

75th Anniversary

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH
LA CROSSE, KANSAS

1886

1961

FOREWORD



The Rev. and Mrs. Forest E. Good

Methodism in La Crosse has, in the past seventy-five years, done much in molding the pattern of life in the surrounding community. Through preaching and teaching the Word, stability of character has been established which has expressed itself in practical upright living. Where people have sensed the presence of the spirit of Christ, they have united with others in the progressive program of the Church. This same spirit of unity is now becoming a noticeable characteristic of the community. To the extent in which every home and institution now unites in building for the highest standards and most noble ideals will success be achieved.

Regardless of how great have been the achievements of the past, much remains to be done today. We may well ask, "Do we have the faith, the vision, the determination, which our pioneer fathers possessed?" If we do, then regardless of the difficulties, God will lead to rich experiences and worthy goals in the future. May God help us to attain unto that better thing which He has provided for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

The building of Christian character is the chief mission of the church. In order to achieve that great task, improvements must continuously be made in methods and in equipment. For this reason, a number of years ago, a building fund was started which now stands at \$53,148.00. This amount should be doubled before plans for the erection of a new church building can proceed. May this 75th anniversary be the inspiration for such an achievement.

The First Methodist Church of La Crosse unites with all Methodism in working for the best in the world through our quadrennial emphasis, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Your Pastor,

Forest E. Good

LIST OF PASTORS

FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH 1874-1935

Hartman, R. A.	
Lafferty	
Ashbaugh, O. M.	1877-79
Earnest	
Newcomb	1880-
Gilchrist	1883-84
Fleming	1884-86
Charter Granted April 16, 1886	
Bernstorf, F. F.	1886-87
Gramley, C. H.	1887-89
Wheat, G. W.	1889-90
Winterburne, G.	1890-93
Nulton, Geo.	1893-94
Clark, J. N.	1894-95
Applebee, W.	1895-95
Templin, F. L.	1895-96
Norfleet, A. L.	1896-97
Johnson, J. F.	1898-99
Templin, F. L.	1899-01
Thompson, C. M. C.	1900-03
Cox, W. E.	1903-04
Wilson, J. E.	1904-06
Laybourn, L. E.	1906-11
Turrentine, E.	1911-12
Chambers, J. E. M.	1912-13
Perrill, A. M.	1913-16
Gilmore, J. B.	1916-19
Rainsberger, G. E.	1920-21
Saville, W. E.	1921-23
Sapp, B. B.	1924-
Presbyterian	
Harper, J. A.	1924-25
Presbyterian	
Wolfe, B. C.	1925-28
McCormick, B. C.	1928-30
Hoffman, Presbyterian	1931-35

LONE STAR GERMAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH 1876-1909

Eichenberger, J. J.	1876-
Fritchse, C. H.	1876-79
Heinrich, C. G.	1879-80
Hoffman, H.	1880-82
Stein, W. H.	1882-85
Babb, W. G.	1885-86
Geiser, C.	1886-88
Schultz, F. G.	1888-91
Humfeldt, H. G.	1891-96
Woner, C.	1896-99
Ponath, Otto	1899-02
Scheu, John	1902-06
Richart	1906-09

LA CROSSE GERMAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1909-1936	
Berg, Walter	1909-12
Hackman, H. H.	1912-13
Haller, John	1913-16
Scheu, John	1916-23
Bernstorf, C. L.	1923-24
Whipperman, F. W.	1924-31
Mayer, C. F.	1931-34
Honderick, L. R.	1935-36

The Merger

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

Honderick, L. R.	1936-41
Plott, Ranold	1941-42
McAllister, D. N.	1942-44
Holmes, Paul	1944-46
Madison, Archie	1946-52
Johnson, Claude	1952-55
Neville, Dwight	1955-59
Good, Forest E.	1959-

