

## *Letters from Former Pastors of Bethel Church*

The following letters are written by ministers that have formerly served our church as pastor.

Dear Friends:

I am sorry I am so late in writing, but we have been busy calling on the sick in their homes and in the hospitals. We have made a little over two thousand calls on Methodist people in the last six months.

I came to the Hydetown Charge in Sept. 1916 with only two years experience in the Ministry after finishing my College Course at Allegheny College.

One of the outstanding qualities of Bethel Church has always been her loyalty to her own Church, and the program of Methodism at large. I remember the sleds and cutters, and an auditorium full of people for Sunday morning services, and evangelistic services. I understand that loyalty is still a quality of Bethel.

Mrs. A. M. Kerr was treasurer at Bethel during my pastorate of two years, and every Sunday morning after the Church Service I received my weekly salary.

Ask Mr. and Mrs. Joe Hummer about the Halloween Party at their house our first year at Bethel. Mrs. Elbel and I were there wearing false faces, etc. Mr. and Mrs. Hummer can tell you more about it. One young man was very much embarrassed when costumes were removed to learn that he had been holding the Minister's wife on his knee. He went to the kitchen, and did not return for the rest of the evening.

Some will remember the night when the thermometer stood at 15 below zero, and one of the ladies pinned a horse blanket around the neck of Rev. Frederick H. Baker for his ride in the cutter with the Minister to Hydetown after the evening evangelistic service on Friday evening.

Bethel Church took me in as a bashful, inexperienced minister, and were very loyal to me, and I shall never forget them.

God Bless you all, and may you be able to continue the good work you have been doing through the years is our prayer. Give our regards to all of our friends and their children and grandchildren.

Sincerely,  
Louis E. Elbel



Dear Members and Friends of "Bethel Church:"

If I had my life to live over again, one thing I would want to relive again would be to serve the Bethel Methodist Church as pastor.

It was in the fall of 1923 that I became pastor of the Hydetown Charge which then contained four churches. It was due to the unanimous request by the four churches that I came, and for three years I had one of the best times a pastor could wish for.

Again and again I have held the Bethel Church up as an example of what a real Christian fellowship is like; for it was truly exemplified by all members, one with another and in their vision for the good of the community, and the world at large.

It was during my pastorate that the money was raised for the old Community Hall. I remember well driving in the severest weather of the Winter, and soliciting from those assigned to me.

Through all the years Bethel has held a special place in my heart, and I have always been partial to the success of this church. May God's richest blessings continue to be poured out upon it.

Faithfully,  
Roy Decker, Meadville, Pa.



Dear Christian Friends of Bethel Church:

We salute you as fellow-laborers in Christ. We rejoice to know that we have had a small part in proclaiming the glorious Gospel of Good News to the people of Bethel.

How we thank God for your faith, and continued loyalty, and devotion to the cause of Christ. We know you will be rewarded by the Master of all good workmen. Our great admiration to all for the splendid way in which you undertook, and completed the building of the Parish House during our stay there.

Our prayers for your continued faithfulness in dressing the vineyard of God.

One with you in His Service,  
Rev. George B. Nolder, Chicora, Pa.



Dear Bethel Friends:

The hand of the Lord moves in mysterious ways, and it has moved us from the time we left you in 1945, into 19 states of the Union on business for His Church. At the present time I am ministering in a Church as totally different from Bethel as one can imagine a Church in an almost down town, crowded area near the heart of a great city with social problems you can scarcely dream of.

