

A Century of Hope

Part 1



*Hope Evangelical Church
Built in 1898
Ephrata, Pa.*

*Heritage Sunday
100th Anniversary Service
March 29, 1998*



This history is dedicated to

Mary Kathryn Cox Englert

(1903 - 1996)

A woman of faith, love, and Hope

Pastors of Hope Church

J. H. Willauer	.....	1898-1901
W. H. Kindt	.....	1901-1903
D. S. Manning	.....	1903-1905
B. F. Krick	.....	1905-1908
W. I. Miller	.....	1908-1909
A. S. Kresge	.....	1909-1910
W. C. Heisler	.....	1910-1911
O. T. Moyer	.....	1911-1912
Ivan Wanner	.....	1912-1915
Charles Willson	.....	1915-1916
B. C. Krupp	.....	1916-1918
Earle Slichter	.....	1918-1919
C. I. Dengler	.....	1919-1920
H. Winfred Butt	.....	1920-1927
Sydney Buxton	.....	1927-1934
Albert Schankel	.....	1934-1938
John F. White	.....	1938-1940
H. E. Fassnacht	.....	1940-1944
Frank Lewis	.....	1944-1960
Parke Adams	.....	1960-1962
Virgil Megill	.....	1962-1971
Harold Ulmer	.....	1971-1978
Kenneth Texter	.....	1978-1981
Barry Wolfe	.....	1981-1990
Steven Morton	.....	1990-1997
Mary Jane Kirby	.....	1997-

Ministerial Sons of Hope Church

J. S. Royer	.....	1915
Sterling Fake	1942
Larry Bergstresser	1958
Ronald Bickhart	1965
John Hornberger	1993

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Part 1



October 30, 1898, dawned raw and rainy in the village of Ephrata, turning the lot at Washington Avenue and Marshall Street to mud. One of the most anticipated moments in the new life of Hope Church, the service marking the laying of the cornerstone, would have to take place elsewhere -- inside another house of worship.

A few blocks away, the United Brethren Church opened its doors, and by 2:30 Sunday afternoon, the sanctuary was filled with townsfolk. At the pulpit was the commanding figure of the Rev. A. Kreckler of Reading, a prominent "divine" in the denomination known as the Evangelical Association.

His sermon, "The Voice of the Stone," was drawn from the Old Testament Book of Joshua, Chapter 4, in which the Lord dried the River Jordan so the Israelite armies, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, could cross in the campaign for Canaan. God then commanded Joshua, successor to Moses, to gather twelve stones from the exposed bed and pile them at their campsite in Gilgad, on the other side: for all future children of Israel who would pass, a reminder of God's might.

"The discourse was an inspiring one," wrote a reporter for *The Ephrata Review*. "...It was listened to with close attention by all who were present."

The service ended within the hour, and heedless of the inclement weather, the celebrants made their way toward their partly-built church, picking up onlookers as they went until the crowd was several hundred strong.

At the site they sang and prayed, led not only by the Rev. Mr. Kreckler but also the Revs. W.H. Weidner and J.H. Willauer, traveling pastors of the Evangelical Association's Brownstown circuit, of which Hope was a part.

A list was read of the items placed inside the metal box in the cornerstone. Among them: a Bible, the Evangelical Discipline, Catechism and Hymnal, the

names of contributors to the building fund, a brief history of the congregation, and copies of denomination publications, many in German, such as *The Evangelical Messenger*, *The Yearbook of the Evangelical Association*, and *The Sunday School Quarterly*. The secular world was well represented, too. The latest editions of Ephrata's three newspapers -- *The Review*, *The Reporter*, and *The News* -- and *The Lancaster New Era* were packed into the box.

This particular cornerstone had done similar duty before, as part of an Evangelical church in Palmyra, about thirty miles away in Lebanon County. The fledgling Hope congregation had been offered the vacant structure -- a modest frame building 38-by-55 feet -- and had dismantled it, loaded it onto flatbed rail cars, and shipped it into Ephrata. It was being reconstructed timber by timber, with a fifteen-foot addition, on the double corner lot on Washington Avenue that the members also had purchased that year.

By October's end, their job was far from done. Yet they planned, Lord willing, to be in for Christmas.

The Lord was apparently more than willing.

A month and a half later, a brief item in *The Ephrata Review* noted that on December 17 at 7 p.m., a Saturday evening, the Rev. Mr. Willauer would conduct the first service in the "classroom" of the new Evangelical church called Hope. "All are invited to attend," the two-sentence article concluded.

While the surroundings were new, or nearly so, the congregation was not. Its roots stretched back years to humble services of Scripture, song, prayer, and exhortation in the homes of local followers of Jacob Albright.

Born in Pottstown in 1759, the son of German Lutherans who had emigrated to America in 1732, Albright had only a rudimentary education and, as a boy of sixteen, signed up as a drummer in the Pennsylvania Militia during the Revolution. He later went to farming in Lancaster County, next to Fry's Mill in what would later become Hahnstown. When his land proved rich in clay and limestone, he built a tileworks. His heavily-starched moral values and integrity as a businessman earned him the name "The Honest Tilemaker."

Albright, however, would not find his destined path until the early 1790s, after an epidemic of dysentery claimed several of his children. The shock of his loss caused Albright to reexamine his spirituality; he became, in the words of one early biographer, "the happy subject of the awakening influences of God's Holy Spirit, and was brought to the knowledge of his sinful state and of the truth." Having parted company with the church in which he was raised, Albright struck out on his own in 1796 to preach to the austere frugal Germans of southeastern Pennsylvania, among whom he feared true Christianity was ebbing.

Disdainful of the formalities of institutional religion, believing that ceremony was no guarantee of salvation, Albright stressed a "change of heart," reflected in personal piety and self-denial. His message stirred animosity, particularly among the Lutherans whose church he had disavowed, and he was often threatened with death and, on occasion, badly beaten.

But he persevered. By 1800, he had established three communities of believers -- known as "Albrechtsleute," or "Albright's People" -- numbering probably no more than twenty. He organized them into "classes" and appointed "class leaders" to tend their spiritual progress in his absence. There was "Walter's Class" in Bucks County, "Philip's Class" in Northampton County, and "Liesser's Class" in Berks County."

The leader of the last of these, Samuel Liesser, hosted a two-day conference in 1803, attended by twenty-nine followers. There they declared themselves an ecclesiastical organization, drew up rules, and ordained Albright their pastor. At a meeting in Kleinfeltersville four years later, with membership now exceeding 200, they made him their bishop.

Within six months, on May 18, 1808, Albright was dead.

Albright had refused to call his creation a "church," a word tainted with empty ritual. Those who carried on his work agreed. At their first General Conference in 1816, Albright's People adopted the name, Evangelical Association.

By the 1840s, when a flood of German immigrants arrived on American

shores, the denomination had more than 20,000 communicants in Pennsylvania and surrounding states, as well as a couple hundred preachers. Most of the latter were circuit riders whose territories typically covered several rural enclaves; the annual salary was \$100 for single men and \$200 for married, though the life was so difficult that few were wed.

They were "unlearned men," wrote W.W. Orwig in 1858 in "The History of the Evangelical Association." "Many of them had perhaps never read any other religious books besides the Bible when they set out to preach. Some could not even read correctly."

Brownstown sat at the heart of a circuit, or "charge," encompassing Akron, Rothsville, Millport, and Voganville. There, on the center square, lived a young tailor named Abraham F. Brubaker and his wife, Harriet. As described in the memoirs of their great-granddaughter, Mary K. Englert, the couple was devoutly Christian and, more specifically, devoutly Evangelical. They and neighbors of like mind gathered for classes in each other's parlors and, in 1854, bought a building in Brownstown.

The Brubakers' stature within their spiritual community was such that, in 1868, they traveled to Reading for the Evangelical Association's annual conference. They returned with a framed collection of photographs of Conference preachers, for which they paid 25 cents.

In 1876, Abraham died, followed almost a decade later by their daughter. Widowed, with a grandchild to rear, Harriet moved to Ephrata to a house just off the square on North State Street. Brownstown was now nearly five miles away, a vast distance for a woman of sixty. On occasion, she found a ride on a wagon heading that direction and could return for services. But in bad weather, she was stranded. Attending class there was no longer possible. But neither was it necessary. Soon enough, Harriet would find spiritual company in Ephrata.

