

The History of Green Bay Community Church
as remembered by Tony and Pat Folk

We would like to share with you some of our own background as we feel it has a direct bearing on the direction of our lives in being brought into a new fellowship--namely, the Green Bay Community Church.

Before coming to Green Bay, we were attending a church in Mt. Prospect, Illinois, where the attitude of the people was so, that in Bible days onlookers would have to say, "behold how they love one another." The Word became more and more real and alive as we watched together new converts come in and go to work for Him who first loved us and gave Himself for us. The love of Christ was so manifested in the lives of the believers there, that as we worshipped from week to week, our hearts exclaimed "Oh! The wonder of it all."

The Lord saw fit after allowing us to experience a real unity among the believers there, to move us to the city of Green Bay in June of 1968.

Someone at Mount Prospect Bible Church told us shortly before we left, that they heard that there was someone in Green Bay trying to start a church, but they didn't know who it was or where they were.

When we arrived in Green Bay, we looked up churches in the phone directory trying to find one similar to the church in Mount Prospect. We decided to visit a Missionary Alliance Church. During the service a couple sitting directly behind us, tapped us on the shoulder and introduced themselves as Barb and Dick Schnittker. In talking with them, we discovered that they were the couple whose vision it was to start a church here in Green Bay. They invited us to their Sunday night bible study which they had been holding for one and a half years. Thus we became part of the nucleus of the Green Bay Community Church. Only God could have orchestrated this.

Barb and Dick came from the Minnetonka Community Church in Hopkins Minnesota, having experienced there a real unity also. The other members of the Bible study were Marcella Baldwin of DePere; and Dr. Earle Gray originally from Crown Point Indiana. Marcella attended Bethel Baptist at that time and Earle had attended the Cook Community Church in Indiana.

In September of the same year, Wally and Ruth Johnson and their four children were led into our midst having moved from Racine Wisconsin in

June 1968. They had been attending the Racine Bible Church where their experience was much like ours.

Others had come and gone from the Bible studies but there were basically eight people that felt the leading of the Lord to begin a new work in Green Bay.

In November, the ladies began meeting for prayer every Tuesday afternoon. About the same time the men began meeting at the YMCA for a prayer breakfast every Tuesday morning at 7:00 A.M.

It was decided that we would begin regular services: a Sunday school hour, and morning and evening services. The date set was November 24, the Sunday before Thanksgiving of 1968. The previous week an order of service was set up. A small chord organ was available for our worship in music, and a pulpit was made. Song sheets and a program were run off on a duplicating machine.

The Johnson home was our first church site. The location of the stairway and coat racks in their basement made it convenient to set up the seating in church fashion.

Sheets were hung as dividers for the three Sunday school classes meeting in the basement. The classes were the Junior high class and Junior class each of which had two students, while the Primary group had four. Upstairs, the four adults had their class in the living room. A bedroom was used as the nursery, where there were two toddlers.

As the Sunday School hour came to a close, and the time for our first service drew near, our excitement increased. Pastor Harvey Martin and his family of the Racine Bible Church were there to deliver the message. Ruth Johnson took her place at the organ, and our first song was "Amazing Grace." We could barely sing. The eyes of many were filled with tears as we beheld His wonder and direction as He alone had brought us together. With visitors, there were about 33 in our little group that first morning. The message for the morning concerned "What a church is, and possible problems we would have as a new church." At the time, we could hardly conceive of any problems ever arising. It was indeed a real "mountain-top experience" for us.

We wanted to be a church with a missionary outreach and had adopted Christian radio station WRVM to share in, with prayer and financial support.

An old school building was available to be looked at, located at Lime Kiln and County Rd. O. Several of us went to see it as a possibility for use as a church. It was so dark inside we couldn't see our hands in front of our faces. It had been empty for approximately five years. Two men had bought it as a possible restaurant and had a new roof put on, after the old one had leaked through, bringing both plaster and water down all over the floor. Windows had been broken and boarded up, and there was water in the basement.. All this and yet the Lord seemed to be saying, "This is what you are to have."

Contacts were made and different loan companies were approached as to a loan for both the purchasing and remodeling of the building. After attempts at various banks proved futile, the Lord allowed us to get what we needed from the Kellogg Citizens Bank. In December of 1968, the papers were signed by Wally Johnson, Earle Gray, Tony Folk, and Dick Schnittker. In January, 1969, the building was ours to begin work on.

New thermo-pane windows replaced the old broken ones, and many other changes began taking place. A drop ceiling was put in the sanctuary and paneling, wallpaper, carpeting and chandeliers were to add to the beauty of the interior.

During this same period of time, Articles of Faith were drawn up by members of the board in a small booklet entitled "This We Believe" and copies were printed up and made available to those who desired one upon coming into the building.

The Lord used many different vessels through which we received spiritual growth, in the first few years together. Pastor Harvey Martin of Racine took special interest and his love and concern for the growth of this new work was strongly felt as we received many messages from him either in person or on tape. There were many others that the Lord used too, such as Ken Hettinga of WRVM, Pastor Erwin of the Cook Community Church in Indiana, Pastor Conradt of Oconto Falls, Mr. Eggebeen of Sheboygan, Pastor Booth of the Mount Prospect Bible Church in Illinois, and many others who were both praying and sending gifts.

Pastor Ray Williamson of Crescent Lake Bible Camp along with his wife, were extremely helpful in our organizing as a church and helping us get incorporated as a not for profit organization.

We are grateful also for the way in which he ministered to us from the word on many occasions.

The Lord brought another family into our midst about this time, Mark and Mary Ellen Vosquil, to share in the work. .

After much labor, we were ready to hold the first service in the new building on Palm Sunday, 1969. We wanted to be able to have organized classes, before opening the church to others on Easter Sunday. Folding chairs were purchased along with song books and everything seemed to be in order.

