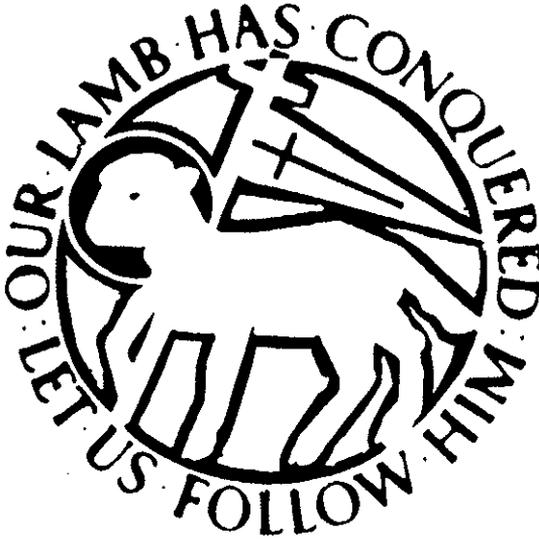


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FOREWARD

An article written by Otto Drebert, about the History of the New Sarepta Moravian Church, is included in this issue both as a tribute to Otto and to acquaint our readership with an example of Otto's valued service in preserving Moravian Church history. For 19 consecutive years, Otto Drebert served on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Moravian Historical Society. Otto Drebert was born into a Moravian pioneer family on November 1, 1909 and passed away on January 7, 2003. His experiences on the farm in southeast Edmonton and later in New Sarepta, gave him an appreciation for the rigors of the early days and how the settlers valued their connection to the Moravian Church. Throughout his life, Otto Drebert had a keen interest in history and he worked tirelessly to preserve it and record it. Many of his articles may be found in the local history books of the New Sarepta District and the southeast Edmonton area.

Good old-fashioned story telling has been coming back into its own as seen by the popularity of story telling concerts making their appearance all around the province. One of these events that took place at Josephburg last year was of particular interest because it dealt with the life of the Rt. Rev. Percy Henkelman. When the story teller, T-R Guenette-Wachno, was contacted she kindly gave us permission to reproduce her story in our Historical Magazine. All she asks is, that you imagine that she is telling you the story of "Percy" as you read it.

When you remember that Canada is only 136 years old, it is hard to comprehend that the Moravians started missionary work in Labrador on the east coast of Canada 250 years ago. The anniversary of this event took place last year with many special events in Newfoundland, Labrador and elsewhere, too. Because

of the attention that was being paid to Moravian Mission work in Labrador, Alfred Harke was reminded of his own visit to Labrador in 1987, when he served as the Canadian representative on the Moravian Board of World Mission. Responsibilities connected with this work took Alfred to Labrador and he willingly recounts his experiences there for us. Hopefully Alfred's good example will encourage others to record and share some of their church related experiences with us, so we can become better acquainted with the many and varied aspects of the work of the church.

Wm. G. Brese
Editor

**SEVENTY-FIVE YEAR HISTORY
OF THE NEW SAREPTA MORAVIANS
By Otto Drebert**

Introduction

As we reflect on the seventy-five year history of the New Sarepta Moravians, it is difficult to avoid duplication of the small volume edited by the Rev. Eric Schulze in commemoration of the Church's fiftieth anniversary.

In the summer of 1945, Bishop Clement Hoyler made his last visit to New Sarepta. Bishop Hoyler was the guest speaker when the congregation celebrated its 41st anniversary in 1945. When he realized that he might not be able to attend the fiftieth anniversary of the congregation he had helped organize, he prepared a detailed historical review of the church. This was done following his retirement in 1947. Without these manuscripts it would be very difficult to recount the history of the New Sarepta Moravians.

Historical Review

It was a matter of foresight on the part of Clement Hoyler that a new colony of Moravians should be established to accommodate the overflow of Moravian families from Bruderfeld (Millwoods). On a visit in the fall of 1897, to the home of the Rev. R. B. Anderson at Bardo, south of Beaver Lake, Hoyler realized the area south of there would be suitable for such a colony. On his way home he travelled the Beaver Hill Trail to a point where the trail intersected the Hay Lakes

Trail. "Here," he thought, "is the ideal place for a colony." He carefully investigated this area known as Long Prairie.

The need for just such a colony arose as early as the fall of 1902. Several young men were interested in establishing their own farms. It also became apparent that immigrant families arriving in the Bruderfeld (Millwoods) district could no longer be accommodated there.

In late October, a party of nine persons led by Clement Hoyler set out to look over the Hay Lakes territory. They travelled as far as the area presently known as Bruce to locate land that was not covered by lakes or sloughs. Hay Lakes area won their approval however, because it was accessible to their homes and church at Bruderfeld.

Township 49, range 22, west of the 4th meridian was subdivided into 160 acre parcels by a land surveyor. A petition was submitted by Clement Hoyler to Mr. A. C. Harrison at the Lands Office. He looked favourably upon the project and granted the Moravians thirty days to file on the homesteads in the township. Thirty persons filed their entries and set up camp on the township on April 21, 1903.

Most of the homesteads were claimed by young bachelors from Bruderfeld. There were two families who, with their entire households, established their homes in the colony. One of these families was the Ludwig Henkelman household of seven. In this family were five sons who claimed homesteads. They were Gustave, Fred, Ludwig Jr., Martin and Samuel. The latter died in the fall of 1905 when he was stricken with typhoid. Gottlieb Hirsh, son-in-law of Ludwig Henkelman joined the colony a while later. The second family to move into the area was the

Ludwig Diewerts with a household of thirteen persons. Three homesteads were claimed by this family.