Steeple~~s~~ on the Skyline



For more than a century after Cloister patriarch Conrad Beissel settled into a log hut along the Cocalico Creek in the 1730s, Ephrata had been little more than a pinpoint outpost along the Downingtown-Harrisburg turnpike. Consisting of a handful of houses and nearly as many hotels, the town proper was ruled over by less than a half-dozen families who inhabited it almost exclusively. Even into the 1850s, all four corners of the square were owned by one of them, the Grosses.

Beginning in the 1860s, however, Ephrata came to life.

The Civil War might have been ravaging other parts of the country and even claiming some local boys, but Ephrata itself was prospering as never before, bustling with newcomers and their businesses.

By the time Harriet Brubaker arrived in 1886, the population already had soared past 1,200 -- nearly double the number of just five years before. The village encompassed 275 dwellings; Main Street alone had ninety-five buildings, whereas there had been only eleven in 1854. It also boasted three public schools, its own fire company with a '67 "Little Giant Chemical Engine," a bank, a passel of hotels, a baseball club, a cornet band, and an entertainment hall, located on the third floor of Lemon Reddig's warehouse on North State Street at Locust.

Three passenger trains pulled into Ephrata daily, on runs to and from Reading, Lancaster, and Columbia.

Among the local industries, tobacco was king. Nearly 200 licensed cigar factories were registered within the town limits. Most were one- and two-person operations, existing side-by-side with the big manufacturers. And those were very big, indeed. In October 1885, it was reported, the Allen W. Mentzer company shipped out 500,000 cigars for sale nationwide.

While stogies were Ephrata's stock in trade, they weren't the only way to make a living wage. Horse and cattle sales abounded. Two coal and lumber yards did a brisk business catering to the building boom, as did a marble and

granite works (where a selection of tombstones also was displayed in the yard). Within a few minutes' walk one could find a tinsmith and roofer, a plumber and a furniture-maker, a tailor, a druggist, a hardware store, a shoemaker, two bakeries, and two milliners, to list just a few on the burgeoning rolls of commerce.

By night, Main Street glowed under new coal oil lamps, installed in 1884. They were lit every dusk by the lamplighter and put out promptly at 11.

The look of the town was changing in yet another way. Seemingly everywhere, churches were rising.

Having outgrown the parlors in which they had been meeting, and enriched by the financial good fortune of at least some of their members, congregations seized the opportunity to build their own houses of worship. In 1868, Trinity Lutheran Church went up near the Mountain Springs Hotel on the East Main Street hill, the first congregation to build within the town limits. The United Brethren Church followed in 1872 on Church Street.

In 1883, the Union Chapel opened just across the street from Trinity. Built with contributions from throughout the community, the structure could be used by any Protestant denomination for Sunday School classes and some worship services. Although no congregation was supposed to monopolize the chapel, it was there that the First Reformed Church organized in 1886 -- and there that it stayed until the early 1890s, when the congregation built on a lot at Locust Street and Washington Avenue. In 1893, the Union Chapel passed into the hands of the Bethany Reformed Church, which then moved into town from its building along outlying Bethany Road.

The steeples that began dotting the skyline were testament to a community that, while large enough to hold the peoples of sundry denominations, was, above all else, God-fearing Christian.

Into the 1890s, however, a sanctuary dedicated wholly to worship and religious instruction was but a dream for the Evangelical Association class in Ephrata, whom Harriet Brubaker, bereft of the Brownstown flock, had helped

gather together. While *The Review's* "Among the Churches" column was filled with lengthy accounts of the doings of the more prominent congregations such as Trinity and Bethany, the livingroom classes of the Evangelicals seldom were accorded more than a one-paragraph mention. Note was made of the visiting pastor from the Brownstown circuit, often the Rev. Mr. Weidner, and whether the proceedings would be in German or English.

Whatever records were kept by the class during that period, they are today nowhere to be found. Indications are, however, that the communicants might have numbered only a dozen or so. In Mrs. Englert's memoirs, she reports that her mother, then a fifteen-year-old farmworker named Minnie Witwer, traveled to services with a Wingenroth family from the southern outskirts of town. Among the other congregants were the families of Reuben Albright, James Ream, and Sebastian Root, the Schloads, and Harriet Brubaker.

Sometime early in the '90s, the group rented a building at Fulton and South State. Around 1894, they took the further step of buying a lot on the northeast corner of that intersection -- a deal that ultimately went awry in a rift among the members.

While not known, the nature of their disagreement can be guessed, for at the same time the entire Evangelical Association was coming asunder. Since the 1860s, bishops of conservative theology and Old World ways had butted heads with those of a more progressive, American bent, representing members who frequently didn't even speak German. Disagreement escalated to open hostility. In 1895 came schism. The old-guard Evangelical Association split with its upstart minority faction, which became the United Evangelical Church. Their disputes over church property were so bitter that they landed before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

The discord hardly was limited to the aeries of power. Rare was the class not broken apart as well in the process.

Against that backdrop, the Ephrata Evangelicals returned the little patch of land to its original owner, one of their own, Reuben Albright.

The Washington Avenue purchase was a happier transaction. Following groundbreaking on September 30, 1898, Harriet Brubaker dispatched one of her grandsons, twenty-two-year-old Walter Cox, to help the men of the congregation dig a cellar there. She then sent him on to Palmyra, to assist in disassembling the church and bringing it to Ephrata.

From this ordeal -- left now only to the imagination -- Hope Evangelical was born.

At the dedication service, the call to the altar was answered by two teenage girls, Lizzie Wingenroth and Minnie Witwer.

Lizzie's parents were present and approved. But for young Minnie, it was a bold step, and she feared what her father would say when she returned home and told him. To her relief, he gave his blessing, though with a caveat. Belonging to the new congregation was fine, he said, but warned: "Remember, Christianity begins at home."

Little more than a year later, in March 1900, Hope's first pastor, the Rev. Mr. Willauer, officiated at the wedding of Minnie and Harriet Brubaker's grandson Walter, who had met at the services.

Through marriages, births, conversions, and "accessions," so the new church would grow -- but very slowly and, in truth, not entirely smoothly.

"The Prospects Are Hopeful"



till a circuit preacher ministering to other classes in the Brownstown charge, the Rev. Mr. Willauer served Hope for less than three years. The following two decades would see a succession of Evangelical Association preachers whose tenures seemed almost as fleeting as the seasons.

In 1901, the flock was passed into the hands of the Rev. William H. Kindt,

a former minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church and once the principal of the Evangelicals' Schuylkill Seminary, where he reportedly had been a hard worker but so unpleasantly blunt as to win few friends. He was gone from Hope in 1903, replaced by the Rev. D.S. Manning.

In 1905, the Eastern Conference of the Evangelical Association decided to remove Hope from the Brownstown circuit and elevate it to a "mission" with regular Sabbath services and a fulltime, resident pastor, the Rev. B.F. Krick.

In the church's current archives is a large, heavy, leatherbound journal, its cover worn by time. Many of the lined pages bear the elegant longhand of the Conference-dispatched preachers, who at the end of their tenures at the Ephrata mission were compelled to summarize the progress they had made.

The earliest entry was dated August 13, 1907, and signed by the departing Rev. Mr. Krick.

"At the beginning of the work as a mission, we had about thirty members. Of those it became necessary to ask nine to withdraw on account of conduct that was not becoming to Christian people," he wrote, without elaboration.

The loss of nearly a third of the congregation, however, was more than made up by the addition of fifty new members during his ministration.

Upon his arrival, he also noted, he had found the house of worship "not presentable." So in addition to paying \$425 on a note held by a Rev. Mr. Swingel, the congregation raised \$400 to lay a new pavement, install electric lights, and paint both the interior and exterior walls. The Ladies Aid Society purchased a carpet.

From 1908 to 1909, Hope was pastored by the Rev. W.I. Miller, who wrote that the congregation had been "uniformly kind" to him. In turn, he believed that he had been successful in "presenting to this people a higher standard of spirituality."

One of the most memorable moments of his pastorate, he reported in the journal, had been Rally Day, at which more than \$120 was collected for new pews.

