mrs. Grace Maxfield at the piano.



MARSHALL CO. CHURCH DAY PARADE



CONGREGATIONAL PICTURE TAKEN IN THE '1930'S.

W. S. C. S.

In 1948, the Ladies Aid Society of Minerva Wesley Chapel voted to join with other women of the Methodist Church and reorganize as the Women's Society of Christian Service. By-laws, consisting of eight Articles were drawn up and adopted in June, 1948. There was some change in the organization, as in addition to the elective offices of president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, the following secretaries were appointive: Missionary Education, Spiritual Life, Christian Social Relations, Literature and Publications, Student and Youth, Children's Work and Supply Work. Officers were to serve two years except for the treasurer who could serve four years, but Ruth Humphreys was re-elected to the treasurer's office for twenty years. Service to the local church remained the same; and, in addition, a yearly pledge to missions was met with monies being channeled through the district treasurer's office. Conference and District annual meetings were always well attended with a carload or more of women representing Minerva. Two delegates were sent each year to the School of Missions.

Minerva women were well known for their annual fried chicken suppers. Other fund raisers were bake sales; passing a basket of food from member to member with a contest between the "north side" and the "south side" to see who raised the most money; waist measuring; birthday cakes at meetings--to name a few--and in recent years, the annual HOMEMADE ICE CREAM SUPPER, which draws people from miles around year after year.

With the merger of the Methodist and United Brethren churches came a change in the name of the women's organization. It now became known as United Methodist Women. Due to changing times, regular attendance at monthly meetings has dropped. More women became employed outside the home; and, whereas in the past all women in the neighborhood and members of other churches came to the meetings, now only women affiliated with Wesley Chapel attend as the other women felt that need to be loyal and support women's groups in their respective churches. However, even though Minerva women can't all attend the regular meetings, no one is a slacker when it comes to helping in preparation for special events such as the fund raising suppers, Easter breakfast, Harvest Sunday, guest days, family nights--working together in harmony in Christian service.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday morning Sunday School and the various activities connected with Sunday School have been a large part of the program at Minerva for many years. The written record of this program is not complete, so much of the information comes from various persons' memories. The memories will probably add color and personal touches that the records would not have provided, but there must be many people that have contributed to the program whose names will be missed.

James Hall, Joe's father, taught an adult Bible Class in Minerva Sunday School in the 1920's or thereabouts according to Dorothea Hall.

In the early 1940's an adult class was organized and Grace Maxfield was asked to teach it. This lasted for several years. Later on Dorothea Hall took the class for one Sunday each month and LaDonna Bartlett one Sunday. Then, for years there wasn't any adult class until Mary Goecke organized a class in the fall of '77.

The list of Sunday School Superintendents includes several names, and the first that Dorothea recalls is Cecil Wilkins. Others are Stacy Nichols, Jr., Clio Nichols, Kenneth Ulery, Warren Reisinger, Joan Witt, Kenneth Goecke (ten years), Gary Harding (three years), Audrey Goecke (eight years), and Betty Humphreys (current).

Other Sunday School officers playing a large role have been Pat Nichols, secretary-treasurer, for the past twelve years or so, and Lucille Goecke had this job for several years in the 40's and 50's.

Many names appear on the list of teachers over the years with several names being missed, no doubt. They are as follows:

James Hall	Dorothy Bryant	Eileen Nichols
Grace Maxfield	Mary Jean Shore	Yolanda Weuve
Emma Veren	Sue Kelsey	Kathryn Snider
Calla Bishop	Kenneth Goecke	Mary Goecke
Dorothea Hall	Jack Nichols	Audrey Goecke
La Donna Bartlett	Kay Blanchard	Pat Nichols
Edith Stuckmeyer	Kathy Hall	Darlene Whitaker
Alice Kaiser	Keith McDonald	Betty Humphreys
Jessie Nichols	Marilyn Veren	Paula Goecke
Helen Goecke		

Clint Brace and Henry Humphreys were called on many times over the years to lead the singing or to help with putting together the musical part of many Sunday School programs.

Pianists for the Sunday School over the years include Edna Lister, Ruth Hall, Barbara Goecke, Yolanda Weuve, Edna Hibbs, Leora Musser, and Deanna Goecke.

Sometime over the years there were as high as five classes--primary, elementary, jr. high, high school, young adult and adult. In more recent years, because of dwindling numbers, there are usually three classes--primary, elementary, and adult.