The first task confronting these families was to provide shelter. Their meagre budgets compelled them to make good use of the natural resources. They arrived with hand tools with which they cut down trees, framed their log cabins and dug their wells. By the spring of 1904, some of the families had made their permanent residence in the colony. Clement Hoyler spent several days visiting the families and shared many of their hardships.

On June 15, 1904, fifteen people gathered at Ludwig Henkelman's log cabin where Hoyler conducted the first service of worship. Families representing a variety of religious denominations settled in the colony during the summer of 1904. When a second visit to the colony was made by Hoyler in late August, forty persons gathered in the Robert Stebner home for an interdenominational service.

There were no guest rooms or spare beds in the family cabins when the Rev. & Mrs. Hoyler arrived in the fall of 1904 to prepare for the organization of the New Sarepta congregation. They accepted the generous offer of a young man named Grauman who offered his log cabin for the Hoyler's stay. This became their private residence for the four days they stayed in Sarepta.

On October 2, 1904 the organization of the New Sarepta congregation took place in the Ludwig Henkelman residence. Thirty-five people gathered on a rainy Sunday to celebrate the event. Eighteen communicant members were received into this new congregation along with five non-communicants.

Following the official ceremony a brief Church Council elected two trustees and one elder. Trustees were Gustave Henkelman and Emil Diewert. Ludwig Henkelman was chosen as elder.

Listed as charter members were the following: Ludwig and Louisa Henkelman, Gottfried and Kinegunde Henkelman, Ludwig Jr. and Adolphine Henkelman, Emil and Rosalie Diewert, Gustave Henkelman, Emil Henkelman, Martin Henkelman, Samuel Henkelman, Julius Drebert, Henry Drebert, August Drebert, Reinhart Grauman, Paul Taber and Michael Stockman. These members were all transferred from Bruderfeld and Heimtal Moravian congregations.

For over a year the services of worship were held in Ludwig Henkelman's residence. A tract of 40 acres of land had been reserved for a Moravian Church site by the Government. The land was located on the north shore of Lake Levering. (This lake was named after the late Bishop Mortimer Levering who had ordained Clement Hoyler in 1892. The lake has since been drained and developed into agricultural land presently occupied by Ed and Mabel Eckert).

The proposed site was considered unsuitable for the Church because of its location. A more central five acre parcel of land was offered the young congregation by August Harke. A Church Council on February 8, 1905 decided to accept the land which was located on the south west corner of Section 26. The property remained undeveloped during the summer of 1905.

In the fall of 1905, a cow was bartered for an unfinished building that belonged to a French settler. The settler had mistakenly built his house on Canadian Pacific Railway land. When he abandoned the homestead he was willing to give up

his house for a cow. The member who had acquired the building sold it to the Church for \$40.00. It was mounted on skids and moved to the Church site by a team of horses and a yoke of oxen. Transformed into a chapel, the building was the site of their first Christmas celebration on December 27, 1905.

A cemetery was consecrated on March 25, 1906 with the burial of a three-day old infant.

The first Mission Festival was held at New Sarepta on August 26, 1906. The service was conducted under the trees near the Chapel. Dinner was served to 125 guests at noon. A number of guests came from Bruderfeld to share in the festivities.

For about four and one-half years Clement Hoyler served as pastor to New Sarepta along with his duties as the Bruderfeld pastor. Travelling conditions prevented him from making regular visits to the church. Most of the services were "reading services" conducted by Elder Ludwig Henkelman. A Church Council on May 19, 1907 elected Friederich Schmidt as elder to assist Ludwig Henkelman. Three Sunday School teachers were chosen to share in the teaching ministry of the church, namely Carl Taber, Ludwig Diewert and Friederich Schmidt.

Summer travelling conditions prevented Hoyler from making regular visits to the Church; frozen mud holes and short cuts across frozen lakes made winter travel much easier. It is difficult to comprehend the hardships encountered by a pastor in the early years. Duties kept him from his family for weeks on end. He shared meagre food and lodging and carried a hammock as part of his luggage.

The Rev. and Mrs. Hoyler shared the hardships of the homesteaders. The family visits proved to be rewarding for both the Hoylers and the families.

During the winter of 1905, Hoyler conducted special services before they had a Chapel. Families gathered in various homes for prayer meetings. For a whole week he shared with the families, conducting prayer meetings at night and visiting in homes during the day. The meetings were concluded with a Sunday morning Communion Service. A number of new members were received into the Church at this service.

Besides attending to the spiritual needs of his members, Hoyler established a warm social relationship with the Norwegian and English speaking families in the community. He was also actively involved in community development projects. He assisted families in obtaining their first postal service when he visited the Peter Elliott family on February 9, 1905. About a year later he helped the community organize a School District.

It was a tribute to the Hoylers when 150 people gathered at the Chapel on December 26, 1907 to share in a Christmas celebration. The program was presented in three languages—English, German, and Norwegian. Only about half of the crowd could be accommodated in the Chapel

By 1906 the membership of the New Sarepta Moravian Church had grown considerably. Additional families had come from Bruderfeld to claim homesteads at New Sarepta. Along with their families, five households from the State of Oregon arrived. They had been affiliated with the Baptist Church in the United States. Three of these families, namely the Gottlieb Eckerts,

Ben Eckerts and Carl Schultz's became active in the Church and were received into membership

Hoyler was assisted by the Rev. Arthur Schultz of the Strathcona Moravian Church when his ministerial duties increased at New Sarepta. Rev. Schultz provided a horse that greatly assisted in transportation to and from New Sarepta.