Next in the pulpit was the Rev. A.S. Kresge (1909-1910). Like one of his predecessors, he complained in his Conference report about the aesthetics of the church. It was, as he described it, "not inviting." To his ambitious plans for improvement, "the congregation responded cheerfully," he wrote, and "we at once proceeded to drain the basement and cemented part of same and installed a furnace and secured new pews, communion table, and pulpit Bible."

During his tenure, he counted "two conversions and fourteen accessions," for a total of eighty-seven members.

"The prospects for the future of Hope Evangelical Church are Hopeful," he concluded, boldly underlining the last word.

Many of the pastors sent to Hope in those early years were theology students at the Schuylkill Seminary (now Albright College) in Reading. Their ministries, too, passed in the blink of an eye: W.C. Heisler (1910-11); O.T. Moyer (1911-12); Ivan W. Wanner (1912-15); Charles E. Willson (1915-16); B.C. Krupp (1916-18); Earle M. Slichter (1918-19); C.I. Dengler (1919-20).

The records that survive from those years are sparse, consisting mostly of small composition books filled with one- or two-page reports of quarterly meetings. Typical of the entries was this, dated April 19, 1918:

"The Sunday School Superintendent reported the school in good condition and increasing. The prayer meeting was reported well attended and in good spiritual condition. The report of the steward board was given to the effect that the sum of 250 dollars and all that can be raised over and above [be allocated] for the pastor's salary Bread and wine will be provided [for the Lord's Supper] by Sister Mabel Gockley."

Given the Evangelical Association's insistence on temperance, it is unlikely that the communion "wine" was anything stronger than grape juice.

Almost invariably, the quarterly-meeting minutes also contained this cryptic sentence: "No charges nor complaints were brought." The only exception to be found was from the November 27, 1918, record. Charges, it was briefly noted, had been brought by the class leader against a "sister" who had

been "found ungodly in her demeanor and giving offence should she partake of the Lord's Supper."

Close monitoring of personal behavior -- and a willingness to send offenders packing -- had been a hallmark of Albright's People from their very beginnings. As the condemned sister could attest, that policing continued well into the 20th century. Some historians theorize that, while it strengthened the moral underpinnings of the congregations, it also did much to tamp down growth.

By 1920, enrollment in the Sunday School, the locus of church life, stood at about eighty adults and children, with an average attendance of fifty. The prayer meetings, meanwhile, drew a fraction of the interest, sometimes as few as a dozen worshipers. The financial report showed a balance of \$26.75 in the treasury, and a total church debt of \$1,087.

That year, yet another seminarian, H. Winfred Butt, was assigned to Hope. His ministrations would last seven years, the first of any duration. But, as he later wrote, "The Pastor could not do the work he desired to do in the first few years because his time was divided between finishing his College and Seminary work and the work of the church. This meant diligent work, especially the few hours we spent each week at Ephrata The Pastor realized many times how patient the people were to wait for him."

In a report to the Conference elders on his introduction to Hope, he described the congregation as "few in number, but eager to do things."

For the entire denomination, the post-World War I years were a heady time. In 1922, after nearly three decades asunder, the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church reunited, forming the Evangelical Church. For the first time in the history of Albright's People, the word "church" appeared in their denomination's formal name.

At Hope, the sense of renaissance was palpable. By the mid-1920s, an average of 100 congregants were turning out for Sunday School, which had grown to eight classes, and nearly three dozen for prayer meetings. And while

the trustees' coffers still typically held very small sums, the church was free of debt, the last \$800 having been paid in February 1924. The pastor's salary got a bit of a fillip, too, going from \$650 in 1925 to \$1,100, plus surplus, the following year.

The growing presence of young and fruitful families in the congregation was reflected in the new observance of Children's Day. And in early 1926, the Rev. Mr. Butt approved the first Daily Vocational Bible School for the following summer.

"We fully realize the present necessity of training the young to become worth-while Christian Citizens," he wrote. "We know that there is a big field for work in this town. Many are unchurched and hundreds attend no Sunday School. These we must reach somehow."

Of the milestones marked in that decade, none was so physically dramatic as the renovation of the church building, a project that began as the addition of a Sunday School annex to accommodate the increasing membership. By the time it was finished in autumn 1926, however, the entire structure had changed appearance. Not only was the annex built, but the original edifice was raised, creating a basement room to be used for more Sunday School classes and social functions. A brick veneer was laid over the old wood exterior and a new brick belfry was put up.

The church, transformed at a cost of \$10,500, was rededicated Oct. 24, 1926, with the Rev. William Bollman, a Conference elder, presiding.

"Words fail in describing the many victories won," wrote the Rev. Mr. Butt, who counted 120 people received into church membership by the time that his tenure, the maximum seven years allowed under Association rules, ended. "We experienced dark times, but God never failed us."

Small wonder that, when the Rev. Sydney Buxton arrived at Hope in 1927, he found a congregation buoyed by optimism for its future. As he put it: "a band of enthusiastic folks who know the Lord and were ready to labor for Him."

In the three years that followed, the membership expanded to fill the new

space, with the rolls steadily climbing to nearly 150 adult members. Average Sunday School attendance topped 200; prayer meetings usually drew about sixty. The worship service itself was changing, if in small refinements. "It was voted upon and carried," according to the minutes of one meeting, "that the congregation will sing the Amen at the close of each service, providing the Hymnal calls for same."

For the first time, the trustees provided a parsonage for the pastor, a rented home at 50 East Chestnut Street, and went on to seriously discuss the feasibility of purchasing a house.

By the close of 1929, the stock market had crashed in faraway New York, sending the shadow of the Great Depression across America. Yet at Hope Church, it was hard to believe that the toughest times weren't behind. That December, the trustees went out and bought 105 new hymnals for \$31.50.

The church's indebtedness had been whittled to a mere \$1,325, from \$5,700 in 1927. The congregation intended to pay it off with all due haste and burn the mortgage on Rally Day, Oct. 19, 1930.

Their plan, however, would change in, literally, a flash.

"Even the Children Cried"



The faint aroma of burning wood might have wafted for hours in the night air around Washington Avenue and Marshall Street. But by 1 a.m. on Monday, April 28, 1930, the neighborhood was choked with heavy, acrid smoke, rousting residents from their beds.

At full run, they set off through the billowing gray veil and soon found the source: Hope Church.

Inside, they saw flames dancing from the floor of the pulpit, then located near the alleyway of Grant Street.

The alarm that called out the local Pioneer Fire Company, and awakened

the countryside, was sounded at about 1:30. But by the time the fire truck and pumper arrived, the blaze was advancing through the church auditorium and licking at the ceiling.

The firefighters had a devil of a time. They quickly decided to train two streams of water on the flames. But when the hoses were first hooked into the plug at Grant and Marshall at the rear of the church, the pressure was too low to produce anything but a trickle. They scrambled to restore the flow. Precious time ticked by. The roof went up.

Ironically, the remodeling done in 1926 also helped doom the structure. Beneath the new brick veneer, the original wood burned wildly -- out of reach of the firemen. On the other hand, that containment kept the flames from spreading to nearby homes.

At daybreak, all that remained of the main sanctuary were its side walls, buckled by the intense heat. Though spared from fire, the new Sunday School annex was worse for the water and smoke that had poured into it.

To the many for whom church was a touchstone of their lives, the charred remains were too wrenching a sight. Alice Bickhart (nee Buffenmyer) recalled the Rev. Mr. Buxton surveying what was left and crying. He was not alone in his tears. "Even the children cried," she said.

The prime suspect in the fire was the coal furnace. But it was determined that the blaze had not started anywhere near it. The basement room in which it sat suffered less damage than any other part of the building.

A report in *The Review* concluded that "the cause of the fire which ruined this fine church edifice, where a local, growing, and quite cooperative congregation worshipped, is not definitely known, and in all probability the cause will never be known."

With embers still smoldering, the gossip mill rattled into action. The subject of wide speculation in town, however, was not the cause of the fire so much as the lack of water pressure to fight it. Rumor had it that the main valve at the reservoir had been turned off, and that only after a Borough Water

Department worker rushed there and opened it could the Pioneer Fire Company douse the blaze.