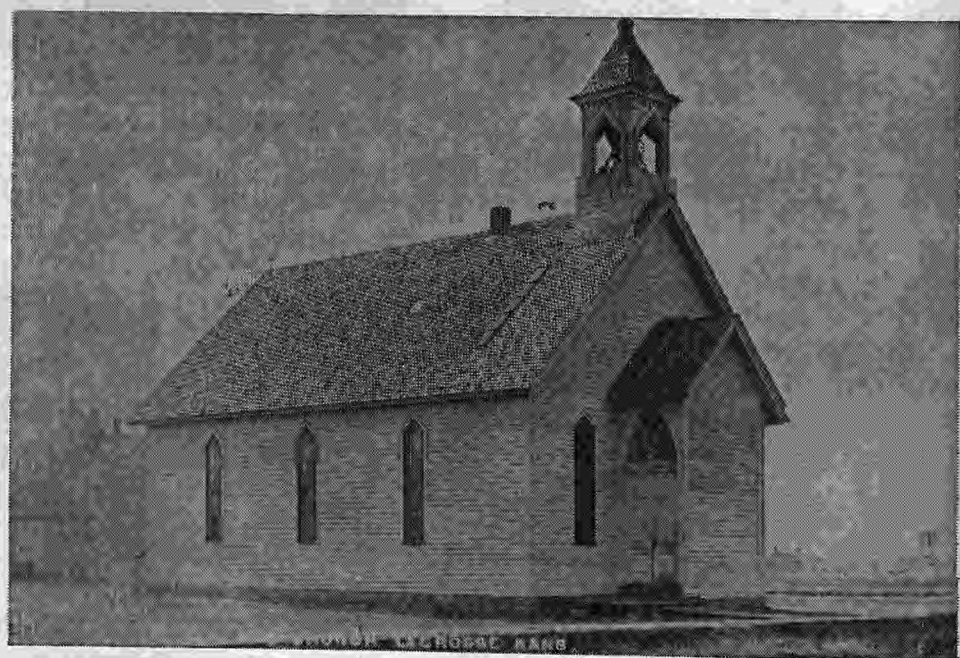
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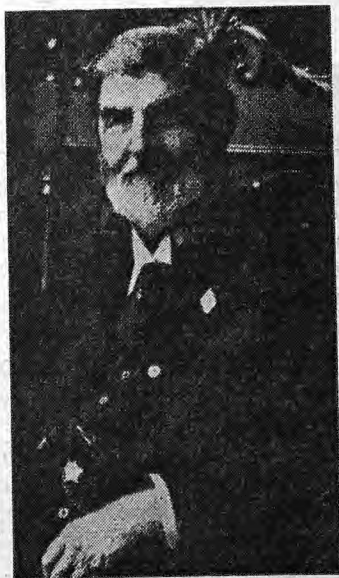
NOT FOR CHECK OUT



GERMAN M. E. CHURCH



METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH (English Speaking)



A. N. See



M. M. Stolz

EARLY DAY DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS



JUNIOR AND SENIOR CHOIRS

Ranold Plott, pastor, 1941-42

HISTORY OF THE LA CROSSE METHODIST CHURCH

compiled and written by
The Reverend Lowell R. Honderick

"Scaffolding veil'd the walls,
Dim dust floats and falls
As to and fro
The masons ply their trade."

This picture was in the mind of one who was watching the building of a great cathedral. What kind of a picture could be in the mind of one if he could stand at a great distance and watch the building of an empire? The trackless prairies of the West furnished the material for the pioneer builders as they, joyously and at times feverishly, went at the task of building homes, churches, and schools out of sod or stone.

Most of the pioneers were ambitious young men ready to accept hardship and suffering if they could only accomplish the security of having their own homes. "This is my own, my native land."

Looking backward from a distance of three-quarters of a century, one is compelled to ask the question, "How could they do it?" Hardship, disease, sickness—oft times without a doctor—and perhaps a lonely grave on the hillside is but scant evidence of the heroism of our pioneer fathers.

If the historian had gotten into the covered wagon and had come along, our story might be changed here and there. As it is, we pick "here a little and there a little," and piece things together. When it is more or less finished, we stand amazed and see the wonder of it all.

The first recorded settler came to Rush County in 1871, only to be followed in a short time by others. They settled along the Walnut Valley, as it was only natural to follow the streams to obtain water for themselves and their livestock. When the first census was taken by the state of Kansas in 1875, Rush County had a population of only 451. An itinerant minister by the name of R. A. Hartman had been appointed to the Great Bend Circuit by the Southwest Kansas Conference. Learning of new settlers up the Walnut, he dropped in on them for a pastoral visit, and finding some were Methodists, he began to hold church services. It is recorded that the first church service was on May 18, 1873, at the home of P. C. Dixon, the father of our faithful brother, L. E. Dixon of the Rush Center Church.

The George Butler family lived nearby. Mr. Butler was another of the pioneer Methodists of that time and worked with P. C. Dixon. As a layman he helped the Reverend Hartman in the establishment of the first organized class called Methodists in Rush County. No doubt when the bishop appointed Brother R. A. Hartman to the Great Bend Circuit he said, "To the Great Bend Circuit and all points west—R. A. Hartman." Our Rush County papers of a later period state that the Reverend Hartman preached in La Crosse but they name no place or home.

Until schools were erected, early day church services were held in the homes of our people. These early schools were built of sod or stone with dirt roofs and floors. It is evident that the Reverend Hartman visited the La Crosse vicinity. One of the Methodist men of the La Crosse community was John H. Barkley, a Civil War veteran, who homesteaded northwest of the present site of La Crosse.

Another man near La Crosse was John Wittenberger. His was a musical family and they participated in the social and church life of the community. A. R. Hockensmith, a farmer and teacher, lived two miles north of La Crosse. He conducted a subscription school. It is altogether likely that in one of these homes the first sermon was preached, and that in all the homes the minister was always most welcome.

By 1877 the population of Rush County had reached a couple thousand. Church classes were formed with a leader in charge in the following communities: Olney, Walnut City, Belleprairie, Brookdale, Hillsdale, La Crosse, McCracken, Hanson School, and North Fairview.

The first class must have been formed at Walnut City, for the record contains the names of people from all over the county. As the population increased and more Methodists were found by the itinerant preacher, classes were divided and others added which formed the groups mentioned previously.