Over the years, Minerva Sunday School is probably remembered best for capacity crowds that it drew for Christmas Eve programs that usually involved nearly all of the younger members. The telling of the Christ-

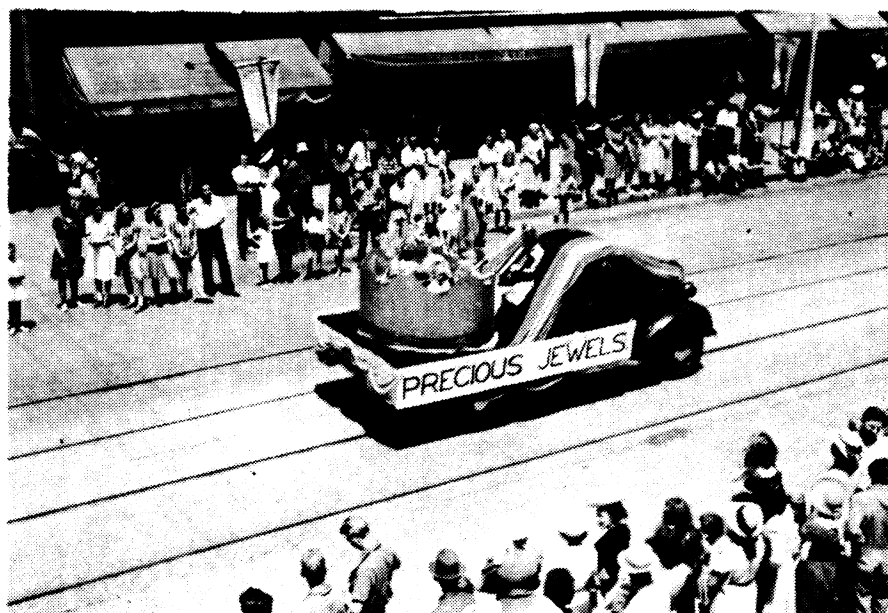
mas story and a good variety of Christmas music was presented. Sometimes these programs were nearly professional in quality, and sometimes they were a little less than that, but they were always enjoyed by those attending. Santa Claus nearly always made an appearance, and a gift exchange followed. Treats were passed out also.

Many programs of a lesser nature have been performed by the younger members over the years.

Other activities include Halloween parties, sledding parties, hay rides, and weiner roasts.



MINERVA FLOAT
MARSHALL CO. CHURCH DAY PARADE
(Grace Maxfield driving)



MINERVA FLOAT IN ANNUAL (6TH) CHURCH &
BIBLE SCHOOL DAY, MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA

WESLEY CHAPEL DEDICATION

As per announcement, the new Methodist church west of Albion was dedicated last Sabbath by Rev. Dr. McCabe. The trustees named it Wesley Chapel. They insisted on calling it Barclay Chapel, in honor of the pastor who has been so closely connected with the enterprise from the beginning and who has been general manager, but he declined the honor and suggested the above name. The church is a perfect gem, not a barn, but it looks like a church. It is 20 x 45 with a symmetrical belfry. It is a very substantial building, the pews are ash and walnut finished in oil and varnish and pronounced by all as the nicest and most comfortable pews in Marshall County. They were made by the Novelty Manufacturing Company of Sterling, Illinois. The inside finish of the house corresponds with the finish of the seats. The platform, altar, and aisles are neatly carpeted, three chairs and a beautiful center table are the pulpit furniture. The church is lighted by two large chandeliers. The building is finely located on the northwest corner of the farm of Warren Nichols in Marietta Township and is the only Methodist church in that region.

The day of the dedication was rainy and real unpleasant, yet it will long be remembered as a day of happiness and victory. It rained heavily up to ten o'clock, keeping away hundreds that had planned to be present. The church is a novel of cheapness and wise management--the total cost in clear cash was \$1,300. The work and hauling donated easily amounts to \$200. This, together with the grounds, etc. makes the total of \$1600. On the day of the dedication there remained a debt of about \$200. Though the morning congregation was rather small, yet \$300 was raised in a short time. Dr. McCabe preached grandly on Ruth gleaning in the field of Boaz. In the afternoon the church was crowded. Dr. McCabe preached a very fitting and eloquent sermon that greatly moved the congregation. The people said we want a bell, and \$55 was raised in a brief time. Then followed the impressive dedicatory service, and the most important day in many years in that part of our county was ended. A beautiful church, splendidly located in a rich farming country, overlooks the fine valley of the Minerva and is the pride of the people.

The trustees all are unstinted in their praise of the pastor, Rev. W. F. Barclay, and declare, but for him, the long struggle of fifteen years in trying to build, would have resulted in failure.

Mr. Philbrick, the carpenter, did an honest, first-class job. He is a splendid workman. Much credit is due J. W. Mills, Edward Hall and Warren Nichols, members of the Building Committee, for their untiring and self-sacrificing labors in the erection of the church.

This is a copy of an article taken from the Marshalltown paper and preserved in the scrap book of Mrs. William R. Nichols now in the possession of Mary Alice Nichols, Gibbon, Nebraska. May 21, 1956.



Old-fashioned Christmas

(In 1958 the Wallace Farmer printed in the magazine about how we celebrated Christmas in our church.)
....Con't next page



BEAUTIFUL Minerva Chapel in Marshall county, Iowa, where members and former members get together each year to celebrate Christmas Eve.

MINERVA WESLEY Chapel in Marshall county, Iowa, fills up fast on Christmas Eve. Folks who want a seat get there early. Standing room is at a premium and late-comers often can't get in the church at all.