In a subsequent edition, *The Review* moved to squelch the buzz. In a boxed article under the headline, "We Correct a False Report," the paper took the rumormongers to task:

"Unfortunately, people are frequently quick to form an opinion and to make expressions in regard to certain circumstances and conditions before they ... make any attempt to get correct information on the subject."

In view of the "criticism and uncalled for remarks [that] flow thick and fast from some individuals," *The Review* announced it had investigated and was ready to set the record straight.

"A thoughtless act on the part of the firemen was most likely responsible for the apparent poor water pressure," the article stated.

The men, it went on to explain, had hooked "a double 2 1/2-inch hose and two nozzles" into a water plug fed by a four-inch main -- an obvious misfit. Meanwhile, the operator of the pumper, who "had his first practical experience" at the Hope fire, failed to properly set the pressure valve on his rig.

"A more experienced member of the fire department arrived," the article continued, and corrected the errors. "Immediately a stream of water with adequate pressure ... was played upon the blaze."

Such postmortems, while they might have quelled gossip, could not undo the fire's tragic consequence. That would be left to the members of Hope, who already were moving to put that dreadful night behind them. They salvaged what they could from the debris, with even the children chipping in to clean soot from chairs. Mark Martin, the then-teenage son of trustee and class leader Henry Martin, joined with other boys in the tedious, weeks-long task of cracking mortar from bricks that could be saved.

The congregation carried \$20,000 insurance on the building and \$1,000 on the furnishings. On the evening following the fire, the trustee board met and voted to forge ahead by putting the rebuilding project out for bids.

Meanwhile, "a number of the local churches offered their edifices to the unfortunate Hope Evangelical congregation," according to *The Review*. But the board instead accepted an invitation to hold services temporarily in the American Legion Hall, popularly known as the Band Hall, on East Locust Street. One hundred hymnals were donated by a Mr. Henningler.

By mid-May, the walls of the burned-out church had come down, and the trustees had settled with the insurance company for \$12,000. In a secret ballot, the congregation voted on how much should be spent on a new structure. The majority decreed that \$10,000, plus the insurance money, was a reasonable sum.

On June 23, contractor Alexander L. Gerhart was awarded the project, which he had estimated would cost \$17,000, give or take depending on the materials and amenities.

On July 1, the process of not only rebuilding Hope Church -- but building it bigger and better -- began.

"Up from the Ashes"



o at least some of the oldtimers of Hope, the events of November 2, 1930, must have seemed strangely reminiscent of another autumn Sunday thirty-two years before, when an exuberant membership first paraded through Ephrata on its way to a new house of worship.

Now, for a second time, the congregation was on a spirited march to the corner of Washington and Marshall.

That morning at 9, the Sunday School had convened in the American Legion Hall, as it had for the last half-year since the fire. But as soon as the classes had adjourned, the members massed outside and headed to the spot where their church had been resurrected from ashes. Voices singing "We're Marching to Zion" filled the streets.

Although the building stood on much the same footprint as the original

structure, everything from ground-up was new and, in the eyes of the 400 who had gathered, magnificent. Before them was an imposing red-brick structure trimmed in stone and graced with arching stained glass windows.

Inside, the sanctuary was finished in oak, the walls painted buff. Separated from the main auditorium by a velour curtain was the Sunday School annex, furnished in yellow pine and equipped with yet another system of curtains that could be manipulated to create a dozen individual classrooms. In the event even more instructional space was required, a balcony at the rear of the sanctuary could be similarly converted into five additional rooms. All told, the seating capacity was about 600.

A large portion of the basement was set aside for the children's classes -- Junior, Primary and Intermediary -- but the Cradle Roll Department was located on the first floor, so small children and mothers with babes in arms would not have to contend with stairs.

"The building has been furnished with steam heat," *The Review* pointed out, "and all fire hazards have been avoided, being state inspected and approved."

When all the bills had been tabulated, the price had come to \$26,594.21.

Virtually every minute of that auspicious Sunday was filled with ceremony -- from a morning address by Henry G. Martin, who also had been the building-fund treasurer, to an evening service at which Mrs. Rebecca Sharp, one of the oldest of Hope's members, presented a pulpit Bible. In fact, every night of the following week had been scheduled with a sermon, to be delivered by such former pastors as the Revs. Mr. Willauer, then of Milford, Mr. Manning of Columbia, Mr. Butt, and Mr. Slichter.

But the centerpiece of the celebration was surely the dedicatory service, which began at 2 on Sunday afternoon before a near-capacity crowd of 500.

The Community Male Chorus sang and Prof. Ray Aires performed a solo on the new baby grand, a present to the church from its own choir. To raise the money, the group had performed for congregations throughout Ephrata in exchange for the offerings. One of their featured acts had been "The Joy Bell

Girls," comprised of the then-teenage Alice Bickhart, Erma and Ethel Martin, Erma Ruth, Betty Hornberger, and Ruby Willwerth. They dressed entirely in white, a bold choice of attire, considering that their mode of transportation was a fruit-and-vegetable truck owned by the father of William Adams, with only orange crates for seats.

The baby grand was hardly the only gift proffered that day. The cash alone, given by individuals in sums as small as \$1 and by various organizations within Hope, added up to \$3,100.

The formal dedication of the building was conducted by Bishop M.T. Maze of Harrisburg. His sermon, as reported in *The Review*, was not entirely congratulatory.

It may well be true, he stated, that greater spiritual service can be rendered where the surroundings are the most beautiful. But the business of a church, he said, must stretch beyond the salvation of souls, and to the cultural and social needs of the community and, in particular, its youth.

"The Bishop declared that this phase had been neglected in the past, to the disadvantage of not only the young people but to the Christian church itself in not rendering true service to humanity in general," the article went on to report. "...[He] urged the congregation of the church to spur their efforts to greater service."

Bishop Maze's call to action reflected a sea of change occurring within the entire Evangelical Church, a concept known as the "social gospel." Heretofore, the spiritual fellowship had been largely focused inward, on matters of individual faith and redemption. But as the Depression began to ravage America, the Evangelical leaders concluded that a church should serve a broader function.

"Men must be converted not simply to a personal faith in Jesus Christ," they declared, "but to the program of Jesus as a method of social reconstruction as well."

It was a message that would still resonate at the turn of the next century.

Enough to Share



The fire of 1930 had claimed virtually everything that the Hope congregation once owned.

But what survived the calamity -- and grew even stronger through it -- was that old-time religion, a love of God so exuberant that it shook not just the soul but the rafters.

No sooner had the new Hope sanctuary been dedicated than it filled with a familiar sound, one of such power that it echoes still in the memories of those who heard it. "Rev. Buxton was a short, little preacher, but he really would jar you," recalled Ralph McQuate. "He would get high on the Scriptures."

Both the Revs. Mr. Butt and Mr. Buxton were famed for their well-exercised vocal chords. But the latter also was something of an athlete, once reputedly jumping off the pulpit, over the altar rail, and into the congregation to make his point.

A sermon's success could be judged by the noise it generated in the "Amen Corner," where church officials sat. At particularly stirring moments, they would shout out "Amen!" and "Praise the Lord!" in approval.

However spirited the regular services might have been, they were positively tranquil compared to the revivals. For Evangelical churches throughout the region, the main event was the annual Adamstown Camp Meeting, two weeks of tent living, open-fire cooking, electrified preaching, and nonstop soul-searching that took place at the end of July into August. Mr. McQuate used to go with his father and grandfather, and those trips remain a "favorite memory" of his Hope boyhood.

Those who could not make the pilgrimage had plenty of opportunity to experience much the same right at home, minus the tents.

At various times during the year, Hope Church had its own revival

marathons. They continued nightly for at least two weeks and frequently longer, during which all other church activities were suspended. An empty seat was not to be found.

"There were no other distractions," Mrs. Bickhart explained of the crowds. There was little parking available to accommodate them, but most members lived within comfortable walking distance of the church. Those who didn't, walked anyway.

The revivals were worth the effort.

Out-of-town evangelists did the preaching. In November 1931, for instance, the Rev. Harold Carter of Strasburg took the pulpit every night for two weeks, including "morning, afternoon, and eve of Sunday," an undertaking that required enormous stamina and paid \$100.