The Reverend Hartman's departure is not quite clear. However, another minister came on the scene in 1877. The Rush County Progress, a weekly newspaper, under date of September, 1877, states, "The Reverend O. M. Ashbaugh will preach in the school house Sunday evening." It is a matter of record that the Reverend Ashbaugh was the pastor of the Walnut City Circuit and on the Larned District. Thus, La Crosse was at that time on the Walnut City Circuit.

An item of interest in the Rush County Progress of August, 1878, says, "The Reverend Ashbaugh preached in his usual happy style: at the hearts of hearers instead of their ears and the sequel proved not in vain as a number connected themselves with the church." The same paper states, "The Walnut City Circuit held Quarterly Conference at La Crosse for two days. The attendance was large. The Reverend Ashbaugh proved the work was in prosperous condition." The same paper states, "After church services Sunday evening the pastor and friends met in the Wittenberger home and were royally entertained by his talented family."

In 1878 The Rush County Progress notes, "The Reverend Ashbaugh went to Belleprairie to preach. His horse broke loose and he had to foot it home." The last record of his work was that he brought his ministry to a close at conference time and left for Great Bend. That was in March 1879. In March, 1886, nearly ten years later he wrote a letter from Ohio, his home, to the Walnut City Blade, and we quote the letter:

Dear Rush County Friends,

I am glad to read of the material prosperity of Rush County. I feel a more than ordinary interest. Two years of hard toil and pastoral work and my experience as a homesteader on the virgin soil has endeared Rush County to me, as no other spot in my itinerant ministry. In no other place have I ever found warmer friends, and none that I remember with more pleasure. I enjoyed the hospitality of the sod house, the dug-out, the humble little cabin, and the stone house with a dirt roof. It was the hospitality of brave, true, and generous hearts. While we rejoice these things are passing away, memory will cling to them as a precious treasure.

Sincerely,
O. M. Ashbaugh

With the year 1879 a crucial period of Rush County Methodism came to a close, or shall I say came to a great climax. The years from 1873 to 1879 will go down in Rush County Methodist history as the years when the Methodist Church was born. It may be called the "borning period," the period when the itinerant preachers went from house to house, gathered the people into little groups, and formed them into classes with leaders so that later they could be organized into churches.

A young "theolog" went to his dean one day and asked, "Dean, can you name for me some of the great preachers of America?"

Whereupon the dean looked into the lad's face a moment and said, "My boy, they are in so many of the small churches of America I can't begin to name them." We, the descendents of the pioneers, are fortunate today that our fathers had two great preachers who tramped the prairies and said a prayer here and there to help guide them in the destinies of to-morrow.

In this our 75th Anniversary—our Diamond Jubilee—may we do as the church in the Book of Revelation, call on our angel to say, "Thank you," for us, to the Reverend Hartman and the Reverend Ashbaugh who have long since gone to the Church Triumphant.

If the first six years of our Rush County Methodist history can be called the "borning period," the next six or eight years can be called the "growing period—the boom period." Covered wagons were moving along almost in train fashion. The population advanced from a few hundred to several thousand. As in all boom periods the churches and the preachers had no small task. The classes were well organized but still in the homes or at best in sod school houses or dug-outs. Substantial structures had to be built. The entire church program had to be put on a more substantial and permanent basis.

Four more preachers came into the Methodist picture. These were the Reverend Newcomb, 1880-1882; the Reverend Gilchrist, 1883-1884; the Reverend Fleming, 1884-1885; and the Reverend Frederick Bernstorff, 1886-1887. To these men fell this almost crushing task. Many people had no money. As has been intimated boom days were not especially religious days.

The fight was on as to the location of the county seat. This was conducted in a raw, almost wild-west fashion. Hardly any of it was in keeping with good religion. Fighting and name-calling was not uncommon. A few items from the papers of that period may be interesting to us today as they may give us a picture of the social and religious atmosphere of the period.

For instance, there was a debate at the Olney School on this subject: "Which town has swindled the people of Rush County the most—La Crosse or Rush Center?" The next week's paper carried this notation, "The Olney School house was packed. A more enthusiastic crowd never assembled in Rush County."

We often refer to the good old days. Listen to this: "Saturday night a gang of toughs paraded the streets, cursing, swearing, firing their revolvers and other-wise disturbing the slumbers of decent law abiding citizens. We refrain from publishing their names only because we do not know who they were."

A store advertisement of the day was, "Kentucky Whiskey for Medical Purposes—A competent druggist and physician always at hand day or night."

A public notice in the newspaper was, "Remember the races on Christmas Day."

This was taken from the Walnut City Herald:

"Petty thieves stole the lap robe out of Reverend Bunker's buggy at La Crosse last Sunday while he was preaching in that berg. We are sorry to make record of this little meanness against our neighbors. But they should have more respect for the man who is laboring for the salvation of their souls."

This reflects a little of the tenseness of the period. Shall the writer say the wildness of the west? Yet, in this same period the churches took deeper root. Substantial frame structures were erected. Charters were granted, trustees were elected, and churches were organized to definitely move forward.