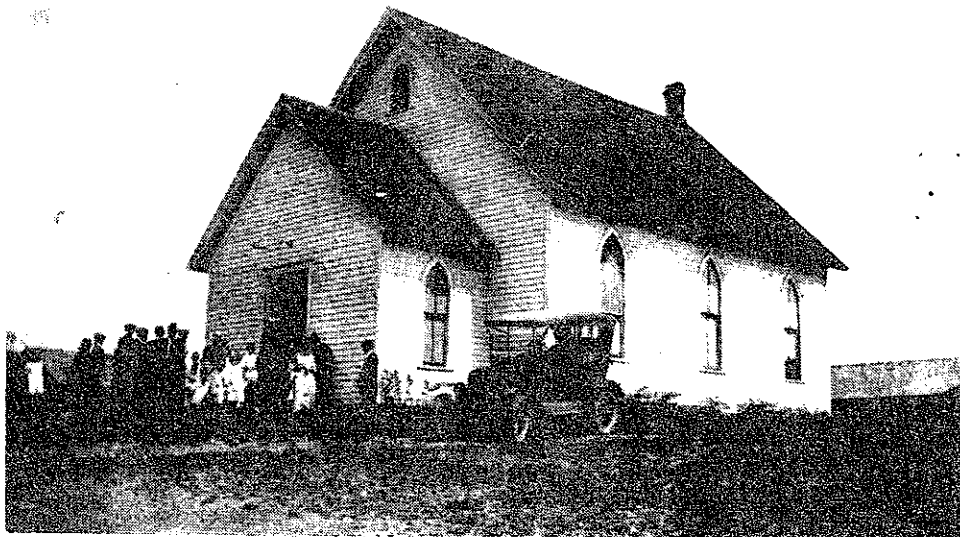
In such a time, one remembers with gratitude the responsiveness of the Bethel community to the work of the Church. Some of the things you accomplished while I was with you were: establishment of the library on a functioning basis; installation of new windows in the sanctuary; ordering of new pews; laying groundwork for "divorce" from Hydetown charge, and a new life as a "station" -- this effected a year or so later.

A most important and cherished aspect of our work with you was the ministry to servicemen and their families in World War II.

I did insist then, and would today, that Bethel's enviable reputation as an "ideal rural church" has not always worked to her benefit: such a reputation would tend to lead to a touch of self-satisfaction anywhere. "Even in Bethel" there are deep problems, social and personal as there are anywhere else.

But when that has been said, one cannot escape saying, for better for worse, that we love Bethel and all the people in it. For you did show us a patience, a sympathy, and an understanding response that made our privilege of living among you a joy never to be forgotten. The Living Christ is among you, too. And so, we share in your joy on this and every like occasion for Bethel is truly "home" to these itinerants.

Yours in the Master's Service,  
David, Arete, John, Paul,  
and Ann Taylor  
Chicago, Ill.



Dear Bethel Friends:

My memories of Bethel are sacred treasures in my mind and heart. All of you and many who have received their summons to their heavenly home by your loyalty, kindness and liberality, to me, a poor humble servant, greatly inspired and encouraged my work for the Lord and His church. I cannot recall a single word or action by anyone of the church that was not helpful.

I recall George W. Hummer, saying that he was going to tell the Bishop he would like a preacher who could tell the difference between a boy's foot and a groundhog. (Elmer Anthony). I enjoyed to the full the sense of humor with which you folks were blessed.

I recall dining at E. W. Hummer's home with Rev. Baker when he tried to have some fun with E. W. He asked him when he was going to sell his Jerseys and get some good Holsteins. E. W. replied, "When you grow hair on top of your head." His head was bare as a billiard ball.

My greatest thrill was received on August 25th, 1920 when my son Ormel and I were sitting on our front porch, and one of the Coates' boys drove up in a brand new Ford, and said, "Here are the keys, the title, and this car is yours with no strings attached." I couldn't believe him. Ormel said he had heard Joe Hummer speak something about the preacher's car the Sunday before. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart for this generous gift, and the confidence placed in me by the finest folk as a whole of all my pastoral relations of 47 years.

Sincerely, Rev. R. K. Rumbaugh,  
Titusville, PA

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My Dear Friends:

As I walk down "Memory's Lane" I am reminded of the fact that Bethel was one of the Churches on my first charge after my return from seminary.

I wondered what kind of people I would meet. I was not disappointed, for I found a spirit of friendship, and understanding which has been a benediction to me through the years.

Many of the young people who then sang in the choir are now parents of happy little families and occupy places of responsibility in the life of the Church. That is the way it should be; for Bethel is above everything else a family Church.

I see a group of older people many of whom have entered that rest prepared for the people of God. They will never know what they did for a young preacher who needed a little seasoning. They all sat in their accustomed places, and were missed if not there. One Christmas day stands out in sunny outline as a truly Merry Christmas. There was a gathering of the Hummers and Kerrs at Clyde Kerr's home. Olevia Kerr was responsible for me having to wash dishes. Irene Hummer was home from Trudeau, N. Y. The year before she had not been expected to live. I shall always bless God for one happy day spent with Andy Hummer at the old community house as we made the table legs for the tables there.

There was one of God's noblemen. And Mrs. Emma Kerr, who never entered the Church while I was there due to illness, but kept the treasurer's books and paid the preacher on time. She and her neighbor, Mrs. Rulin Vosburgh, were two of God's saints.

As I look back I can see more clearly than ever that it is the kind of people who have come out of Bethel community that has made America the great country she is.

