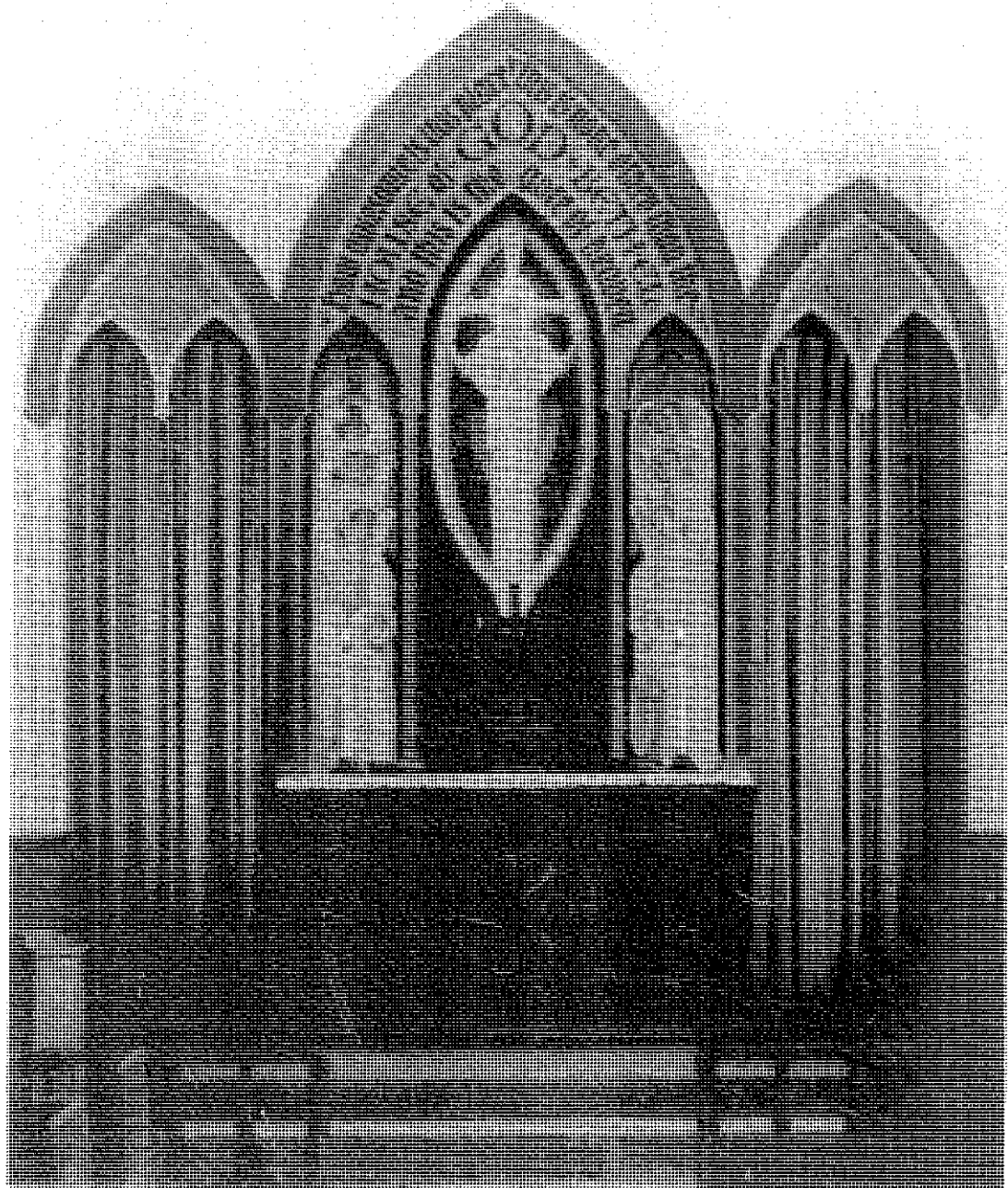


# *The Bethel Story*



THE BETHEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
Crawford County, Pennsylvania

## THE COVER DESIGN

The new chancel pictured on the cover was dedicated February 9, 1941, and was the gift of Miss Bessie Hummer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Hummer of Bethel. She gave this in memory of her nephew, Melvin Kerr, and her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Hummer, and Mr. and Mrs. William David Hasbrouck.