The churches in the following communities erected new frame structures: Walnut City, La Crosse, Lone Star, Alexander, and McCracken. George Butler, one of our founding fathers and a most out-standing Methodist leader, in his report to the county Sunday School Association reported 22 Sunday Schools of all denominations, including six Methodist Churches.

During the period from 1874 to 1886 our La Crosse Methodist Church was served by the Larned District of the Southwest Kansas Conference. The Northwest Kansas Conference convened its first session in Beloit, March 15, 1883. There were 38 pastors in attendance. In the General Conference Session of 1888 La Crosse was allocated to the Northwest Kansas Conference and it became a part of the Ellsworth District. In the early spring of 1886 the La Crosse Methodist Church applied for a charter to the Secretary of State and was granted one on April 16th. The Reverend F. F. Bernstorf was pastor.

Plans were immediately begun for the erection of a new church building. This was completed at a cost of nearly \$2000. The church was dedicated January 9, 1887, by Presiding Elder Miller. The Walnut City Gazette said, "The services were inspiring to a large congregation that was present." The men who signed the charter were John Barkley, John Wittenberger, Austin Cannon, J. R. Rose, and A. R. Hockensmith. The total membership of the church was 75. This building served the church for more than 45 years.

The next period in our church history falls into a setting of 12 years from 1888 to 1900. With the exception of a year or two they were trying years in Rush County. While the six or eight years preceding were marked as boom years, the following 12 years were drought and depression years. In the previous period we spoke of covered wagons heading west, but in this period, especially during the nineties, the wagons seemingly turned around and were headed east.

Many people left and went back to where they had come from. Many left their breaking plows and their few belongings in the sod houses, planning to reclaim them when times were better, and they could return. Many never returned. This may account for the fact that in a period of twelve years there were ten ministers. Preachers' salaries were extremely low,—some times as low as \$150. per year and rarely over \$400. Consequently some of the pastors stayed but a few months and at times the church was without a minister.

The membership of the La Crosse Methodist Church was composed of people living in the La Crosse vicinity and two small classes at Pleasantdale and Eclipse located in the northwest part of Rush County. The names of John Linn, Bert Myrick, George Hopkins, C. C. Christman, and S. F. Pearson will stand out as the leaders of the Pleasantdale church or class. The names of A. A. Edwards, Amos Honderick, William Younkin and Albert Bieber will be honored as supporting the Eclipse church or class. These three church classes composed the La Crosse Methodist Church. They often met in all day sessions and quarterly conferences.

At these times the presiding elder preached two or three sermons, observed the Lord's Supper, and many times the love feast. The presiding elders of that period were M. M. Stolz, A. N. See, and Isaiah McDowell, founding fathers of the old Northwest Kansas Conference and Kansas Wesleyan University. These men were good preachers and of the evangelistic type.

The churches of the La Crosse Circuit never had beautiful furniture, stained glass windows, or fine carpeting in the aisles. The altar generally was a rude bench that could be used for seating when the crowds were large. The sight of those common farmer men, our fathers, kneeling at Holy Communion with their children is a picture that should never fade.

The fourth period of our history covers a little longer time. We shall go from 1900 to 1924. This takes us to the time of federation with the Presbyterian Church. We group these years together because there is a similarity. As Mrs. Carrie Cheney, a member of the church during that entire period, put it, "The church had its ups and downs, depending too often on changing population. But the church continued to maintain services on the Sabbath Day, both church school and Epworth League." There were 12 ministers in this quarter of a century, which made an average pastorate of nearly two years. The Reverend L. E. Layborne, the Reverend A. M. Perrill, and the Reverend F. L. Templin each held pastorates of three years or more.

The Reverend Templin drove the circuit with a cart and horse. The churches finally purchased a two-seated buggy so that he could take his family with him. The thought never occurred that he had only one horse and the buggy had to have two horses. He borrowed a horse for a few weeks until money was available to purchase another horse. There were some younger preachers such as John Edward Wilson who made a great impression and was liked by all. His ministry was all too short. The occasion of his leaving was to attend Garrett Biblical Institute. The writer remembers that upon his leaving remarks were made such as, "He is going to the theological seminary and he will be spoiled when he comes back."

As one tries to evaluate that period it could be said that it was a good day. Nothing spectacular happened but a steady growth took place. Many young people went away to college. Several attended Kansas Wesleyan University. The ministers were all consecrated men trying to do their best. Revival meetings were held, camp meetings conducted during the summer time, and preachers and churches were looking forward to a greater day. If it had not been for the faith we had in tomorrow we would have succumbed to many a defeat, but this faith carried us on to a more glorious hour.

We come now to the fifth period, a time within the memory of many, the years between 1924 and 1936. This takes in the story of the federation of the Methodist Church with the United Presbyterian Church. The federation was accomplished in 1924 under the leadership of the Reverend W. E. Saville, our Methodist minister, and the Reverend J. A. Harper of the Presbyterian Church. The federation lasted for twelve years. In the first few years the combined membership of these two churches almost doubled, and the church school reached an all time high.