Cordially yours,  
Arthur Colley



Dear Friends of Bethel Church:

It is a pleasure for me to write a few lines in the interest of the church which once upon a time I served. The Hydetown charge of which Bethel Church was a part was my second pastorate.

Bethel Church has always been a family church. I shall always remember how you people worshipped by sitting together in families -- grandparents, parents, and children. Often times the children would become restless and attempt to out do the minister, but this was accepted. The man behind the sacred desk had only to raise his voice to a higher pitch in atoning the message of the Lord. This was my experience on several occasions. I shall not personalize the event for it might be embarrassing to the young men who now sit where once dad sat, and had the embarrassing moment of whispering quiet suggestions to their sons. I have many cherished memories of those dear saints who came regularly to worship. Many have gone to their heavenly rewards, and are greatly missed by the friends and relatives of the Bethel community. I need not mention their names or call the roll. Can I be scriptural and say, "their spirit speaks for them" and "their works do follow after them."

Bethel Church was a friendly church. No stranger could say -- he was uninvited or unwanted. The door was open to all -- youth, strangers, and the regular members who made up the fellowship of the church which stands by the side of the road. There were the good times too, game suppers, the delight of the happy nimrods; family nights, in the old parish house; Halloween and other parties for the youth, quilting bees for the women and wood cutting for the men. All of these and many other activities made Bethel Church a cooperating church. All the members and friends working together to make the community a better place in which to live.

Many more statements could be made, but I close saying again, I cherish in my memories the three years of work and fellowship I had in serving you good people. May my influence be one of good throughout the years to come. I did try to serve Christ and His Church.

Sincerely yours,  
Rev. Dwight H. Jack, Erie, Pa.

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### **Kindness**

*"If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain.  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain."*

Emily Dickinson



Dear Friends:

It is a pleasant task to write of my memories of Bethel as they were crowded with incidents that now enrich the present. The hours spent in the Junior Sunday School and Vacation Bible School; the hours spent at your firesides, and the confidence you shared with me; the hours of worship with a host of true and loyal friends of Titusville. The fulfilling of my wishes for an outdoor fireplace far exceeding my dreams in beauty and service-ability. The most vivid memory is the building of the parsonage. Some, outside our borders said it couldn't be done, but it was, and that without soliciting from any who misunderstood a friendly gesture as a cry for help.

All of the building of the parsonage comes clearly to me: the felling and skidding of the trees. Then the curing of the lumber. There was the leveling and grading of the lawn, the digging of the cellar, and the host of men who made the forms and laid the foundation. Then the erection of a dwelling that any city church would be proud to own. The toilers names and faces come clearly to me, but too numerous to mention. Only one of the worthy -- E. W. Hummer, I shall mention because of the many weeks of unrequited toil, and the laying of the hardwood floors.

The pleasure of living in so fine a house with garage, well-kept lawns, and choice plantings will not be forgotten, and the generous souls that met a sick man's needs. It is truly the land of milk and maple syrup.

God bless you all is a prayer that rises spontaneously from my heart for each and every one.

George Wood Anderson,  
N. Y. City, N. Y.



*The parson rooted in his work is hard to stump.*





### Our Pastor 1952

Rev. Henry C. Zimmerman, who came to Bethel as pastor in September 1950, is a student in Allegheny College. Rev. Zimmerman is a native of Erie where he graduated from the Erie Strong-Vincent High School. He attended Purdue University for three semesters where he met Miss Nancy Perigo, whom he married in February 1950. Steven, the third member of the family, was born in December 1950.



# BETHEL MINISTERS

## OIL CREEK BOROUGH

Salmeron Smith ..... 1840-42  
 Alvah Wilder ..... 1843

## TITUSVILLE DISTRICT

D. N. Jones ..... 1857-58  
 W. Hays ..... 1859  
 J. C. Scofield ..... 1860-62  
 D. M. Stever ..... 1863  
 T. Stubbs ..... 1864-65  
 G. N. Luke ..... 1866-67  
 W. P. Bignell ..... 1868-70  
 D.C. Osborn ..... 1871-72  
 A. N. Craft ..... 1873