The Rev. Clement Hoyler bid farewell to the congregation in 1909 to accept a call to organize Moravian Churches in Central Saskatchewan. From March, 1909 to July, 1912, New Sarepta and Heimtal shared pastors. The Rev. Emil Suemper served as their pastor for over a year. He asked for and received a good team of horses for travel between the two churches.

Suemper, no doubt, recalled an earlier trip to New Sarepta in 1906 with Hoyler and a party of five men. They had left Bruderfeld the day before a special service in New Sarepta and spent the night in a farmer's yard. Suemper, with the men, slept on a lumber pile while the seasoned traveller Hoyler slept in comfort in his hammock suspended between two poplar trees.

The New Sarepta congregation was served from Heimtal every third Sunday. A study and sleeping quarters were provided for the minister at the August Harke home near the church. These accommodations were put to good use when the Rev. Hermann Schulze arrived at Heimtal in March, 1910. For thirty years Rev. Schulze served the New Sarepta Church. He was a mild mannered man with an incredible capacity for perserverance. He was never heard to complain about the long trips between Heimtal and New Sarepta.

During Rev. Schulze's ministry, the Rt. Rev. M. Leibert visited the congregation. He recognized the need for a resident pastor upon meeting with the joint boards of Elders and Trustees of the Church. Most of the spiritual ministry of the Church had been carried out by the Elder. The boards convinced Bishop Leibert of the need of a more comprehensive program for the younger members of the Church.

A call was issued and accepted by the Rev. Reinhold Riemer who graduated from Moravian Theological Seminary in 1912. Riemer had been prepared for Seminary entrance under the tutorship of Hoyler. He enrolled in Moravian College in 1906 with three other young men from Bruderfeld. On July 14, 1912, it was necessary for the Rev. Riemer to install himself pastor of the New Sarepta Church. Inclement weather had prevented the Rev. Hermann Schulze, the designated installing pastor, from attending the service.

In the beginning Riemer travelled from Bruderfeld to conduct services at New Sarepta. A two room shack and horse stable were built by the congregation during the latter part of the summer.

Upon taking up residence, Riemer initiated a number of new activities at New Sarepta. He organized their first church choir as well as a brass band. A Sunday School program was organized with three classes. German language instruction classes were conducted on Saturdays.

The new pastor also organized a number of social activities. Basket socials were the most popular events and proceeds from these socials were used to purchase their first church organ.

An outdoorsman, Riemer enjoyed hunting and photography. For about two years he operated the postal service for the community. Since there was no railway express service delivered out of Bittern Lake, his sister, Miss Elsie Riemer, assisted him in operating the Post Office.

In spite of his busy schedule, he found time to landscape and seed a lawn on the church property. He also planted a lilac bush in the centre of the lawn which remains as a living memorial to the much loved minister.

Reinhold Riemer took his leave of the New Sarepta Church in the summer of 1915. The vacancy was filled immediately by Herbert Kant, a young graduate of Moravian Theological Seminary. Like his predecessor, Kant was an active leader of the young people of the congregation. Besides conducting Sunday morning services of worship, Kant met for worship on Sunday afternoons in various homes. English services were conducted in the Fred Brown and Charles Siper homes. German services on a monthly basis were held at the Edward Plitt home.

Substantial growth took place in church membership during the pastorate of the Rev. Kant. Two families from Heimtal settled in the New Sarepta area, namely Edling's and Stebners. Four families from Bruderfeld also moved into the area. They were the Martin and Joseph Harke families and the Paul and Ferdinand Busenius families. Two Niederhaus families from Saskatchewan settled near the church and soon joined the church.

It became apparent that a new and larger church was needed. A Church Council on January 9, 1918 made the decision to build

and pledge the sum of \$9,500.00 toward the project. With the generous assistance of the Bruderfeld and Bruderheim congregations, the project began in the spring of 1918. The members donated most of the labour. The work was supervised by Samuel Naetsch who was building the Lutheran Church west of Hay Lakes. Not only did Mr. Naetsch supervise the building of both churches, he also took time off to conduct the bands of both parishes. It was fitting that the combined bands played at the dedication services of both churches in the fall of 1918.

The excitement of the new church was still running high when the Spanish influenza epidemic made itself felt in the community. The new church along with all public buildings were ordered closed by the Department of Health. Kant was called on to officiate at two funerals in the Benjamin Eckert home. Their children, Martha and Ewald were buried within two days of each other. Hardly a week later the minister was again called on to conduct a funeral service for a one-year old boy named Elmer, son of the William Kretchmans. By Christmas time the epidemic had subsided enough to allow the first Christmas celebration in the new church.

Herbert Kant suffered another setback in the summer of 1919. He had placed his horse named "Tom" in a livery stable in Edmonton while he made a short visit. On his return he learned that the stable had been destroyed by fire. It was a great loss to the minister who had become attached to his trusty horse.

On Christmas Eve of 1919, John Schubert of Bruderfeld presented a pulpit Bible printed in English to the New Sarepta Church. The Bible was rarely used in those days. Only a few years ago was it placed on display on the communion table.

There was a brief vacancy after the Rev. Kant gave his farewell message to the congregation in June, 1920. The call to the church was accepted by the William Scheel family on December 1, 1920. For several years the Scheels had served the Moravian Church in the Alaska Mission field. Due to the illness of Mrs. Scheel, the family had returned to the United States on furlough. When Mrs. Scheel had made a satisfactory recovery, the Scheel's accepted the call to serve at New Sarepta. A housing problem presented itself when the Scheels and their two children, Geraldine and Doris, arrived on the scene. The two room shack which had served the bachelor minister well was too small to accommodate the Scheel family.