One reporter of the event put it this way, "The church's prestige and influence was making a deep impression upon the community." The members of the church were very enthusiastic, and looked to the future with great satisfaction, so that by 1927 they entered into a contract to build the first unit in a church building program. A. R. Wilson, C. P. Fyler, and Tom Conard were the signers of the contract. The basement part of the new structure was completed. Pastors were selected alternately from the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Synod. For some reason, almost unexplainable, the federation was dissolved in 1936.

Some weeks later, the Methodist people of the Federated Church and the German Methodist Episcopal Church merged, and became the First Methodist Episcopal Church of La Crosse, and a charter was granted on that basis; thus the year 1936 marked a turn in Methodist history. We now have the converging stream of two sources of Christian inspiration. The German people brought with them a great background of history and spiritual blessing.

None who were present on that beautiful autumn Sunday morning will ever forget the thrill when Peter Weber, the oldest man in the German Church, and S. H. Meneley, the oldest man in the English Church, walked arm in arm down the center aisle of the church and pledged their churches to united cooperation in the program of the Kingdom of God.

At this point we go back to 1876 and bring up the German side of our story. It was in that year that the Reverend J. J. Eichenberger of Great Bend came to the community where Bison is now located to visit some of the German families who had recently settled there. He found the families of J. H. Weichen, Henry Rages, Joseph Bieber, Gerhart Stulken and others. He organized a class and every three or four weeks would come out to hold church services. The first service was held in the home of J. H. Weichen. The services thereafter were held in various homes. Two years later, in 1878, came the families of Ficken, Settee, Seuser, John and Gottlieb Meyer, John Marquardt, Jacob Timken, Julius Kruger, William Wolter and possibly some others.

The class was now served by the Reverend C. C. Fritsche, a student pastor from Cincinnati, Ohio. It is recorded that the people eagerly came to church across the roadless prairies, on foot, on horse back, and in wagons drawn by horses or oxen. In the fall of 1878 it was evident that a more commodious place of worship was necessary, and a church building should be erected. The building, still standing one mile west of Bison known as the Lone Star School house, was erected to serve both as a church and a school. This is, in all probability, the oldest church building in Rush County.

The name Lone Star was given to the church by the Reverend Fritsche. It was he who carved the star on the stone and placed it in the east gable. The thought was that the church should be a guiding star to all far and near. It was not only the guiding star but the center of all community life.

As the late William Crotinger in his history has so aptly put it, "Who can number the meetings that have been held in the little stone church—worship services, Sunday School, weddings, funerals, socials, literary societies, arithmetic matches, shows (magic lantern, the fore-runner of the movie), and many, many other meetings of interest to all around." This church was completed in the fall of 1878. The following year, probably in the summer, a tornado took the roof from the building. That summer all crops failed.

As one man put it, "There was not five dollars in the whole community." Money to replace the roof was secured from friends in Missouri and the little church was repaired. Today the building is used for a meeting place for a home demonstration unit and a 4-H club and it also stands as a silent reminder of the intrepid and courageous spirit of the founding fathers of German Rush County Methodism.

Naturally the membership of such a church should grow and prosper. By the year 1890, just a little over twelve years, it was again felt that a larger building was needed. The Missouri Pacific Railroad had been completed in 1886 and in 1888 Bison was established. It was a natural contention as to where the new church should be located. Those south and east felt the church should be in Bison, while those north and west wanted it more in the center of their activities.

Those in favor of the north and west won and a frame structure one mile north of Lone Star was erected. This was on the present Highway No. 4. The church was built at a cost of \$4000. This structure, known as the German Lone Star Church, served the people for twenty-eight years until it was destroyed by fire in 1918.

The Lone Star Church throughout its history prospered materially and spiritually. Some great revivals were held. They were not always in the church building. The writer was told by one of these pioneers that he was converted in 1886 in a revival held in the Happy Hollow school house. This sod house building was located northwest of the stone church. The Reverend C. Ott was the pastor in charge. If he had an evangelistic helper it is not known.

This friend related that nearly all the young people in the German community were converted and made their professions of faith. Whether or not the pastor in charge or the people themselves realized it, standing from the vantage point of nearly seventy-five years and looking back at the leadership of the church through the years, the churches of La Crosse, Bison, Lone Star, Otis, Alexander and Bazine are the beneficiaries of the harvest and spiritual ingathering of that 1886 revival.

May we put on record another great meeting? It was in the year 1902. The Reverend John Scheu was pastor of the Lone Star Church. His was a six year pastorate. A tent was erected in the Allen Grove near the Happy Hollow School. The writer and his father attended the meeting by driving a horse and buggy a distance of twelve miles. We tied our horse to a fence post nearly one-half mile from the tent. The crowd was immense. The tent was filled to capacity and people were sitting on spring seats carried from their wagons and on cushions from their buggies. The crowd extended over one hundred feet in all directions from the tent and there were still many others who could not hear and spent the time quietly visiting in the moonlight of the evening.