The more fiery the evangelists' oratory, the better. Isabel Treisch (nee Leibold) told the story of how, as an infant, she began crying during one of the programs. As she was being carried swiftly from the church, the minister called from the pulpit: "Don't take her out! I can shout louder than she can!"

The most remarkable moments in the revival spectacle, however, were provided by the members themselves. Those moved by the Holy Spirit would begin to shout, often speaking in tongues. It was known as "getting happy." For some, the experience was so unbearably intense that they simply passed out. God was to be praised at the top of one's lungs and to the point of exhaustion -- a practice that, while good for the soul, did nothing for relations with the neighbors.

Each revival period concluded with Decision Sunday, when congregants were encouraged to go to the altar and accept Jesus Christ. Giving testimony also was expected, and if it did not flow as freely as the evangelist-in-charge might have liked, members found themselves called on at random to come front and hold forth -- the "decision" having been made for them.

Apart from traditional holy days of the Christian calendar, many Sundays were designated as special observances. One of them was Homecoming Day, when members who had moved away were invited back to worship and renew acquaintances. Another, and perhaps the most anticipated, was Rally Day, usually held in the fall. On that Sunday, groups within the church, the Sunday School classes, the Ladies Aid Society, the Women's Missionary Society, presented gifts of cash they had raised during the previous year.

Rally Day, which was advertised with hundreds of hand cards and window placards placed throughout town, ran from morning to evening and drew upwards of a thousand people. Imported for the occasion were professional gospel groups, a popular choice in the 1930s being the Kutch Sisters of Lebanon.

Mark Martin remembered his father, Henry, one of the most influential and charismatic men of the church, accepting each group's donation and challenging individuals in the congregation to ante up and to be generous about it. At the end of the day, he usually had collected a couple of thousand dollars, all of which went into the building fund.

Each summer, one Sunday was set aside for baptisms. Conversion was a prerequisite, and so only adults and older children were eligible for the ceremony. An amazing sight it was, there in the Cocalico Creek on Sam Stauffer's farm, which sat off North State Street across from what is now the Green Dragon. In old clothes, the candidates waded into the creek, no more than three or four feet deep, and were immersed by the strong arms of the Rev. Mr. Buxton. Sopping wet but joyous, all then changed into dry clothing in the barn.

Coal Sunday, on the other hand, was no celebration.

In 1931, the trustees decided to give that name to the last Sunday in August, at which time they would appeal to the congregation for money to buy fuel. For the winter, they had purchased twenty-four tons of coal, at

\$8 a ton, and paid for it with the help of a \$90 loan from Ephrata National Bank. The note was due September 1. The Coal Sunday offering would be a last-minute bailout.

Across the country and across denominations, many churches found themselves in the same predicament. Coal Sundays became a fixture of the '30s, a sign that the chill of the Great Depression had settled over God's house.

Things only got more desperate as the economic distress of the decade worsened. By July 1933, the minutes of the trustees' meetings showed that the general treasury, which had never held more than minuscule sums, had sunk into the red by \$43. "The offerings of the church," secretary James Sharp wrote, "are not sufficient to pay the bills." That included the Rev. Mr. Buxton's salary, \$42 in arrears.

To save some money, the trustees turned to Stella Weber, owner of the parsonage, a house at 120 Park Avenue that the church had begun renting just the year before. They asked her to lower the monthly payment, which she did, from \$25 to \$22.

To keep the furnace going at Hope, they also started buying the cheapest coal, "river coal" at \$3.40 a ton. Still the bill was a burden.

Mrs. Bickhart has vivid memories of those Coal Sundays, of trustee Henry Martin standing before the congregation and asking, "Who's willing to give \$1?" The members, even the children, dug deep, usually managing to scrape together at least \$100.

In even the best of times, Hope was not a wealthy church. In the worst of times, which these were, it had barely the resources to sustain itself, let alone to reach out to the needy in the larger community. But the church did quietly take care of its own, paying the rent for members deemed to be in "serious circumstances" and, more often, providing food baskets.

"It was tough for everybody," said Mrs. Bickhart, who recalled

having just one dress to wear on Sundays. "You did all you could just to get by. Everyone was needy.

"Still," she added, "there was always some to share."

Getting by on Prayer



Lancaster County suffered in the Depression. But truth to tell, there were places much worse off, and they weren't very far away.

In counties just to the north, where King Coal had been the bedrock of the economy, mining operations were scaled back or shut down entirely, throwing whole communities out of work. In Schuylkill County, the most devastated area in Pennsylvania, the unemployment rate in 1934 was a staggering 39.5 percent.

By midsummer of that year, nearly a million workers statewide were jobless -- a number that was soaring at a rate of about 60,000 a month. According to Governor Gifford Pinchot, the state had handed out more than \$87 million in relief just since May 1932.

In rural regions like Lancaster County, dependent on farming and light industries such as textiles, unemployment averaged a relatively modest 20 percent or below. But even that was painful.

In Ephrata, factory workers had earned a total of \$1.2 million in 1931. By 1933, that payroll had dropped to under \$890,000 -- meaning \$312,000 less in people's pockets.

To make matters worse, the Relief Workers Division, part of President Roosevelt's "alphabet soup" of New Deal programs, had curtailed its employment projects in 1934. One of the major ones locally, the Lancaster Municipal Airport, was grounded. Ephrata, too, had dearly hoped to get some of those RWD contracts, to keep laid-off residents working during the lean times.

By that summer, the Ephrata Welfare Association had forty-two families on its relief list, a relatively low rate for a town of 6,000 people. As officials noted, "The number being aided was reported to be far below that of some other county towns."

Indeed, Ephrata took no small pride in its ability to survive. An editorial in *The Review* boasted that the borough "has weathered the Depression much better than some communities. Our banks withstood the financial crisis. While production has necessarily been slackened in our industries, the shut-downs have been comparatively few."

The riot at the Stunzi Silk mill, then, came as a great shock.

In the early-morning darkness of Friday, September 7, 1934, workers pulling up to the mill at West Chestnut Street and Park Avenue found themselves and their autos pelted with rocks, hurled from a nearby cornfield. Soon all roads leading to Stunzi's were blocked with logs and fences hurriedly strung by 500 out-of-town protesters.

The General Textile Workers Strike, perhaps the largest and most violent episode of labor unrest in U.S. history, had found its way to Ephrata. It had begun the day after Labor Day in the South, where more than 400,000 workers had walked off their jobs in cotton mills to protest speeded-up production and lowered wages. There, blood flowed as strikers clashed with National Guard troops called out to protect the factories and the strike-breakers trying to enter.

Union agitators were taking their cause north.

At Stunzi's, the Ephrata police and newly sworn-in deputies tried in vain to quell the commotion and finally summoned the State Police from the Reading barracks. By the time they arrived, the mill, which employed 300, had been closed down. Eight people had been injured -- including Constable Walter S. Cox, Mrs. Englert's father, who suffered lacerations -- and fifteen cars wrecked, their windows and radiators smashed by rocks.

The protesters dispersed, only to reappear less than two weeks later

at the Westerhoff Brothers silk mill. Again, stones were thrown through windows, and that plant was shut down, too.

By the end of September, the national strike was over, brought to an end by murder, intimidation, and a lack of money.

If the people of Ephrata had been rattled by the sudden violence in their midst, they seemed to recover quickly. The Stunzi story faded fast from the front page of *The Review*, to be replaced by even larger headlines touting the upcoming 16th Annual Farmers Day Week, from Wednesday, October 10, to Saturday, October 13, with "more exhibits, greater features, better entertainment than ever before."

As they did every year, the young married couples of Hope's "Wide Awake" class would be selling soup and sauerkraut and ham dinners at their stand in front of the Ephrata National Bank.

The Review also made prominent mention of another Hope event in the fall of 1934: "An Old-Fashioned Spelling Bee, the first of the season," to be held in the Legion Hall on Friday evening, October 19, by the girls of the "Always Faithful" class, under the tutelage of Mrs. Englert. Music would be provided by the Hope Church Orchestra, led by Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Overly. To cap the evening, the Young Men's Bible Class would perform a playlet, "Hypnotism Exposed."

When it came to beating the Depression blues, prayer was the number-one antidote. But good, wholesome entertainment was a close second. And at Hope Church, there was no shortage of either.