A temporary residence was provided when the Ludwig Henkelman's offered their retirement home. The building of a parsonage began immediately as the members volunteered the labour for the project. William Scheel also assisted with the building program throughout the winter of 1920. His brother, Herman Scheel, from Minnesota, U.S.A. came to their assistance. The work was hampered by severe winter weather. When the walls and ceilings were plastered, it was necessary to keep an all night vigil to keep a wood fire burning. Meanwhile frost damage resulted during the building of the chimney. A few years later the mortar crumbled and resulted in a chimney fire that had to be put under control by a bucket brigade.

The parsonage was occupied by the Scheel family in March, 1921. The minister's salary was small for a family of four. A dentistry course that Mr. Scheel had acquired in college assisted the family in meeting their budget. Families came from the surrounding area for their dental care. Since Scheel had no practising licence, he could not charge professional fees for his service. It was free will offerings made by the families that

helped support the Scheels. Some of the offerings were made in the form of farm produce. The Rev. Scheel recalls that during the four years he served as pastor the pay was small but the Lord blessed in many ways.

The Scheels were further able to supplement their income when a group of families requested that services of worship and Sunday School be conducted in the Hay Lakes School. These services were conducted in the English language. Mrs. Scheel was in charge of the Sunday School class.

When the Rev. Scheel accepted a call to Dundurn, Saskatchewan on January 1, 1925, the New Sarepta church experienced a vacancy of ten months duration. A crisis occurred when there was no one to accompany the congregational singing. Over the past twenty years they had been able to rely on their pastors to accompany the hymns on the organ. The only accompaniment had been provided by the church band. Now the band had been discontinued because a number of members had moved from the area. The need for a church organist became critical when their Christmas program was being planned in November of 1925. This was the dilemma that confronted the Rev. Charles Gutensohn, president of the Canadian District Board, when he met with the New Sarepta board.

A request was made that the Heimtal Moravian Church share their minister with New Sarepta. This was to be an interim arrangement until a new pastor could be secured. The Rev. Hermann Schulze once again served Heimtal and New Sarepta on alternate Sundays.

A number of members requested that lessons be provided for their young people to develop musical talent for the church. Several students enrolled in music lessons offered by the Rev. Schulze. After Schulze was relieved of his duties at New Sarepta, Mrs. Klassen, wife of a railway worker, continued the music lessons. As a result of the efforts of these two talented teachers, the congregation was blessed with an abundance of musical talent.

In July, 1926, the Rev. William Kroening was installed pastor of the New Sarepta church by Charles Gutensohn. A new era was ushered in as witnessed by the conversion of the horse stable into a garage for the Rev. Kroening's Chevrolet Coupe. This added mobility permitted Kroening to travel to Bruce where he conducted regular services. He could drive cross-country in less than an hour. The Bruce congregation had been served by the Strathcona pastor who had made regular visits by railway coach.

The membership of the New Sarepta church began to decline during the twenties. Fourteen families moved out of the area. It was interesting to note that about half of the charter members of the Vancouver Moravian church founded on May 17, 1927 came from New Sarepta. The membership decline was offset somewhat by new immigrant families received into the church by Kroening. Members received by William Kroening were August Schachtschneiders, Hans Schuberts, Fred Steinbachs, Adolph Hiebners, Gus Sagerts, Emil Schmidt, Robert Schmidt and Martin Henkelman Jr.

Along with the immigrant families, two families from Bruderheim settled on the Brennecke estate. This estate was established in 1901 when Dr. Robert Brennecke visited the

Hoylers. In conversation with Brennecke, Hoyler told him that Canadian Pacific Railway sections could not be homesteaded. The land was offered at \$10.00 an acre to Dr. Brennecke who purchased the tract with the proviso that Moravian families settle there. Twenty-two years later his offer was accepted by the Karl Klammer and Christian Kittlitz families. The latter of these two families is still active in the Moravian Church.

The Rev. Kroening organized a Youth Fellowship program in the church. Further musical talent was also developed with the organization of a string orchestra. Funds were also raised to purchase a church organ. The ladies of the church supported the organ fund with a bazaar and sale at the church in the summer of 1928.

Kroening spent part of his time on the family farm at Bruderheim during his bachelor days. In June of 1929 he was married to Emma Stelter of Bruderheim. While the family lived in New Sarepta their son, Donald, was born.

In the winter of 1931, William Kroening was granted a leave of absence during a recovery from a thyroid gland operation. He resumed his duties as pastor in the spring of that year. In July, 1932, the family moved to Southern Alberta to accept responsibilities at the Champion and Didsbury Moravian churches.

It was back to the horse and buggy days when the Rev. Hermann Schulze was once again called upon to resume his duties at New Sarepta. Many families by this time travelled by automobile but the pastors mode of travel had not changed from the time he had arrived in Heimtal in 1910.

His patience and endurance must have been severely tested when his aging horse was no longer able to trot the thirty miles from Heimtal to New Sarepta. A member of the New Sarepta church offered the use of a younger horse to alleviate the situation. Once again Schulze's faithful service was recognized, especially his ministry to families in times of stress and need. A number of families experienced concern for the pastor and his long tedious trips from Heimtal.