The architect for this redecoration was Mr. Marion Mack, and the carpenter Mr. John Lundstrom both of Titusville, Pennsylvania.

The speaker at this dedication was Rev. Harry D. Hummer, Th. D., minister at the Methodist church, Bordentown, N. J. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Hummer, and has gone out from this church into the Christian ministry.



## Bethel Church Established By Methodists Back in 1825

The following information is taken from the "History of Crawford County," Pages 581 to 583, and was read to the congregation at the Dedication of the new Parish House by Elias W. Hummer.

The Alcorns, Mitchells, David and Samuel Henderson, and the Watsons were among the earliest Methodist families in this region. The band was small, but faithful. It was too weak to build a church, and meetings were held in various places, cabins, school houses, and in summer, barns, commencing soon after the first settlements and continuing with tolerable regularity until the Titusville church was built.

"Bethel" church is a Methodist Episcopal Sanctuary situated on Tract 11 in the northern part of the township. It is a small frame building about 36 by 46 feet, and was erected in 1856 as the result of a revival conducted by Rev. George Eberman.

A class was organized in this vicinity as early as 1825, and among its first members were Andrew Alcorn, Obed Gardner and wife; Isaac Connell and wife; John and Martin Zeley, Barnett Shelmadine and wife; Benjamin Shelmadine and wife; John Colton and wife; and Charles Fink and his father.

Early meetings were held at Fink's Cabin; then in Colton's school house until the church was built; quarterly meetings having been held in the barns and in the forest. The society has about 30 members and is a part of Hydetown Circuit.

The deed was originally conveyed to: Edwin Hotchkiss, Perry Steadman, Barnett Shelmadine, John A. Kerr, Robert Henderson, David L. Fink, Richard Peek, Andrew Alcorn and John Kerr from John Shelmadine and wife Mary Ann Shelmadine.

1941,  
E. W.  
Kerr,  
Mrs.

d the

t. D.,  
f Mr.  
o the

vford  
t the

tsons  
was  
were  
com-  
regu-

Fract  
bout  
cted

g its  
nnell  
amin  
l his

ouse  
arns  
t of

nan,  
ink,  
and



*This Book Has Been Compiled  
In Memory Of  
ESTHER DAVIS KERR*

A kind friend, mother, servant; leader in good deeds, and an example to those who would be good, useful and great. To her a life worth living was worth giving. Truly a refreshing flower in God's earthly garden, a star in His heaven.

## *Letter from the Architect*

Dear Friends:

The gentle reader of Bethel history will be spared anything resembling a day-by-day account of the remodeling work which occurred in the years 1939 and 1941.

As to the choice of design, the ones on the basketball team then were responsible for raising the roof to its athletic height, and for my partner John Lundstrom's inventing the depressible stage. Economy of materials and utilization of doors and windows from the old community house determined much of the design. The foundation forms were measured to a fraction of an inch so that the finished flooring and ceiling would come out even in standard-sized pieces. The studdings were spaced so as to serve as finished door and window jambs.

The slight Gothic flavor imparted to the original Church building by its pointed-arched windows was carried over into the new wing. In fact, two of the windows themselves were carried over, and set up in the new north wall. The central space between them was left without a window lest the light prove blinding to persons facing the stage; but on the outside the blankness of the wall was relieved by a window-shaped panel of fiber-board with slight projections to make possible a color decoration easily maintained in paint. Later the flat-topped entrance to the original church was decorated by an arched panel set into the gable in a like manner.

The work was done in that depression period which we still call "The Depression." Prices were low, but the supply of money was lower. Hence, every little old stick was saved and used. Labor was cheap to free. John Lundstrom and I undertook the contract in an ostensible business-like fashion, but when all the extras which we felt like adding were done, we had contributed a great share of our labor gratis. Demolition of the old Community House, excavation of the basement, cement work, sheeting and much else were done free by the members of the church and community. Elias Hummer, manager of those operations, could add interesting notes at this point.

Inside the original church building, the principal change was at the east end, where the choir was remodeled according to the current mode in church planning. A new platform was raised; the old rectangular, moveable pulpit was taken apart and rebuilt into a polygonal, stationary part of a south chancel; a lectern, designed to match its style was set into a north chancel. The solid rails were framed in rough lumber and covered with fiberboard and trimmed with stock pine moldings. The altar was finished with a combination of painting, staining, and varnishing which I had worked out. The old wainscoting was also covered with fiberboard, and likewise the weather-beaten main doors. The old Communion rail was disassembled

and rebuilt on an elevating base.