The Reverend William Pommerenke was the preacher. The writer could not understand much of the sermon but could feel the forebodings of the spirit. The tense spiritual atmosphere made one feel that it was to be an hour of destiny. When the sermon ended and the call was made for people to make their professions of faith, they crowded about the altar from every direction. The writer was just a lad of twelve years of age but the impression left on his memory was truly a guiding star.

In 1909 the church again proved too small. The families of the Weigands, Webers, Gilligs, Scheidemans, Schwabs, Kaisers, Hartmans, Yosts, Benders, Brenings and others were living in and near La Crosse. Instead of enlarging the old church, these folks decided to build nearer home and the German Methodist Church was built in La Crosse in 1909. A part of this building in which we worship today was that structure. The men who chartered the organization were Adam Weigand, Alexander Gillig, William C. Reinhardt, George Schwab, Adam Brening, Phillip Krug and Henry Weigand. This building was dedicated in September, 1909. The honored speaker of this Diamond Jubilee, Reverend Walter Berg, was the pastor of this newly organized church. It was his first pastorate. As he tells it, he was a mere boy, but at this time we join with him in the delightful experience of having completed nearly fifty-two years in the ministry of the Methodist Church. All hail, Brother Walter Berg!

The years following the Reverend Berg's ministry were covered by six German ministers. Two of these had two year pastorates. The other four gave from five to six years of service to the La Crosse Church. As one examines the records that were faithfully kept, it is noted that the children were baptized and faithfully catechized and received into the fellowship of the church. It can be said of the German preacher that his ministry was marked with carefulness and faithfulness in the preaching of the Word and diligent care in shepherding the people called Methodists.

The year 1935 was a difficult one for this German Church. The conference did not assign a pastor as no German-speaking man was available, consequently the pastoral committee asked this writer to temporarily preach sermons in English on Sundays. The old West German Conference had discontinued and its preachers were assigned to the conferences within whose bounds they had been preaching. Seemingly, German preaching was going out. To say the least, it was rather a blue Monday for the German-speaking people. English services were more or less an experiment. During the sum-

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mer of 1936 the Federated Church dissolved and a dozen or more families of the Methodist side of the federation came over to the German Church which was now having English preaching. These families were the Elias, Mullen, Frank Snodgrass, John Krug, Leo Frazier, S. H. Meneley, Frank Cheney, Mrs. Carrie Cheney and daughters, Lester Benbow, Henry Schwab, Charles Bitter, Albert Smith and other adherents to the English speaking group. These people came into the church services and brought new interest and inspiration. The merger of these two groups has previously been stated in this history.

The year 1936 was really the beginning of a new epoch in the history of La Crosse Methodism. No sooner had the merger taken place than it began to appear that the church building, as it was, was not large enough for either church services or Sunday school. The congregation set about in a short time to add an addition to the old structure. The English Methodist Church building that had served since 1886 was torn down and the material used in the erection of the new addition. The work was done by volunteer labor. Late in the fall of that year the new addition was dedicated. The District Superintendent, Albert Noah Smith, was in charge.

We were still, in many ways, two churches. Old traditions and customs are hard to lay away but the people were Christian on both sides. About this time, negotiations were begun to merge the Northwest and Southwest Kansas Conferences. This merger was consummated in 1939. The 1938 conference of the Northwest Kansas group would meet for the last time in a full session in September, 1938. Methodists of La Crosse immediately began to make plans to extend an invitation for the conference to come to La Crosse. This was done in the conference of 1937. At this conference there were several invitations. Some were from much larger towns. The pastor was loathe to present the invitation. When it was presented and it was time to vote, invitations began to withdraw in favor of La Crosse and we were chosen by unanimous vote for the 1938 and last session of the Northwest Kansas Conference.

When the report of this action was brought home, the people, of course, were happy. They set about immediately to make plans and to build a program for the conference. Much had to be done and it took the complete loyalty of the entire church to accomplish this undertaking. To entertain from three to five hundred guests for a week was not a small task. Be it said that from the choir to the folks who served meals and washed dishes and all other activities combined, no church ever set itself more loyally to a task than the La Crosse Methodist Church. No Nehemiah ever had a more loyal group in the building of his temple than the pastor of the Methodist Church of La Crosse had in the entertaining of the conference. When we came out of that conference experience we were neither German nor English but one body in the Methodist Church of La Crosse.

The story connected with the period between 1936 and 1961 is not without its heartache and its glory. Included in this era were some of the dust bowl years. Our Methodist Church had not a single farmer who actually owned his land because of heavy mortgages. Financially the country was at low ebb. One of our Methodist business men confided to the pastor that his accounts-receivable were in excess of \$32,000.00. So far as he was con-

cerned, the bottom had fallen out. The thought was in the mind of not a few that Methodism should quit the field. Many were encouraged in this attitude from outside sources.

The fact that German preaching was nearing its end seemed to have a depressing effect. When the conference minutes of 1936 are examined we note that for pastoral support and all benevolences there was expended a total of \$904.00. That was less than half of what was expended in several previous years. When by comparison one turns to the conference minutes of 1960 it is noted that for all purposes a total of \$10,667.00 was expended. The total membership of the church in 1936 was 170, while the present membership is 360. In spite of the dust bowl, World War II, and the Korean War the church moved ahead. How does one account for it? A part of it must be credited to nine good ministers who covered this particular span of years and part—be ever and always said—to the loyalty, devotion, and faithful consecration of the people called Methodists.