Laborers in God's Vineyard



brief pause on a musical note:

Although Hope Church had had a choir for years, the trustees decided in the mid-1930s that the group could stand some reorganization

and, more importantly, some "definite and permanent rules." Belonging to the choir was not to be taken lightly, and as the following resolution makes perfectly clear, woe be to any member who did.

"With the growing consciousness of the seriousness of the days in which we are living, and realizing the presence and power of sin, with the ever increasing effort of Satan to deceive and seduce 'even the very elect,' it becomes more and more essential that everything which is done in the worship periods be expressive of one primary concern, namely that the spiritual atmosphere be increased and enriched and the spiritual ministry to our people deepened.

"To this end the worship is always enriched by the contribution and services of a church choir of consecrated Children of God. It is, however, necessary to the fullest expression of inspirational service that the laborers in God's vineyard be conscious of their obligation, as well as faithful and loyal to the same."

Under the new rules, members had to be elected by a majority of trustees and approved by the preacher, based on the "faithfulness and ability of the individual."

Furthermore, "unfaithfulness or incompetency in the duties of the choir on the part of any member shall be reported to this official Board. If after careful investigation such charges shall be supported, this Board by majority vote and approval may require the resignation of such member. In such event the member shall be notified in writing by the Secretary of the Board."

The pastor was given final say on "all Music rendered by the Choir."

The first choir to pass muster consisted of Clayton Irwin, Clarence Mohler, Mark Martin, Paul Kilhefner, Richard Hernley, Gerald Weaver, Eva Kilhefner, Mrs. Richard Gamber, Mrs. Ralph Burkholder, Mrs. Leroy Dissler, Cora Schankel, Irma Martin, Mrs. Mary Englert and Mrs. Alice Bickhart.

A Home of Their Own



To the thrifty Pennsylvania Dutch, paying rent was akin to throwing money down a rathole. It never ended, nor was there ever anything to show for one's labors.

Understandably then, having to rent a parsonage did not sit well with many in the Hope congregation. Fiscal common sense dictated that the church should purchase a residence for its pastors. Yet with the Depression still brewing trouble aplenty, the mid-1930s was not the optimal time to be taking that leap. Property prices were no particular bargain, and the church already was so hard-pressed just to meet interest payments on various loans, both from the bank and the Evangelical Extension Board, that it had to add an annual Interest Sunday to its calendar.

Still, the frustration of renting had, by late 1935, begun to outweigh the risks of buying.

Although the trustees looked at several homes for sale, ranging in price from \$6,800 to \$10,000, they decided that "buying a lot and building on it would be the wisest."

Specifically, they had their eye on a vacant double lot at the corner of Washington Avenue and Walnut Street, just two long blocks from the church and in use as a ballfield for neighborhood boys. It was on the market as part of the Bolster estate, with an asking price of \$2,500. The board offered \$2,000. In April 1936, a deal, negotiated by Henry Martin, was sealed.

But what kind of house to put on it?

Many members had in mind a humble abode. But the Rev. Albert J. Schankel, who had moved from Phoenixville in 1934 to replace the Rev. Mr. Buxton, had other ideas. He was a tall man, 6-foot-2, somewhat more reserved than his predecessors and, with four children, also more prolific

in the family department. He wanted a home roomy enough to hold all the Schankels.

His daughter Cora, who later married Mark Martin, remembered the tensions that surrounded the discussion of how big to build. The people of Hope, she said, were unassuming folks who lived in unassuming homes, and they expected their pastor to do likewise. But the Rev. Mr. Schankel dug in his heels -- and prevailed.

That spring, resolving to "proceed with building the parsonage with the best of material at the lowest possible price," the trustees asked for bids on the construction of a two-story, eleven-room brick house with an 8-by-16-foot front porch. Competing for the job were A.L. Gerhart, who had built the new church, and Allen Birkenbine. At the last minute, another contractor, Harry Good, jumped into the action. His estimate of \$4,768 bested Gerhart's \$5,700 and Birkenbine's \$6,760.

Good's price ultimately rose to \$5,156 when the porch suddenly more than doubled in size, to 10-by-32 feet, and a portico was added on the Walnut Street side. He was to erect only the bare-bones structure and was given a deadline of seventy days in which to do it. The trustees would see to everything else. And therein lay an adventure in bargain-hunting.

To get the best deal on plumbing fixtures, for instance, a delegation consisting of the Rev. Mr. Schankel, Henry Martin, Clarence Mohler, and James Sharp went all the way to Philadelphia one June day. There they purchased, among other things, a 60-inch white enamel sink for \$37.50; a 66-inch bathtub for \$48.00; a pedestal lavatory with fittings for \$24.50; a two piece "silent flush" commode for \$23.50; and a "regular" commode for \$13.25.

All the electrical fixtures cost them \$100, installed. If anyone in the congregation felt moved to donate anything -- the decorative linoleum border in the kitchen being just one example -- and, better yet, to do the work himself, an official commendation would come his way.

No sooner were such finishing touches as the vegetable bin put in place than the parsonage project began to grow again. In September, Harry Good got the go-ahead to build a matching brick garage at the rear of the property, providing he could hold the cost to \$1,400. It would be nothing fancy, just an unfinished space 30-by-50 feet and nine feet high.

The "garage," however, soon became the Hope Church "social room" and then the "social hall." One of the first events booked there was a silver wedding anniversary dinner for Mr. and Mrs. Charles Enck.

Over the years, the hall would hold untold numbers of church suppers and social affairs. But for many men in Hope Church, it conjures memories of something other than tea cakes.

If you were young and male, the social hall meant basketball. Hope had a team of about a half-dozen players, Mark Martin recalled, and they took on any opponents they could find. Norman Boudier, their manager, even bought uniforms for them, although an older member of the congregation complained about the shorts and tank shirts, saying he didn't care to see the boys half-naked. Whether he minded seeing them bloodied and bruised, he didn't say.

In a space so small, smashing into the wall behind the net was inevitable. Ralph McQuate, who spent many happy hours there, credits Harvey Ruth with immortalizing it as "the Brick Wall of Blood."

By the time all the bills had been added up, the parsonage and the social hall had cost \$10,085.53. Hope Church sank deeper into a hole of indebtedness, a total of \$14,400.00.

At least there was no rent to pay. At least there was something to show.

Today, the social hall is once again a garage, part of a parsonage property estimated at \$125,000.

From Laughter to Shock to Prayer



For faithful Hope members during the 1930s, Sunday was anything but a day of rest.

Kathryn Boudier (nee Stauffer) still can recite the schedule: Sunday School at 9:15, morning worship at 10:30, Christian Endeavor at 6:30 p.m., and the evening service at 7:30. Rare was the Sunday when a special program did not fill the afternoon, as well.

Some of her most "uplifting memories," however, are of the Wednesday night prayer meetings, held in the sanctuary and conducted by such lay leaders as Henry Martin and Lloyd Will.

As a more formal liturgy had begun to creep into the regular Sunday services (the Doxology was added in January 1932, for instance), the prayer meetings stayed true to Hope's early Evangelical roots, with unrestrained testimony and impassioned prayer. That experience hit home for Mrs. Boudier, whose maternal great-grandfather, the Rev. Jacob B. Zern, had been a minister in the young Evangelical Association. She herself had first attended Hope in 1912, at the age of five, and had as her Sunday School teacher Mabel Gockley.

The church of yore, embodied in those mid-week prayer meetings, was truly in her blood.

On Wednesday nights "following the message," she said, "we gathered around the altar for prayer and praise. Some of the older men prayed in German or Pennsylvania Dutch dialect and you could feel the Holy Spirit in our midst. What a blessing those meetings were to all of us."

As the 1930s drew to a close, Hope Church had a new pastor, the Rev. John F. White, and a membership of about 220, with a Sunday School enrollment of nearly 350. More than two-thirds of the adults in the congregation were women, and their organizations, chiefly the Women's Missionary Society, the Mission Band, and the Ladies Aide Society,

accounted for a great deal of the activity at Hope.

So while the church was led by men, much of the day-to-day work fell to the women and children. They scrubbed the church in advance of such major occasions as Rally Day. They raised money by selling foodstuffs, from saffron to crabcake mix. Isabel Treisch recalled going door-to-door with the other kids selling Easter eggs faster than Mary Graham could make them.