The arched window openings of the north wall were retained, their glass replaced by panels. A frame and panel were placed against the west wall to balance the small door already there; and arched panels were placed above the doors to harmonize them with the existing windows. I intended eventually to decorate these various panels, but never got so far as even to make designs for them. The entrance doors, however, were decorated with symbols of the Apostles.

The most conspicuous change was the blocking off of the glare from the east windows by a cyclorama, and the hiding of the piano behind a reredos.

The theme of the altar piece was suggested by the name of the church; Jacob's dream at Bethel. Against a night sky the angels ascend on one side, and descend on the other, as though passing the altar in their round between earth and heaven. The inscription, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God (Beth-EL) and this is the gate of heaven," is from Genesis 28:17. The vision of Deity represented in the center panel is influenced by Daniel's description of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7: 9-10; and by St. John's vision on Patmos (Revelation 1:13-15), and also by Mediaeval representations of Christ in glory.



My last work was carving a mixture of Pilate's Greek and Latin inscriptions of the Crucifixion on the altar cross which was built by John Lundstrom. John became seriously ill the night that his work at the church was finished, and although he recovered to work for several more years, his vigor was never the same. I like to think of the church as his last principal work. It is with tender affection and most happy memories that I recall our work together at Bethel with my father and with all of you good folks.

Sincerely yours,  
Marion Mack, Ithaca, N. Y.



### *Parish House Provided for Bethel Church*

Addition completed at cost of \$5,000.00. Dedicated December 31, 1939. The Bethel Methodist Church dedicated its new Parish House, which has been built as an integral part of its edifice, on Sunday morning. This building opens directly from the church auditorium, but is also entered from without.

It has in its commodious basement two large furnaces, large storage for fuel, room for the installation of tables for ping pong, and other games, and the extensive frame which lifts and lowers the platform at the end of the floor above making a stage for tableaux and plays.

This large room with its high ceiling hidden, but with bright electric lights, moveable seats, and tables is adapted to various uses, lectures, concerts, plays, and suppers.

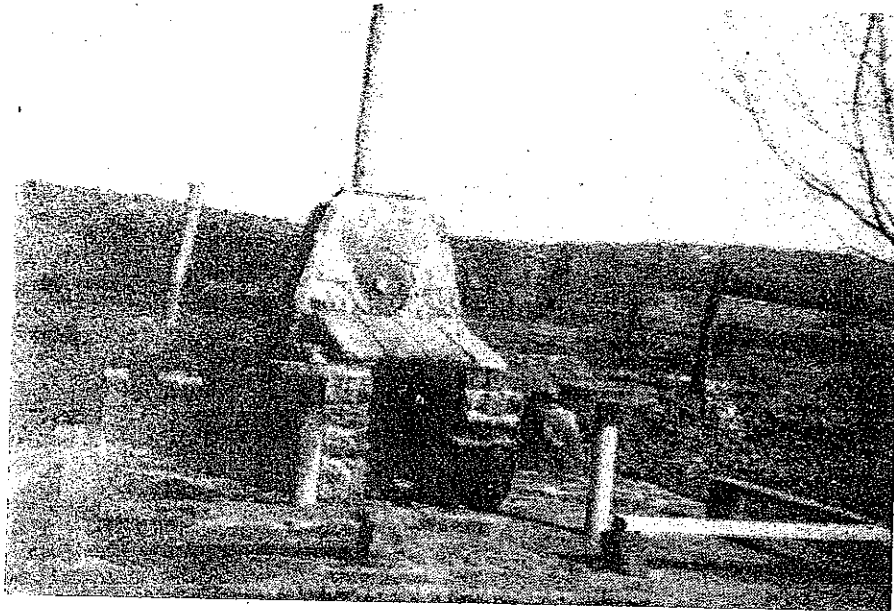
Opening directly into this spacious hall is the kitchen, supplied with all utensils needed to give to cooks and waiters ease in serving. Above is another large room to be used for Sunday school classes and meetings of various groups.

Marion Mack of Titusville was the architect, and John Lundstrom and Mr. Mack were the contractors. The building committee consisted of Elias W. Hummer, Joe C. Hummer, and Eber Kerr.