Charles Gutensohn met with the church boards in 1934 and agreed to appoint N. W. Bahnman, a Mennonite, to serve as pastor of the New Sarepta church. The board agreed with Gutensohn that should the Rev. Bahnman's ministry prove satisfactory, his term could be extended. A combination of events and the fact that Bahnman was living away from his family dictated that he conclude his ministry in New Sarepta in December, 1935.

The Rev. Hermann Schulze resumed his ministry in what was to be his last official call to New Sarepta. The congregation was blest in having most of the Schulze family share in the spiritual work of the church. During this term of ministry, the Schulze's invested their life savings in a farm near Hay Lakes. Their eldest son, Theodore, operated the farm and his younger brothers attended public school in Hay Lakes. The younger Schulze's became active in the youth fellowship program. They played in the string orchestra and played in the band that had been organized by Lorenz Sagert, a few years earlier. Besides participating in all the aforementioned activities, the young men also sang in the church choir. When Schulze's ministry was terminated in Heimtal, the whole family moved to Hay Lakes.

Upon the termination of Hermann Schulze's ministry, a call was extended to the Rev. Theodore Weingarth in the spring of 1937. Weingarth was serving the Vancouver Moravian church and accepted the call to New Sarepta shortly after the passing of his wife. His children had also left home, thus the New Sarepta parsonage must have been a lonely place for him.

In the summer of 1937, Weingarth went on a vacation trip to the United States and returned with a bride who had been a long time acquaintance of the Weingarth family. The new parsonage lady provided active leadership in the youth program of the church. She also served willingly in the Women's Fellowship.

It was during Weingarth's ministry that a church bell was dedicated on March 13, 1937. The bell was purchased from the Bruderheim Moravian church. Due to a metal flaw in the bell, New Sarepta was able to purchase the bell for a salvage price of \$40.00. The Rev. Hermann Schulze officiated at the dedication of the bell and Martin Harke rang the bell for the first time.

Another significant event took place at New Sarepta on July 1, 1937 when the first Canadian District Youth Conference was convened there. It is significant that at this point in history the youth membership came close to equalling the adult membership of the church. A contributing factor to the high enrolment at the District Conference may have been the depression of the thirties. There were few job opportunities for young people thus making it possible for them to attend.

When Theodore Weingarth retired from his official duties in May, 1941, the total membership had reached an all-time high of 204.

The membership remained static during the war years when the Rev. Fred Schimke served as pastor from 1940-1943. A steady decline of membership followed World War II. Families retired and moved out of the area. The discovery of oil in Alberta provided job opportunities away from the farm. Periods without pastoral leadership also took their toll on the congregation.

It is hoped that, despite former dissension and reluctance to adapt to changing times, the congregation may indeed have a bright future. Opportunities for outreach and growth have never been better. With God's help, it is up to us.

Pastors who have served the congregation during the past 75 years are as follows:

Clement Hoyler	October 1904 – March 1909
Emil Suemper	March 1909 – March 1910
Hermann Schulze	March 1910 – July 1912
Reinhold Riemer	July 1912 – August 1915
Herbert Kant	September 1915 – June 1920
William Scheel	November 1920– December 1924
Vacant	January 1925 – November 1925
Hermann Schulze	November 1925 – June 1926
William Kroening	July 1926 – July 1932
Hermann Schulze	July 1932 – December 1934
N. W. Bahnman	December 1934 – December 1935
Hermann Schulze	December 1935 – March 1937
Theodore Weingarth	April 1937 – May 1941
Fred Schimke	August 1941 – March 1943
Elmer Stelter	May 1943 – August 1947
Alfred Weiss	September 1947 – April 1952

Vacant	April 1952 – June 1953
Eric Schulze	June 1953 – September 1959
Wilbert Frey	January 1960 – April 1962
Vacant	May 1962 – June 1963
Joseph Lafortune	June 1963 – December 1966
Vacant	December 1966– November 1967
Kurt Vitt	November 1967– September 1976
Brent Marshall	January 1969 – June 1974
(Assistant Pulpit Supply)	

Pulpit Supply during vacancy are as follows:

Marvin Henkelmann	May 1952 – September 1952
Stanley Schlaak	May 1962 – June 1963
Harvey Prochnau	May 1967 – September 1967
Kenneth Bonney	September 1976 – January 1978
Jerry Fassen	January 1978 – April 1978
Ron Coyer	April 1978 – September 1978
Laurie Taylor	September 1978 – January 1979
Elmo Herman	January 1979 – April 1979
David Merritt	Present Pastor

In preparing a review of the early Church history of the New Sarepta Moravians, it should be noted that official records were not made available for this project. Manuscript sources from the Hoyler diary provided useful information on the early development of the New Sarepta Moravians. Some reference notes were used from the Story of the New Sarepta Moravians, published in 1954.

I wish to thank Mrs. Lydia Sampert for providing notes of interest from old periodicals. A note worth mentioning is the letters I received from William Scheel. At the age of 91 years, he recalls many details of his ministry at New Sarepta. While

some of his personal recollections included in the story may appear trivial to some of the readers, I trust that the human interest value in the story will compensate for the lack of formality in writing.

Otto Drebert

Percy

The Country Boy Pastor

By T-R Guenette-Wachno

Editor's Note: This story is intentionally written in an oral format for presentation in a public storytelling concert in Josephburg, Alberta on May, 3, 2002.

I begin this story tonight with an outline of a very old tale about an ambitious man who once sold his land in the mountains and set off to find his fortune. Though he traveled far and wide, he never managed to *strike it rich*. It was only many destitute years later that he learned a prosperous diamond mine was discovered on the land he **used** to own. I relate this story to illustrate that it is often human nature to look *elsewhere for diamonds*.