Our first service open to visitors was on Easter Sunday. Programs were printed and an Easter Lily was presented by Mr. Despin, the carpenter who had done the paneling in the sanctuary. Telegrams were sent for our opening service by some who shared the burden in this work.

Once again, it was our privilege to have in the pulpit Pastor Martin, bringing God's Word with Mrs. Martin singing "The Holy City" and Bernard Wynstra from Racine favoring us with an instrumental solo.

In August, 1969, our church experienced our first death and our first birth. The Lord saw fit to draw to himself three year old Gregory Folk and in so doing, supplied His grace in abundant measure for those involved, as He has promised. Shortly after, it was His pleasure to bring into the world a tiny daughter for Mark and Mary Ellen Vosquil to raise for Himself, who was given the name of Jennifer.

The Lord had also continued in the physical provision for our church, as the Sunday School room and nursery were complete and a new basement floor was to be poured. New entrance doors were also in the process of being installed.

God had brought to us another lovely couple, John and Linda Benson, from Minnesota, and on November 23rd, we had a potluck supper at the building which marked our one year together as a body of believers. This was a time when we reflected on the faithfulness of God as He provided for our every need during the past year.

More evidence of God's care for us in all phases was when McCormick's Home for the Aged, built a new chapel and offered us their pews. A truck and trailer were used for the moving of these solid oak pews to the church. Some of our men went out on a Saturday morning at 6:00 A.M. and after having worked all day, finally called a mover

to come and finish the job. The pews were painted and replaced the folding chairs in the sanctuary. One more thing to praise Him for!

In the months that followed, the plumbing and water were hooked up, and we were able to replace our chemical toilets with better facilities. One instance that we were really grateful to the Lord for were the specifics relating to the water being piped in.

It was going to cost the church \$1,000 to put in a septic tank and field. Just before we were going to do that, we discovered that the city was coming right past the church with water and sewer lines. All that was needed was for the church to pay the charge to hook it up. Praise God! He saw us through again.

More visiting pastors, missionaries coming through to share with us and feed us spiritually, and tapes to bring us messages, when live speakers were not available were our main source of spiritual food.

As a congregation, we now felt the Lord was leading us to call our first pastor. We began praying regularly that the Lord would supply His servant to fill the pulpit; a man full of the Holy Spirit and well acquainted with the Word.

Letters were written, and in December, 1970, Leonard Hale came to fill our pulpit. He was not coming at the time to candidate but began feeling led of the Lord to be our pastor. We felt such unity at a subsequent business meeting as we gathered together to vote for this man. It was unanimous! We began taking steps to call Leonard Hale to be our first pastor.

A parsonage was purchased with the Brown County Savings and Loan Co., and was made available for him and his family soon after he arrived in March.

In the months that followed, we received real insight into the scriptures as a result of Pastor Hale's ministry and as souls were saved, we once again were privileged to watch new converts come in and go to work for Him.

It is our desire as a church to serve our Lord in a manner of "moment by moment" as one can experience when shown just a glimpse of His glory. The joy of knowing Him must find some means of expression as it is too great to contain. Others may

become the recipients of our Savior's love through us. May it be our continuing prayer as believers that the Lord will use us and keep us clean vessels for His use. Only as we keep our eyes on Him, can we continue to spill out His love to others; for He alone is the source of our strength.

Six months later Pastor Hale announced to us that he was leaving. He felt called back to Dallas. This was a time of discouragement for us as we had grown to love him and his family. However, the Lord had other things in store for us. During the next year the elders conducted the services of the church. We are sure that God was using this as a period of training for them so that they each would be able to teach the scriptures.

The church slowly grew in this time with the witness of various members to different individuals. The missions program grew as we took on new missionaries and one of our own families, Jim and Karen Cleveland were called to the mission field. Another couple, Wally and Ruth Johnson, left us and went to Bible School. Each time some left, the Lord replaced them with others to carry on the ministry.

Then in May 1972, Pastor Martin sent us another candidate for pastor, a young single man from Dallas Theological Seminary, Ted Bazett-Jones. After hearing him express his views of the ministry and his concern for teaching the scriptures, he was called and became our second pastor in June. The following August we had our first baptism service out at Dr. Gray's home near Abrams. He had a pond in back of his house and the natural setting gave a particular beauty to this service. The following month we had our second baptismal service.

In October of that year, our pastor was ordained by the church. We watched and listened as he was questioned for three hours by a panel of men from churches through out Wisconsin. It was also during this time that he met his wife to be, Cheri Greenfeldt. They were married the following August on Washington Island. It was exciting to share this time with our pastor. At this point the only service which had not been observed was a wedding and in June 1973, our pastor performed his and our church's first wedding. Chris Glembo, one of our young people, married Tom Flynn.

The church has continued to grow. From the first few people in the

basement of Johnson's home, we now have 70-80 people in a morning service, as of this writing.

Our initial bank account consisted of \$5.00 to buy stamps while the Budget, as of this time, is \$1300 per month. Our mission outreach grew proportionately. In the early days it was \$25.00 per month to WRVM. Now it runs \$480.00 per month, with the support of seven families or individuals and three organizations.

There is very little mentioned of membership at the church. Instead we feel that when an individual has accepted Christ as Savior, then he or she is a member of Christ's church and so he is welcomed with us. Later on when he grows to know us and love the ministry then he will want to become a member. In the meantime, he is free to worship and serve with us.

The primary need in an individual's life is a living relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The goal of the Green Bay Community Church is to be an instrument of God in accomplishing that need in the lives of individuals. All that is done in the church has this goal in mind. The building is only brick and mortar. Since believers are the church, the salvation they have in Christ should shine forth to the community of Green Bay.