### *First Wedding in the Church*

The wedding of Miss Virginia C. Vosburgh, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde O. Vosburgh, and George Simpson, son of Mrs. Charles Morrison of Indiana, Pennsylvania on August 10, 1943 was the first wedding ever to take place in the Bethel church.



## The Outdoor Fireplace

The fireplace above is the work of Basil Hummer, Bethel Community farmer. The fireplace was built in the spring of 1948, while Dr. George Wood Anderson was pastor. Material used in the fireplace is of native rock brought to the site by younger members of the Church.

Three old grindstones were used, two as table tops near the fireplace while the third one can be seen imbedded in the front of the fireplace.



## Memorials

The communion set was given by E. Juline Kerr in memory of her father, Marion Kerr.

The pulpit Bible was given by E. Juline Kerr in memory of her mother, Mrs. Eva Kerr.

The Young People of the Bethel church gave the "Inter-Church Hymnal" to the church school in memory of Ione Hummer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Hummer. Later Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Hummer gave "The Methodist Hymnal" to the church school in memory of their daughter, Ione.

Rev. and Mrs. R. K. Rumbaugh gave "The Methodist Hymnal" hymnals to the choir. They also presented the Lectern scarf and Bible marker to the church, and gave the large picture of "The Last Supper" that hangs in the Junior Sunday School room.

The electric stove in the parsonage was given by Mr. and Mrs. Elias Hummer in memory of their little grandson, Melvin Kerr.

The choir chairs were a gift of the choir.



*While the church is seeking better methods God is seeking better men.*





## Open House of the Bethel Methodist Parsonage Held March 20, 1949

A dream of several generations was realized as members of the congregation and friends gathered at the little community of Bethel to inspect the new parsonage of the Bethel Methodist Church.

Much of the material and labor was donated by members of the congregation who began construction of the house a year ago.

Logs were taken from their farms to a sawmill, and converted into lumber, including hardwood flooring. Last fall the members excavated a cellar and put a cement block foundation in place, and then proceeded to erect the framework.

The eight rooms all pleasantly lighted by large windows, include a living room with a large fireplace built by Dick Sharp, and spacious picture window, a spacious dining room, fully-equipped kitchen, laundry room, study, washroom downstairs, and a bathroom upstairs, three goodsized bedrooms, on the second floor, and ample closet space.

Members of the building committee were: Chairman, Ralph Hummer; George M. Hummer, Paul Kunz, Harry Kerr and Chester Staskiewczyk.

Dr. George Wood Anderson, the pastor, has been with the church two years coming there after an illustrative career as a church evangelist. He had had ninety tabernacles built for him in large cities throughout the United States.

Light refreshments were served to the visitors at the open house. Church ladies who poured were: Mrs. E. W. Hummer, Mrs. Will Hasbrouck, Mrs. Eber Kerr, Mrs. Charles Kerr, and Mrs. Clyde Vosburgh. In addition to all of those who gave to the erection of this house uncounted hours of sacrificial work, we are deeply grateful for many special gifts that have been made spontaneously. Among them are: The ground on which the structure stands, \$100 to apply on the excavation, \$25 for personal purposes, donation of logs for lumber, \$10 or a 2 x 4, \$25 to apply to fireplace and



chimney, \$40 to apply to lighting fixtures, the cost of plumbing, the cost of plastering, the gift of the roof, the front door complete, the siding for the garage, the electric hot water heater, the electric stove, the labor on the cupboards, the shades for the windows, and \$270 in various gifts of money for general use.

In addition to these we are indebted to those who furnished materials and labor at a discount.

Financial Statement:	Donations .....	\$ 2,180.44
	Borrowed .....	\$6,378.05
		<hr/>
Cost of building .....		\$ 8,558.49

## Letters from former Members of Bethel Church Who Became Ministers

*The following letters are written by three ministers who have gone out from our church to preach God's word. We have also had one Missionary Miss Mildred Kerr (now Mrs. Clarence Kunz) who was a member of our church. Elaine Brown is going to work in Home Missions, and her brother, Dick, is studying to be a minister.*

Dear Bethel:

I cannot point to any one thing which made me decide to enter the ministry. It was a long slow process involving many factors. Among these: my early home training, and the Christian influence of Dad and Mother; the important place in their lives of the church; the observation of older friends which pointed toward the ministry; opportunities to do leadership work in the church while away at school and teaching; time to reread and meditate upon the New Testament while in France; working with the Chaplain and Y. M. C. A. secretary; working as assistant to an evangelist; and finally all these coming to a vocal point by Rev. Rumbaugh saying, "You ought to prepare to become a local preacher." I went on to college and seminary and was ordained.