The women also prepared the meals for visiting evangelists and entertainers. Mrs. Boudier remembers one dinner in particular -- on Sunday, December 7, 1941.

Of all the gospel groups that performed at Hope in the late '30s and early '40s, perhaps none collected such a following as the "Cleveland Colored Quintet." Each time they appeared, the church filled "to its rafters," she said. "At times there was standing room only. They were a dedicated and talented group of musicians and a never-to-be-forgotten experience."

They had come to Ephrata in the winter of 1941 for revival, and Mrs. Boudier was to provide their noon meal. "What a joy to have the group surround an extended table, sing the blessing, and enjoy a substantial meal," she said. "I had made a large rump roast with rich brown gravy, heaps of mashed potatoes, and a typical Lancaster County dinner with seven sweets and seven sours. My mother helped with the cooking and serving and we had a marvelous time together.

"Later in the day, the news of Pearl Harbor quickly turned laughter to shock and, appropriately, prayer. I can't begin to adequately convey the mixed emotions of the day."

America went to war.

For the Evangelical Church's General Conference, the entry of U.S. troops into the Pacific and then European theaters posed a terrible predicament. After backing off their pacifist stance during World War I,

the denomination leaders had sworn never to do so again. Besides, the Evangelicals' theological roots were in Germany, and over the years they had worked hard to nurture close mission ties.

A year after Pearl Harbor, the Conference issued a statement that "war and bloodshed are not agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ." To its members throughout the U.S., it offered conscientious-objector status.

In 1938, Hope Church had refused a request by the Ephrata American Legion to participate in a Community Armistice Day service marking the 20th anniversary of the end of World War I. But when World War II exploded, Hope did not encourage its young men to sit out the conflict.

Fathers, husbands, and sons went into the Armed Forces, and at each Christmas during the war, the Wide Awake class showed its support by sending them food baskets. As far as anybody can recall, no one took advantage of the conscientious-objector offer from the mother church.

Predictably in those years, attendance slumped, thanks to pumped-up production schedules in factories that kept humming on the Lord's Day. But even this was taken in stride.

Like every town in America, Ephrata geared for attack. Mrs. Bickhart recalls the blackouts, when air raid sirens signaled everyone to "outen their lights." Wardens then went house to house, scouting for any rays of light escaping from heavily curtained windows.

The war years also saw the rationing of gas, tires, meat, sugar, and butter. The situation was so dire, in fact, that the Adamstown Camp Meeting was canceled -- an unthinkable move. According to Quarterly Conference notes from 1942, "It would be next to impossible to have any kind of attendance upon the meetings with automobile service cut off. It is hoped this will only obtain for the season."

The next year, it was canceled again.

Perhaps because of the war, no great excitement was stirred by a

momentous vote at the Evangelical General Conference in 1942, approving a union with the United Brethren Church.

At Hope, there was little opposition to the merger, only puzzlement over why it was necessary. Those who asked were told simply, "There is strength in numbers."

Albright, Otterbein, and Boehm : Three Men, Two Churches, One Vision



Jacob Albright was not the first self-styled preacher to set out among rural Pennsylvania's German communities with a message of personal redemption through faith in Jesus Christ. The same countryside he traveled in the late 18th century was being worked by the circuit-riding minions of two clergymen who had formed their own experimental spiritual society -- what would become known as "Vereinigte Bruder," or "United Brethren."

There was little in the philosophies of these sternly moralistic, plain-living neighbors, Albright's People and the United Brethren, to separate them. And in fact, they began speaking of union in the early 1800s. Yet it would take nearly a century and a half for them to formally join as one body.

The patriarchs of the United Brethren were quite an odd couple, an ocean apart in birthplace and a world apart in education and class rank.

One was Philip William Otterbein, born in Germany in 1726 into a family with a single-minded dedication to the German Reformed Church. His father and uncle were ministers, as were his five brothers; his sister married a man of the cloth. Otterbein followed dutifully, getting university-level schooling and becoming ordained himself in 1749. He was not, however, an especially beloved pastor, thanks to his habit of delivering

"forthright sermons" that "disturbed his people," as one historian wrote. "They were probably glad when he answered a call to serve German Reformed people in the New World."

In the summer of 1752, Otterbein arrived in Lancaster, where he assumed the pulpit of the second-largest German Reformed church in America. It was there that, unable one day to answer a congregant's question about the nature of God's grace, Otterbein reexamined his faith and experienced much the same evangelistic awakening that Albright later would. In 1754, he took his revivalistic preaching into the hinterlands beyond Lancaster.

Otterbein saw himself as not only a deliverer of truth, but also a seeker, anxious to look beyond German Reformed doctrine. That led him in 1767 to Isaac Long's barn near Neffsville, six miles northeast of Lancaster, where a Mennonite pastor named Martin Boehm had called a "big meeting."

Boehm was just one year older than Otterbein, but the two men were a study in contrasts. A Lancaster County-born Mennonite of Swiss heritage, Boehm was self-taught and unrefined in manner. As was the Mennonite custom, he had been chosen by lot to be a pastor, even though his shyness made public speaking difficult. He preferred the solitude of prayer and Bible study, through which he had found Christ's presence and forgiveness.

That personal connection to God made Boehm a man after Otterbein's own heart. The Reformed minister listened to the Mennonite and, at the end of the meeting, embraced him, declaring, "Wir sind Bruder!": "We are brothers!"

Thereafter, the two teamed up and established small fellowships, based not on any particular church doctrine but on the quest for individual salvation and the desire to live faith daily. Like Albright later would, they called these groups "classes" and, by 1773, had organized a number of

them not only in Pennsylvania but also Maryland and Virginia.

Unlike Albright, who turned away from the Lutheran Church, neither of the founding fathers of the United Brethren abandoned his original denomination, at least not willingly. In 1774, Otterbein was named pastor of a large German Reformed congregation in Baltimore, where he served nearly forty years. Boehm left the Mennonites only because he was forced to, having been excommunicated in 1775 for preaching among "the heathen" and reading English-language theology texts.

While their fortunes took different turns, the pair continued on their evangelistic mission. In the fall of 1800, a group of their disciples, including about a dozen preachers, met near Frederick, Maryland, to adopt a discipline for their society and elect Otterbein and Boehm as bishops. What they did not want to do was form a new church, in part because their followers already held membership in such established denominations as the German Reformed, Mennonite, Amish, and Moravian. But that was not the sole reason. Again like Albright, Otterbein and Boehm believed that institutional religion had lost sight of the Gospel's true message. They had no intention of repeating that mistake.

When the time came for naming themselves, they turned away from the word "kirche," or "church," and chose simply "United Brethren in Christ." But even that title was not widely used until the latter part of the 19th century. More often than not, they referred to themselves as just "unparteiisch," or "unsectarians."

It is impossible to explore the life of Jacob Albright without tripping over such intellectual ties to Boehm and, in particular, the Reformed-rooted Otterbein. In fact, Albright had married a German Reformed woman, and he credited his religious epiphany to the Reformed pastor who had officiated at his children's funerals.

Ironically, all three men died within a five-year span: Albright first

in 1808, Boehm in 1812, and Otterbein in 1813.

Even without them, their societies flourished in the great evangelistic fervor that whipped up America in the early 19th century. At the Evangelical Association's first General Conference in 1816, a proposal was made to join with the United Brethren in Christ, which at the time counted 10,000 adherents. For reasons unknown, the subject was tabled.

So the two groups moved, virtually in lock-step, through the decades. Both were in the business of saving souls, not promoting social or political causes. Yet early on, they took a firm stand against slavery. At its 1816 conference, the Evangelical Association drafted a resolution condemning "the buying and selling of men and women." Five years later, the United Brethren also prohibited members from taking part in the slave trade.

As the century wore on, both organizations set up publishing houses to produce songbooks, newsletters, and instructional materials, primarily in German, for their thriving and important Sunday School movements. Circuit preachers, along with all their other duties, were expected to act as salesmen for the various publications. And indeed, in the conference logs of the early Hope pastors, careful note was made of the number of subscriptions sold to the class.