When Helen Lavender, the coordinator of this Strathcona Heritage Project, came up with the idea that our T.A.L.E.S. group (The Alberta League Encouraging Storytelling) should focus on a project which would highlight Strathcona County history (dig up our diamonds, so to speak), I immediately jumped at the chance to introduce you to Percy, a most incredible man of the cloth.

He lives within the boundaries of the little spot of Earth we call Strathcona County. He lives, laughs, comforts and entertains, but most of all, he believes . . .

.He believes in a humble, nonjudgmental **care of** and **for** his fellow human beings. He is part of the history of our land.

When I first tried to figure out how I might possibly contain, in one story, a glimpse of the "being" Percy is, I struggled. I used imagery. I imagined a clear pool of water into which I dropped a large rock. Imagine, with me, how the force of that rock causes the water to ripple into waves, waves which spread out gently in all directions. Could this possibly portray Pastor Henkelman?

Percy, as he'd invite you and I to call him, was born on October 7, 1923 on a farm in the northeast corner of our County, two miles north of Lamont, to be exact. His parents, Emil and Lydia, German/Russian emigrants and pioneer settlers, named their son: Percival Reinhold Henkelman. (With a respectful, yet

amused twinkle in his eyes, he jokes that he wasn't old enough, at the time, to **defend** himself!)

His family homesteaded four quarter sections of land near the North Saskatchewan River. The farm was a good distance from the nearest settlement, a community of Moravians who had called it: Bruderheim, meaning "Home of the Moravian Brethern".

Very early on in his life, Percy decided he'd focus on one of two professions. He'd be a radio announcer. . .("Radio," Percy said, "was **big** in our lives, it was a window on the world. We heard the first news of WWII on the radio, it broadened our horizons, it was educational." I think some of his love of radio might have come from his 1930s experience on a CJCA broadcast called the "Army and Navy Amateur Hour". Percy and two sisters received third prize for their rendition of "That

Silver Haired Sweetheart" -- a song they dedicated to their mother.) So, he'd be a radio announcer...or a minister.

And though, in the end, he's not able to nail down an exact reason he chose to devote his life to ministry, he bunches together a number of factors: his extremely devout parents, the influence of good clergy role models, his amazing pre-school fight against diphtheria and an influential local school teacher.

By age 10, Percy decided. After attending Bolton Elementary School and the Walker and Star High Schools, he followed his calling to the USA, to the Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1941. While his wartime service interrupted schooling from 1943 to 1946, he returned to college, graduating in 1948.

Pause with me a moment, here in Percy's history, as I put in a little of my own beliefs. The more Time goes by, the more I believe that our lives are "influenced" by forces we cannot see. Some would call this

Karma, Fate or plain coincidence; others would call it Destiny or God's Will. Regardless of what you call it, I, personally, have seen these forces at work. I have two examples pertinent to Percy's story. The first, I'll tell you now; the second I'll save for the end of the story.

The first example sees Percy, a young airman on leave from the Royal Canadian Air Force, and hitchhiking to Portland, Oregon. He decides, for the fun of it, to check the local phone book to see if there are any Henkelmans in town. Sure enough, he discovers a man with the same name as his father. This Emil Henkleman turns out to be his father's cousin.

Percy is welcomed into Emil's home and within half an hour, in walks a "brown-eyed chick" named Martha Roth, a theological student boarding at Emil's house! Three years after their chance meeting, they take another chance. They marry in June 1948 and for Martha and Percy, the rest, as they say, is history!

Well, together Percy and Martha's lives continue. Percy achieved his Masters Degree in Theology from the Moravian Theological Seminary. After being ordained as a deacon, Percy and Martha returned to Canada and served at the Edmonton Moravian Church from 1951-1970. During these 19 years, the Henkelman's three children were born and schooled in Alberta's capital. In 1966, Percy was consecrated a Bishop of the Unity. This is defined as being a "pastor to the pastors", the highest position available in the Moravian Church. (Here I must stick in a story from Percy's memoirs about the consecration and celebration. It's an anecdote about the son of a mother from Percy's Rio Terrace congregation. This child was overheard declining an invitation to go "out to play". He was busy, he said. He needed to go to the

Edmonton Moravian Church to see his minister get "crucified as a Bishop.") The honor of attaining this top position was sweetened by the fact that, at age 42, Percy was the youngest bishop elected in the church in the past 100 years!

In 1977, Bishop Henkelman took a posting at the Josephburg United Church of Christ, a mere eight miles from his childhood homestead, and we've been the lucky ones in the end.

As you've probably gathered, Percy has never been one to do "just one thing" and our County, our community is richer for having his energy and enthusiasm. In the past 24 years, he's had his hand in many local organizations.

For example, Percy served for many years as the chaplain of the Elk Island District Scouting program (he and Martha even offered their farm as an unofficial campground for the

boys). He's currently official chaplain of the Fort Saskatchewan Legion (always organizing the annual Remembrance Day celebrations) and chaplain for the Fort Saskatchewan RCMP.

Additionally, Percy is one of the 20-member Josephburg Male Chorus and, due to his keen interest in ham radio, he became one of the founding members of the Fort Saskatchewan District Amateur Radio Club. (His call letters are: VE6 PRH, for anyone who speaks *that* language).

With his interest in ham radio, he spent over 10 years as a local member of a "Health and Welfare" radio group. This involved a weekly Thursday afternoon radio contact with up to four friends to keep up, via radio waves, on worldly happenings.

