
CELEBRATION OF MINISTRY AT BETHEL UCC



Bethel UCC is a little white country church with its steeple standing over the rolling hills and prairies of North Dakota. It is located about 10 miles southeast of New Salem.

One memorable time in Bethel's 99 years of history was the ministry of Rev. Wm. Schmidt from 1928 to 1942. Rev. Schmidt accepted the position of pastor at the age of 68 and retired at age 82. He was a man whose demeanor personified love and kindness to all including surrounding community folks including the children. He hosted ice cream socials at which he always had games, prizes, and gifts for all the children-balloons, candy, pencils, small notebooks, etc. Homemade ice cream was always served. The Sunday afternoon was spent visiting, enjoying the fellowship and ice cream. Rev. Schmidt was given a meager salary which was supplemented by gifts of cream, eggs, chickens, etc. from the parishioners. During his time as pastor at Bethel he led "Singing School" (A lot like vacation bible school today) which was held in a schoolhouse on the church grounds. Confirmation classes were also taught by Rev Schmidt in this building. He taught the children many hymns which they memorized and still remember today. One parishioner says "Through knowing Rev. Schmidt I developed a strong faith at an early age." God indeed shines through him. Rev. Schmidt never married but he did raise a foster son, George Ronicke, whose parents

were too poor to raise him. George did go on to become a pastor as well. Both Rev. Schmidt and Rev. George Ronicke after death were brought back to Bethel for burial.

Bethel's congregation is small in number of members and are older so projects and activities are less than they used to be. Missions are still important to the congregation. Those supported are Northern Plains Conference, OCWM, One Great Hour of Sharing, Blanket Fund and Tools of Hope, Strengthen the Church, Christmas Fund, Camp Recreation, Relief funds in the community both nationally and internationally, Ruth Meier's Hospitality House, Charles Hall Youth Home, Aid, Inc., Jamestown Hospital, Abused Adult Resource Center, and Ronald McDonald House.

Since Bethel has had an almost 100 year history, there have been many people who have shown their love of the Lord and witness thereto. We could go on for a long time telling of the dedicated pastors, members of the congregation, Sunday school teachers and students, church organists, choir members, and consistories. There were only two pastors before those presently serving who had served over ten years, Rev. Schmidt and Rev. Charles Hill. Rev. Hill who was an inspiration to all as he had Parkinson disease and there were many challenges to be met by both he and his wife, Christine. The light of God's gracious presence has certainly shown through them.



Rev. William Schmidt-1928-1962

During the years, Bethel has been blessed with many, many experiences and memories because of the dedicated service of many servants of God including two exceptional persons and pastors having served the last nineteen years and still presently serving Bethel UCC, Rev. Duane Wacker and Burnie Kunz, both chaplains at Med Center One. They and others fall into the category of "Faithful and Loving Servant" to Bethel and surrounding community as did Rev. Wm Schmidt.

Bethel UCC which was organized in June 1908 with 21 pioneer families will be celebrating their 100th Anniversary on July 20, 2008 with an afternoon service and

fellowship to follow. At that time many memories will be shared including those of Rev. Win Schmidt.

Thanks be to God for the foundation of faith and guidance and strength given by all who ministered to Bethel these "almost" 100 years.