Why all this interest in the Christmas Eve program presented by a little church out in the country?

Part of it may stem from the friendliness of the community and their interest in the church. Partly, perhaps, because the program has become traditional in the neighborhood and no one wants to miss it.

Members, both young and old, all have a part in the program. Former members drive long distances with their families so their children can have a part in an old-fashioned church program.

Of course, there are many changes since the church was built and the Christmas Eve program started. Kerosene lamps along the side have been replaced with indirect lighting. Central heating has replaced the wood burning stoves. Shiny cars in a parking area have replaced the horse-drawn sleighs.

But the original warmth and friendliness of the members has made the church an important center for the community.

A large Christmas tree stands in front of the church. Originally it was decorated with strings of popcorn and cranberries. Colored popcorn balls were suspended from the limbs. Then, it was precariously lighted with tallow candles.

Today the tree is decorated with shiny ornaments and strings of colored electric lights. Young people of the church generally decorate both the tree and the church for the Christmas season.

The program for Christmas Eve isn't spectacular in any way. The congregation sings the beautiful old Christmas carols and hymns. Children speak pieces, and young people, many of them home from college for Christmas, provide special music.

High point for the children arrives with the sound of sleigh bells. Then, Santa Claus comes bursting thru the back door with a huge pack on his back.

Older folks speculate on who impersonates the current Santa, since the delightful chore is passed around.

A gift exchange follows. This part of the program began in the early years of the church when few families had Christmas trees in their homes.

Parents would bring gifts for the children and their friends and hang them on the tree at the church. Gift giving gradually became a community affair.

Mrs. Iver Veran, whose father donated the land when the country church was built, says that she can remember when these gifts were only a bag of popcorn-balls and an orange or apple. She can also recall when gold watches or fur coats were given for gifts in more prosperous years.

And even tho every family in the community has its own Christmas tree, the tree at the church is an important part of the evening.

Today the tree is loaded with brightly wrapped packages. A pile is also stacked underneath to be distributed by Santa and his helpers.

Long and friendly association of the members have made joke gifts a part of the entertainment. A member received an elaborately wrapped gift box last year that contained only one nylon stocking.

Like many other rural churches in Iowa, beautiful Minerva Chapel holds its community like a powerful magnet. It stands high on a hill overlooking the surrounding valley.

The church was built in 1880 and has had services continuously since its dedication.

Christmas is only one of many special days that draw back former members. There are many thruout the year.

After the Christmas program at Minerva Chapel when members file out the front door, each is given a bag of treats. No one goes home empty handed.

Older members recall snuggling down in blankets in a sleigh for the ride home. Members today slip into comfortably heated cars and get home quickly.

Times and customs change but the spirit of Christmas, exemplified by this little church, remains the same.

December 20, 1958

Church Social Still Big Event At Minerva

By VIRGINIA BAXENDALE
(T-R Staff Writer)

You could tell there was something going on at the "Little White Church on the Hill."

The churchyard had assumed the appearance of a parking lot, and there was a great bustle of activity. This was the night of the annual ice cream social, a summer event important to the life of churches large and small.

THIS particular social held at Minerva Wesley Chapel in northwest Marshall County last week was typical of several held in the area in recent weeks.

Visitors were greeted at the door by tantalizing odors from the kitchen, and Mrs. John Goecke, dining room hostess. The menu involved many decisions . . . "Chicken or beef?" . . . "Potato salad?" . . . "Baked beans?" . . . "How about some pie?" . . . "Ice cream now or later?"

Amounts were totaled by Mrs. Clio Nichols, president of the Women's Society which sponsored the event. Each of the 30 to 35 members provided two pies or a cake, a gallon of ice cream, hamburger or chickens and a variety of other items. Mrs. Harry Veren was chairman of the event.

THE WOMEN are so accustomed to working together that they even used the same recipe for the homemade ice cream. In serving the more than 350 who attended, the group raised more than \$275, most of which will be used to help meet some of the expenses necessary to keep the church of 100 membership

going.

There have been a great many socials held in the church since it was built in 1880.

"Rural churches are coming to the fore," stated Mrs. Grace Maxfield, one of the longtime members. "People are moving out of the cities, and the churches are moving out too."

"This has been known as a family church. Visitors have commented on the friendly spirit. The farms in this area are owned rather than just tenanted. The young people have stayed. Many of the farms belong to descendants of the Goecke family which came originally from Germany."

MRS. MAXFIELD'S parents, the Jarred Elliotts, were charter members of the church. "I was practically raised in it," she laughed. "I still sit in the front, because that's where our family sat. In the early days when you went to Sunday school you stayed for church. Youngsters now should be taught that church service is also a necessary part of the Sunday observance."

In his 40th year as pastor of the church is the Rev. A. O. Bishop, 307 N. 6th St., Marshalltown, who came there as a student minister. The church was enlarged in 1924 and extensive improvements made in 1958.

This article is a copy of the original from the Marshalltown Times Republican.