Through this he learned, first hand, the details of the fall of the Berlin Wall. . .

Through my personal experience with the soft-spoken, liberal-minded Percy, I know the treasure he is. While I discovered this 15 years ago, other's recognize this, too, as evidenced by the fact Percy received the **Strathcona Award Of Excellence** in the 80s and the **Pride of Strathcona Award** in 1998.

Percy's philosophy of ecumenical worship and lack of his "judging" his fellow man makes him, in my eyes, different from others. There's a peace about him that infuses

those around him, no matter what their faith - or lack thereof. His philosophy of not preaching, but rather *witnessing* to people, (telling them what he's experienced in Life), is a firm and evident part of his continuing mission.

His Life's work so far spans seven decades. *Roughly* speaking there have been:

557 weddings, 546 Baptisms, 305 Confirmations, 280 funerals, 19 ordinations and only God knows how many Sunday services and counseling sessions. He smiles humbly when forced to admit his **popularity**. In ecumenical circles, it's said that he has performed more services in this district, than some other pastors combined.

Percy is called upon by people from all walks of life. Often by simply **meeting** him, a person could decide, as I did,: "I want Percy to do my wedding." When they book a church and ask to bring in their "own" minister, often the first question asked is, "Who is it?" The answer: "Percy Henkelman" is followed by, "Percy Henkelman? Oh yeah. Not a problem!"

Such was the case for a couple who wanted to be married in Leduc. They approached that Leduc pastor and when she heard Percy's name,

she agreed unequivocally. She **remembered** him. She met Percy on a plane to Regina, where they'd take RCMP chaplain training. A day later, she found herself in the back seat of a cruiser driven by Percy. They were on the course as a "getaway car" with the pursuit car hot on their tail. When Percy realized the pursuit car would beat him to the gate, he cut across the centre of the track bouncing and roaring along, to finish first.

Back to the wedding in Leduc. . . At Percy's request this other minister also said a few words during the service. She related the story about the high-speed chase and counseled the couple, unlike Percy, to: "Stay on track!"

"Highlights?" I ask Percy.

Well, meeting Albert Einstein, who was impressed by the fact Percy was Canadian, and

though he didn't take time to explain the "theory of relativity", did shake our Percy's hand.

Percy befriended actor Andy Griffith. Studying with Mr. Griffith in college and Percy later performed the actor's wedding ceremony, with actor Don Knotts standing in as best man!

Another "highlight" of Percy's life, for us moreso than him, I'm sure. . . involves the second example of what I call "the work of the **Powers that Be**".

The year is 1945. It's December. Percy's RCAF crew, based in Comox, B.C., is relocating to Greenwood, Nova Scotia. Percy, however, is in Stathcona County on a short furlough, visiting his parents for Christmas. He's young, 22 years of age, and entering the last few months of his 3-year stint in the RCAF.

When the leave is over, heading for Comox, he boards a Vancouver-bound train.

Hours later a snow slide in the Rockies, leaves the track impassable. Percy is stuck "AWOL by accident", and misses the plane to Nova Scotia.

There is no time for official military punishment. . .our young airman's Fate is worse. The crew, his friends, are comfortably settled in the 4-engine B24 bomber, with their sights set on the luxury of "quick trip" sailing through the azure Canadian sky from one end of this sprawling continent to the other. Our airman, Percy? He has to endure the arduous cross-country journey on a rickety cold iron horse: a troop train filled with lots of stuff . . .boring "stuff".

"I grumbled to myself," Percy admits. "I *could have been across the continent in a day or so.*"

Much later, bone-weary and stir-crazy, Percy looks straight into the stark eyes of Reality. "As soon as I arrived out East," he said, "I happened to have a little portable radio in my kitbag. The first radio program I heard was the news broadcast . . .that the plane and my buddies. . ."

Well, that plane, the B24 Liberator, had crashed. His friends (including the flight engineer who had taken Percy's place), eleven young men, all alive with the hopes, dreams and daring of youth, were all dead. . .They only got as far as Fernie, B.C. before the Rockies claimed them.

Percy said, "I shouldn't try to second-guess Providence." While he certainly didn't understand "why" this happened, he trusted his belief in God's Will.

Today, all these years later, as the outer edges of his lips curl up into his bright smile and the laugh lines around his blue eyes crease into place, I get this distinct feeling he has more than a *hunch* about things, that he "knows", that he's privy to something I'm not.

He denies this, saying we're all as close to *knowing* anything as he is.

"And don't make me out to be *too good*," he says in the interview, "I'm *just* a 'country boy pastor' who got elected to be bishop!"

But I do know one thing for certain. In trying to present the sparkle of local history, I've found a diamond in our backyard. And if **you** look, you will discover diamonds like our Percival Reinhold Henkelman and others, stories like you've heard tonight,

proving how rich and interesting our own
"history" is, right here in Strathcona County.

REFLECTIONS OF MY VISIT TO LABRADOR - 1987**By Alfred Harke**

As a member of the Board of World Missions of the Moravian Church I had the opportunity, along with another board member, Rev. Otto Dreydoppel Jr. to visit Labrador.

The American Province had assumed the responsibility of the mission work in Labrador from the British Province. The B.W.M. was now responsible for supplying pastors (missionaries) to serve the churches there, as well, to continue financial support for the work there.

The B.W.M. goal was to replace the Advisory committee with an active Provincial Board that would be responsible for more of the administration of the work in Labrador, as well, to challenge them to a greater financial support of their own Province.