## HYDETOWN CHARGE

Sylvester Fiddler ..... 1874-76  
 J. S. Hill ..... 1877-79  
 J. E. Roberts ..... 1880-83  
 Sampson Dimmick ..... 1884  
 C. H. Quick ..... 1885  
 Thomas Berry ..... 1886-87  
 Thomas Pollard ..... 1888  
 Harry Bates ..... 1889  
 W. P. Lowthian ..... 1890-91  
 J. K. Mendenhall ..... 1892-93  
 R. A. McIntyre ..... 1894-95  
 S. E. Winger ..... 1896-98  
 Rev. Dean ..... 1899-1900  
 E. C. Rickenbrode ..... 1901  
 A. E. Salisbury ..... 1904  
 J. E. Secor ..... 1905  
 E. D. Mowrey ..... 1906-07  
 Anthony Grove ..... 1908-10

Rev. Slater ..... 1911  
 J. H. Summerton ..... 1912  
 Rev. Godsave ..... 1914  
 B. D. Addis ..... 1915  
 L. E. Elbel ..... 1916-17  
 R. K. Rumbaugh ..... 1918-20  
 O. H. Bloomster ..... 1921-22  
 Roy E. Decker ..... 1923-25  
 Scott Ingersoll ..... 1926-27  
 L. W. Chambers ..... 1928-29  
 M. K. Strickler ..... 1930-32  
 A. B. R. Colley ..... 1933-35  
 Dwight Jack ..... 1936-39  
 G. B. Nolder ..... 1940-43  
 David Taylor ..... 1944-45  
 H. L. Smith ..... 1946-47  
 Dr. Geo. W. Anderson ... 1948-50  
 Henry Zimmerman ..... 1950-55  
 Donald Horton ..... 1955-1957  
 Arthur Babbitt ..... 1957-1958  
 Jack Best ..... 1958-1959  
 Dale Arnink ..... 1959-1962  
 Ted Cole ..... 1962-1965  
 Dale Livermore ..... 1965-1969  
 Jack Reaugh, Jr ..... 1969-1973  
 John King (summer) ..... 1973  
 Ivan Hunsberger ..... 1973-1977  
 Herbert Boyd ..... 1977-1981  
 H. Arnold Ohl ..... 1981  
 (June/Dec.)  
 Christopher Livermore ..... 1982  
 (Jan/June)  
 Dennis Swineford ..... 1982-1988  
 John Snyder ..... 1988-Feb. 1993  
 Henry Zimmerman ..... 1993  
 (Feb./June)  
 Everett Hammond ..... 1993-1997

## SOME MEMORIES OF BETHEL: 1955 - 1957

Sarah and I arrived in the Bethel community in the summer of 1955. Our daughter, Phyllis, was about three months old. Although our pastorate at Bethel took place over 40 years ago, there are still many vivid memories.

"Titusville Bethel" was our first appointment after seminary in Dallas, Texas. It is difficult to imagine a better starting point for an inexperienced Parsonage family.

From the very beginning the people of Bethel opened their hearts and their homes to us.

We probably had more dinner or lunch invitations during those two years than we did in any ten years in other places. Of course, church fellowship dinners were frequent and special. Once the parsonage driveway was used to barbecue an enormous number of chickens.

Sometimes Mrs. Elias Hummer would call on a Monday morning with a lunch invitation. Sometimes she would call early in the day to tell the Pastor that someone needed help with farm work. So, part of my ministry included work in Everett Kerr's barn - or riding on John Hummer's tractor - or climbing into Ralph Hummer's silo.

During our first year, Sarah was impressed by an early snowfall in October, when the youth were gathering food for the Ida Cribbs Home. That snowfall got her attention. She was also impressed when she saw a deer wander past the parsonage. Sarah remembers how convenient it was to get our milk from the Vosburgh Dairy.

As a young Pastor I had many lessons to learn. One of these lessons came during a Conference-wide Stewardship Campaign. I had been to a Pastor's meeting and was all charged up. At one point, Harry Kerr offered some words of advice. He told me to be careful about putting too much emphasis on Tithing - or some of the dairy farmers would have to cut their monthly giving to reach the ten per cent level.

I recall the time that Ed Donner came to preach for a week at Bethel. Each night he did a magic trick. On one of those nights we borrowed two or three live fish from the Knapps. After the service, the fish spent the night in the laundry area of the parsonage. It seems to me that one or two of those fish died, before I got them back to their owners.

A very special memory has to do with two boys from the Ruth Smith Home in Sheffield. They came to Bethel for a Christmas visit. One of these boys later came back to live and work with the Clarence Dressler family.

Another memory has to do with the maple syrup industry. Neither Sarah nor I was acquainted with the process of turning maple sap into syrup. Thanks to several of the men, we came to understand the process very well. (We were told that some of the less desirable sap at the end of the season was shipped to Vermont.)