In reciting this history it would be most unfortunate, if not unforgivable, were we not to pay tribute and honor to the fine church choir and its leadership. First organized in the fall of 1936 under the direction of Miss Dorothy Schwartzkopf, the choir was built and trained to furnish the music for much of the 1938 Annual Conference. Miss Corrine Krug followed as choir director for a short period. The years since then, the choir has been led by the able and faithful director, George Keith.

We wish it were possible to name all the pianists, organists, soloists, and other individuals, who with much sacrifice, have rendered so great and beautiful a service to the church. In this respect, Sunday School superintendents, officers, teachers, church stewards, trustees,—all stand in line as having made their contribution to the building of the fellowship of the church and its program.

The story of our young people comes not without honor. What a power the Epworth League was in its time! Several of our young people gave themselves to full time Christian service. Many times, twenty to forty young people would meet Sunday evenings for their League meetings and afterward furnish inspiration and help for the evening fellowship of the church. Today as we look over the leadership of the church, we must be thankful for the fine work of the past years. The old Epworth League has passed the torch to the Methodist Youth Fellowship. Our youth were never of finer quality, nor did any group of young people ever have a greater day in which to serve.

We now make special mention of the women of the church who so heroically, in all the years, gave their devotion and consecrated service. Who can number the countless hours the Ladies' Aid has placed on the altar of the church? May a great church be thankful, and generously reward and enshrine the Ladies' Aid in its memory. Both the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society and the Woman's Home Missionary Society must come in for a large share of honor as they helped in carrying the redemptive love of God to the world. In the old Methodist German Church, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was especially strong. Several of the ladies supported Bible Women in foreign lands, and helped educate girls in some of the first schools.

Our history would be incomplete were we not to make special mention of the Woman's Society of Christian Service. Three branches of Methodism,—the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church, united in May, 1939. The women of the church soon reorganized themselves, and the Woman's Society of Christian Service was born. The forerunner of the Society in La Crosse was the Guild,—a combination of the Ladies' Aid, the Philathea Sunday School Class, and the Missionary Societies. The Guild graciously gave way to the Woman's Society of Christian Service when that organization came into being in 1940. Mrs. Dave Schwartzkopf was the first president. This great organization in Methodism has proved itself a miracle in the history of the church.

In summing up the story for our 75th anniversary, our Diamond Jubilee of 1961, let it be said: Our fathers toiled, sacrificed, carried heavy loads, sang their paeans of praise even at midnight, in order that those of us today and those yet to come might find the peace that passeth all understanding. In the words of our beloved apostle, John,—“These things are written that ye might believe.”



The Reverend and Mrs. Lowell R. Honderick, Pastor Emeritus, La Crosse, Kansas. A native of La Crosse. Bachelor of Divinity, Boston University, 1915. Member of Northwest Kansas Conference, 1917. Pastor at La Crosse, 1935-1941. Mrs. Honderick grew up at Indianola, Iowa.

THE CHURCH SCHOOL

This year our Church School has an enrollment of 278, including the Home Department and Nursery Roll, with an average attendance of 119. A large percentage of these persons are in the Youth and Children's Divisions. The Adult Department forms a very small portion of our Sunday School enrollment. If the percentage of adults could be raised, it would, no doubt, have its effect on our Children's Division.

Worship and teaching art carried under crowded conditions. It is difficult to truly worship in a setting where one can so plainly hear other classes and departments trying, likewise, to conduct meaningful sessions. The need for more and better Sunday School space is quite evident to those who attend.

A Vacation Church School is held each year in cooperation with the Evangelical United Brethren Church. The spirit of cooperation and true Christian fellowship form the basis for a successful school. Last year there were seventy-five in attendance, two-thirds of whom were Methodists. Such successful union projects remind us that we are one in Christ our Lord.



NURSERY, KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY DEPARTMENTS



JUNIOR DEPARTMENT



Bishop Eugene Slater



Dr. J. Russell Throckmorton

OFFICIALS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

BISHOP EUGENE SLATER, Kansas Area

DR. J. RUSSELL THROCKMORTON, Supt., Hays District

1961 - 1962

La Crosse, Kansas

PASTOR — Ex-officio of all commissions and committees.