My call was definite, and I have never doubted it.

Love and Best Wishes to All,  
Harry Hummer, D. D.



The Bethel Methodist Church:

I was pleased to learn that an attempt is being made to compile a history of Bethel Church and Community. I know of no other Church more worthy of such an effort, for Bethel has a record of which we all are justly proud.

A host of people of my generation would join me in expressing their highest respect for the stalwart Christian citizenship of the men and women who provided the leadership for the Bethel Church from the early days of our childhood.

The sincerety of worship led by devout men of God in our pulpit, the effective testimony of class leaders, the sincere interest of Sunday school teachers, and the consistent example of everyday Christian living by these leaders of church and community life blended to develop in me a wholesome concern for Christian leadership that eventually drew me into the Christian ministry.

Beyond the austerity of my Grandfather, William David Hasbrouck, and others like him, there was a profound faith in God. To live under the simplicity and devout atmosphere of grace at the table, to hear either him or my Grandmother read from the family Bible at the close of day, then to kneel with them in prayer was to become heir to a heritage more precious to me than gold.

May God preserve to future generations that which has made Bethel community unique.

Yours in Christian Service,  
David M. Hasbrouck



Dear Bethel Community:

In answer to your question regarding my decision to go into the ministry, I would reply that it was during a revival campaign in Bethel Church (I hope you still have revivals) under Rev. Baker as evangelist in 1918 that I first definitely sought Christ as my Saviour, and at the altar in Bethel Church at that time I received my call to preach. I believe this Rev. Baker was later pastor of the Baptist Church in Titusville.

I was driving team, hauling lumber into Titusville for Joe Hummer that winter that I was saved. Charley Kerr was the other teamster.

I have now been a pastor for twenty-five years (May 1st, 1952). I have served eight different churches -- some of them on three-point or two-point charges. I have organized two new churches, and took one other when it was only a few years old. I have revived two old rural churches which were about ready to die, and they are now prosperous organizations, and their property in good repair.

I am now serving the West Jasper Wesleyan Church in Steuben County, New York. We have been here the past six years, and our congregation averages about 50 during good weather. We completely rebuilt the church four years ago, and are to start work on the parsonage in a few weeks. The average attendance in Sunday School the year before we came was ten.

All of my service has been in the Wesleyan Methodist Church except four months when I supplied a union church.

In His Service,  
J. B. McClintock



Dear Bethel Friends,

The church and community at Bethel were truly formative for my spiritual journey, and set the course for my life. Of course family played a significant part in my sensitivities for vocation, but at Bethel, family and church and community were virtually one and the same. Parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and siblings -- all participated in that reality bearing the names Hasbrouck, Hummer and Kerr. All of these shaped me. There were important adults who influenced me -- whether teaching a Sunday School class, or sitting in a church pew, or sharing the news on Aid day, or participating in the numerous parish house events, box socials, basketball games, pageants, plays and dinners were events that expressed important values by important people.

One such person for me was Albert Kerr. He was truly a mentor for me. Despite ill health, he persevered and achieved. In his brief life, he gave many gifts to us, and fully participated in church and community life. He encouraged my love of music, and in choir rehearsals he taught me that I could sing that love.

And pastors were important. The first pastor I remember was George Nolder, and I can recollect certain aspects of him and others who followed. But the influential pastors were George Wood Anderson and Henry C. Zimmerman. Dr. Anderson was a towering, patriarchal figure who preached in engaging ways, and who could match wits and funny stories with my Grandfather Hummer and Rev. Rumbaugh. But more important still was Hank Zimmerman, pastor in my adolescent years, who later became my classmate at Allegheny College, and my colleague in ministry. When God spoke the call to ministry, it was in the voice of Henry C. Zimmerman.

I shall always be grateful for Bethel, and to my parents and forebears who gave me this home, and provided the nurturing that influences me still. Marion Mack's striking altar piece and its quotation from Jacob's dream points to the truth about Bethel for me: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Genesis 28:17) Family, church and community combined to let me know that here or there or everywhere, in time and in eternity, I am at home with God.

Erwin K, Kerr  
November 12, 1996

\* \* \* \* \*