The purpose of our visit to Labrador was to introduce these concepts, and to get feedback from all of the churches there. We visited all the churches, met with the boards, as well as with all the church councils.

We arrived in Goose-Bay – Happy Valley, and then by air, on to Nain, Hopedale, Makovik and North West River. We spent several days in each community.

Some of my impressions of Labrador-- We arrived on January 13th, middle of winter; it was cold, some days really cold, but we were received with a warm welcome and warm hospitality.

Our first flight was to Nain, the most Northern station on the East Coast. The 7:00 AM flight took off at 12:00 noon, a short delay because of a snowstorm. We were told that 3-day delays were quite normal in the winter. We landed at Nain, where the airstrip is up on a flat plateau, and rode down into the village on a snowmobile.

Nain is the oldest station in Labrador; it was started in 1771, built on the shore of Voisey Bay. Jens Haven, a former missionary from Greenland led the party to begin the work in Labrador.

Many of the early missionaries were men of humble learning; they were carpenters, builders, and blacksmiths, men who were used to earning their living by the sweat of their brow. But they were men of simple, fervent faith. In their work of translating the Scriptures and preaching the Word they met many difficulties with the Eskimo language.

From 1771 to 1900 the Moravian mission work spread along the coast - north and south from Nain, establishing stations in Hopedale, Okak, Ramah, Zoar, Hebron, Killinek and Makkovik. After 1900 and the decline in population, several stations were abandoned. In 1987 there were five Moravian churches on the Labrador coast - Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, North West River and Happy Valley, with a total membership of about 2,000.

Nain is not only the oldest station, it is also the largest in Labrador. From 1771 to 1957 Nain was the headquarters of the Mission. Since 1957 the Headquarters for the Labrador Province is in Happy Valley - Goose Bay.

As the work grew, many enterprises were established which benefited the life of the Eskimo. The first Eskimo newspaper in the history of the world, "Nainemick", a translation of Scriptures as well as News was published. Also the first Eskimo Justice of the Peace in Canada is a Nain man, Jeremias Sillit. The Nain Radio Station was also started. Its broadcasts were in the Eskimo language as well as in English. In 1987 Otto Dreydopple and I had the opportunity of being live guests on their radio broadcast. We communicated with them the purpose of our visit to all of the churches in Labrador, including Nain.

Our visit to Nain gave us an insight into the day-to-day life of the people there. Not only of the life and work of the church in Labrador, but also we had the opportunity of staying in the home of Bob and Clara Voisey. As we sat at the kitchen table, we looked out of the window, across Voisey Bay, the same Voisey Bay where there is speculation today of rich mineral ore deposits. Clara Voisey was very involved in the work of the church in Nain. The people value the customs and traditions of the Moravian church, as well as their native traditions. The challenge for the church and the leadership of the church is to make its message applicable and practical for every day life. We also had the opportunity to spend time in the home of the pastor in Nain, Rev. Renates (Ray) Hunter. Rev. Hunter is the first Eskimo, ordained as a Moravian minister.

Our next stop was Hopedale, a small intimate village nestled in the rocky hills of Labrador. Hopedale mission station was founded in 1782, and a mission house was built there then, which still stands there today. We stayed in the home of Rev. John and Naomi Case, who were serving Hopedale in 1987. While there I had the opportunity to attend the Saturday evening

“Singstunde”, as well as the beginning of the Youth Festival, which included a Lovefeast.

The Moravian traditions have a strong influence on the life of the church there. Hopedale is also the site of the museum for the Moravian Church in Labrador. There are many artifacts depicting the early years of mission work in Labrador.

From Hopedale we flew to Makkovik. Makkovik was incorporated as a village in 1896. A church, a school and living accommodations had been shipped aboard the mission vessel –“The Harmony” from Germany to Makkovik. The buildings were built (Prefabed) in Germany, all pieces were numbered, then taken apart and shipped to Makkovik, where they were then erected again.

While in Makkovik I stayed in the home of Rupert and Peace McNeil. Rupert was an avid hunter and fisherman, so we enjoyed the wild game, caribou, rabbit as well as salmon and arctic char. With no ordained Pastor there, Makkovik was served by a layman, Jim Andersen.

From Makkovik we flew to Goose Bay – Happy Valley. Rev Leslie Robinson was the pastor there. He was also the Superintendent of the mission work in Labrador. Happy Valley, founded in 1942, and the adjacent town of Goose Bay were born of the grim necessity of war. The building of the Air Base, used jointly by The Royal Canadian Air Force and the United States Air Force, provided employment for many civilians, Eskimo as well as Whites, at Goose Bay.

Many of the families that came to Goose Bay were members of the Moravian churches from the coastal settlements in northern

Labrador. The Moravian Church in Labrador felt responsible for the spiritual needs of these families that were now living in Goose Bay.

The Moravian Church has played a prominent part in the life of the community of Goose Bay, even though there are several other church denominations working in close co-operation with them.

Today, 2003, fifteen years later, Labrador as a Province of the Moravian Church continues to struggle for survival. The four churches and two Fellowships (North West River and Postville) have only one ordained pastor to serve them since the resignation of Rev. Walter Edmunds, who was the pastor at Happy Valley as well as the Chair of the Provincial Board. There is a real need to staff the churches there with pastoral leadership. There are also many social and economical problems that need to be addressed, similar to those of Davis Inlet.

We need to keep the needs of the Labrador Church in our prayers, as they seek for the leadership they need to continue in work in Labrador.