TRUSTEES:	Class of 1964	Class of 1963	Class of 1962
	Raymond Brening Nelson Yost Laurence Mullen	Clarence Cunningham Glen Humburg Ivan Krug, Chr.	Ralph Pivonka John Luft
STEWARDS:	Class of 1964	Class of 1963	Class of 1962
	Dr. R. E. Gibson Dean Cooley Bert Ficken Harold Honn	Bert Wallace Lloyd West Norman Hetzel	Mrs. Harold Miller William Weber Richard Ramsey

STEWARDS: (Ex-Officio)

- Martin Turner, Church Lay Leader
- Harold Rife, Church School Sup't and Chairman of Commission on Education
- Mrs. Kenneth Wilson, Chairman of Commission on Membership and Evangelism
- Mrs. Glen Humburg, Chairman of Commission on Missions and Reserve Lay Member
- Mrs. Harold Weber, Chairman of Commission on Christian Social Concerns
- Bert Wallace, Chairman of Commission on Stewardship and Finance
- Mrs. John Krug, President of Woman's Society of Christian Service
- Mrs. Flossie Mullen, Lay Member of Annual Conference
- Mrs. Russell Lohrey, Church Treasurer
- Mrs. Esta Manahan, Financial Secretary
- Miss Linda Ohlemeier, President of Methodist Youth Fellowship
- Clarence Cunningham, Recording Steward and Ass't KWU Council Member
- Rev. L. R. Honderick, Kansas Wesleyan Council Member, and Retired Minister
- Z. M. Wolfe, Head Usher
- Mrs. William Weber, Communion
- Mrs. Bert Wallace, President of Young Adults
- Mrs. William Pokorny, Communion
- Mrs. Mary Lohrey, Communion

COMMISSIONS

MEMBERSHIP AND EVANGELISM:	Mrs. Kenneth Wilson, Chr.	Mrs. Frank Bussart
	Martin Turner	Joe Rife
	Mrs. Forest E. Good	Harold Rife
	Mrs. Rosa Sehnert	Mrs. Glen Humburg
	Miss Linda Ohlemeier	

COMMISSIONS, Continued

EDUCATION: Mr. Harold Rife, Chairman

Workers' Conference members (composed of all officers and teachers of Church School except in the election of the officers and teachers)

Martin Turner	Chris Blackwell	Mrs. Martin Turner
Mrs. Raymond Brening	Mrs. Rosa Sehnert	Jim Mullen
Mrs. Leslie Rein	Nelson Yost	Elda Applt

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL CONCERNS:

Mrs. Nora Benbow	Mrs. Harold Weber, Chairman	Mrs. Deda DeYoung
Mrs. L. R. Honderick	Mrs. Frank Hardwick	Martin Turner
Mrs. Z. M. Wolfe	Dr. John Elliott	Jim Offutt
	Dr. R. E. Gibson	

MISSIONS: Mrs. Glen Humburg, Chairman

Martin Turner	Ken Good	Laura Cunningham
Harold Rife	Mrs. Forest E. Good	Rev. L. R. Honderick
Clarence Cunningham	Mrs. Kenneth Wilson	Mrs. Rosa Sehnert
		Mrs. William Pokorny

STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE:

Bert Wallace, Chairman		Lloyd West
Martin Turner	Chris Blackwell	Arthur Schiedeman
Mrs. Esta Manahan	Mrs. Glen Humburg	Earl Elias
Mrs. Russell Lohrey	Mrs. Clara Kerbs	Z. M. Wolfe
John Mullen	Clarence Cunningham	Fred Lohrey

COMMITTEES

PASTORAL RELATIONS:

Glen Humburg, Chairman		
Harold Weber	Martin Turner	Mrs. Bert Wallace
Allen McChristian	Mrs. Flossie Mullen	Harold Rife

PARSONAGE: Mrs. Earl Elias, Chairman

Mrs. Bert Ficken	Mrs. Fred Foos	Mrs. Philip Lohrey
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MUSIC: Robert Stutterheim, Chairman

George Keith	Miss Linda Schiedeman	Harold Weber
Mrs. Arthur Schiedeman	Mrs. Esta Manahan	Miss Deda DeYoung

AUDIT:

Dean Cooley, Chairman	Laurence Mullen	Mrs. Kenneth Wilson
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CHRISTIAN VOCATIONS:

James Lewis, Chairman	George Keith	Mrs. Kenneth Wilson
Mrs. Raymond Brening	Mrs. Raymond Barnett	Harold Rife

RECORDS AND HISTORY:

Rev. L. R. Honderick, Chr	Mrs. Nora Benbow	Mrs. John Krug
A. L. Hallsted	Adam Brening	Mrs. Glen Humburg
George Weber	Fred Krug	

FLOWER:

Miss Clara Kerbs, Chairman for Wesleyan Service Guild to supply flowers for sanctuary
 Mrs. William Pokorny, Mrs. Frank Bussart
 Mrs. O. L. Toadvine (to see that hospitalized and bereaved members receive flowers)



OFFICIAL BOARD — 1961



SENIOR CHOIR

It is an inspiration to see the number of high school youth who unite with the adults in the Senior Choir under the capable leadership of Mr. George D. Keith assisted by Mrs. Arthur Schiedeman at the organ.



THE JUNIOR CHOIR

This year the Junior Choir is a great addition to our Sunday morning worship services. One often wonders how Mrs. Robert Stutterheim, director, produces such music with Juniors. Of course, Linda Schiedeman's accompaniment helps. This church should not lack in its praise to God in the years ahead!

Junior Choir—Mrs. Robert Stutterheim, Director; Miss Linda Ohlemeier, Pianist



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