Also by mid-century, the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association had opened their first seminaries -- respectively, Otterbein University in Westerville, Ohio, in 1847, and Albright Seminary in New Berlin, Pennsylvania, in 1852. The schools represented quite a leap forward for the two groups, which traditionally had frowned upon education for fear it would expose the faithful to worldly ways and heretical ideas. Pastors needed no training, only a calling from God.

Understandably then, opposition to the seminaries ran high, with critics warning that learned men would lose their piety, their ardor for hearty preaching, and their willingness to endure the harsh life of the

circuit. The proponents prevailed, however, and a modestly educated clergy began to emerge.

Ambitious mission programs also were launched by both organizations, with workers carrying the Gospel to such far-flung corners of the globe as Africa, China, Japan, and the Phillipines, as well as to Germany. By the late 1830s, the Evangelical Association had created a Missionary Society "to make arrangements and provide means, to extend and promote the kingdom of God." The task of raising money and collecting supplies fell to the women, who formed their own small missionary societies, one of which the Hope congregation would have almost from its start.

Yet the greatest mission activity was occurring on the domestic front. The relatively young, fast-growing nation held unsaved souls aplenty.

The United Brethren had beaten the Evangelicals to Ephrata. By 1871, a class had been organized in the home of Burton Keaner, with thirty-six members led by a circuit pastor, the Rev. H.J. Mumma. The following year, they paid \$500 for a lot on a "reserved road," later named Church Street, at the intersection with Locust, and put up a tiny brick building. The United Brethren congregation grew ten-fold by 1890, when the old structure was razed and replaced by a sanctuary with 400 seats.

It was there that, on Oct. 30, 1898, the Hope class was given shelter from the rain for its cornerstone-laying service.

Despite their original intentions, the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren had become, for all intents and purposes, denominations. Between 1860 and 1920, the former blossomed from 95,000 members to 350,000; the Evangelicals from 40,000 to 240,000.

Compared to more mainstream churches, the two groups were still quite small -- but not so small that their followers were of one mind. The old were bumping up against the new, the 19th century ways against those

of the 20th.

That tug-of-war, which often centered on the use of the German language, played in the highest seats of power and in the most humble homes. In her memoirs, Mary Englert recalled how, as a child in the early 1900s, she faithfully attended the Hope Sunday School, "where the people spoke mostly Pennsylvania Dutch." Afterward, she always had to report to her great-grandmother, Harriet Brubaker.

"My great-grandma wanted us to tell her all that we learned," she wrote. "We were supposed to tell it in German. But we could not tell her much. She would say, 'You don't try hard enough.'"

But as Mrs. Englert also remembers, her great-grandmother "understood." The world, as even she could see, was changing.

For both the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren, that deep rootedness in German culture was the source of not only internal but external tensions. With the start of World War I, a great wave of nationalistic fervor -- and anti-German sentiment -- swept America. Though pacifist, the groups temporarily stepped back from their long-held position and supported the war effort. The Evangelical Association went so far as to portray Jacob Albright as a great patriot of the Revolution. Still, in various places in the U.S., their churches were vandalized -- with yellow paint splashed on their cornerstones -- and their members branded as un-American.

In 1918, the war ended. That year, too, Harriet Brubaker died at the age of 92, a tiny, wizened woman of German tongue and plain dress -- the epitome of the pioneer Evangelical. Had she lived just four years longer, she would have seen her beloved language dropped from use in the newly organized Evangelical Church. In the early 1930s, German also disappeared from the services of the United Brethren.

Few of the founders of the Hope class survived to witness the greatest change of all: the birth of the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

For a century, talk of a merger between the two seemed always in the air, stirring and dissolving like the breeze. But in the post-World War I years, the conversation took on a more serious tone. In the 1920s, they were for a while part of a grand plan to unite several denominations, including the German Reformed, into a "United Church of America" -- a plan that ultimately came asunder.

In 1934, the Evangelical and United Brethren Churches, both battered by the Depression, formed a commission that would finally bring about their union. A plan was presented at the Evangelical conference in 1942, where it passed by a vote of 226 to six. Three years later, it sailed through the United Brethren conference, 224 to two.

On November 16, 1946, in an impressive ceremony at the First United Brethren Church in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Evangelical Bishop John Stamm and United Brethren Bishop A.R. Clippinger officially merged the two denominations.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church -- a church that neither Jacob Albright, nor William Otterbein, nor Martin Boehm had intended to create -- was now more than 700,000 members strong.

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Apart from its new name, Hope Evangelical United Brethren Church did not experience any dramatic changes in the wake of the merger. Although suddenly part of a much larger institution, the congregation continued to draw its strength from within, as it had from the very start. During the first half-century of Hope Church, the members toiled in many a valley, yet they never stopped believing that God would see them through. That faith was rewarded the day the cornerstone of the first church was laid, and it would be rewarded often thereafter, including one January Sunday in the mid-1940's.

But that is a story for another day.

To Be Continued

100th Anniversary Committee

Barbara Tucker, chairperson

Betty Good	Brian Boyer	Suzanne Fisher	Sandy Howe
Dick Imhoff	Donna Imhoff	Joanne Imhoff	Shirley Kreider
Kris Powers	Laura Strohl	Debbie Yoder	Pastor Mary Jane Kirby

Acknowledgements

This history was compiled by Suzanne Hacker Fisher and Kathleen Hacker Tinney, the daughters of Mae and Earl Hacker and granddaughters of Mary and Earl Englert.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the senior members and former members of Hope who so generously shared their memories. Without their help, the story of the early years of the church could not have come to life.

We wish to acknowledge, in particular, the contribution of our late grandmother, who during the last several years of her life wrote down all she knew about her ancestors and, in the process, opened a window into the very beginning of Hope. Her recollections of her own childhood in the church in the early 1900s were always full of fondness and, often, humor -- from Christmas in Sunday School, when each child received an orange and a small bag containing six pieces of gum candy ("My oh my, we thought we were rich!") to the time "Mammy" Ream, one of the founding members, gave money to a young minister to have his shoes resoled because "when we would kneel to pray, the people could see the holes."

All the memories offered were a guiding light in the preparation of "A Century of Hope." May they also serve as a reminder that one of the greatest gifts we can give our children is a knowledge and understanding of the past.

Thanks also are due : photographer Jack Tinney, who restored a damaged picture of the first church building for use on the cover; Daniel Daneker, who assisted with layout and graphic design; the Historical Society of the Conestoga Valley; and Albright College.

Source materials include : "Proclaiming Grace And Freedom," edited by John G. McEllhenney (Abingdon, 1982); "The Story of American Methodism," by Frederick A. Norwood (Abingdon, 1974); "Discovery and Promise," by Eugene H. Barth (Albright College, 1989); and "The Journal of the Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley," Vol. XVI (1991).

We eagerly anticipate compiling "A Century of Hope - Part 2," a collection of memories of the congregation of Hope.

March 29, 1998

Heritage Sunday

*"One generation shall praise Your works to another,
and shall declare Your mighty acts - Psalm 145 : 4*

THE PRELUDE

FANFARE "Bells of Hope" arr. Thompson

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

SOLO "Hymn Medley" Gaither
Kris Powers, soloist

*HYMN "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" no. 117

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor : Praise the Lord! Give thanks to Him...

People : TO OUR GOD WHO GIVES US A FUTURE AND A HOPE!

Pastor : For 100 years God has filled and sustained us.

People : FOR 100 YEARS HE HAS SHOWN US HIS GRACE.

Pastor : For 100 years He has given Himself to us in word and sacrament.

People : FOR 100 YEARS GOD HAS EMPOWERED US WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Pastor : For 100 years He has given us to be His witness to the world.

People : FOR 100 YEARS HE HAS GIVEN US TO BE IN LOVING FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER.

Pastor : Praise the Lord forevermore. Declare to the generations His story and sing His praises.

People : PRAISE THE LORD!

*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (pastor)

MOMENTS OF SILENT PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

EPISTLE LESSON : I Peter 2 : 4 -10, 3 :15

(in German - Sue Fisher)

ANTHEM "How Beautiful the Feet of Those" Martin

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Children age 4 - Kindergarten are invited downstairs to Room 122 for Church Times with Jenna Taylor, Lauren Jones, and Brent Nelms. We hope that visiting children will choose to attend, also.

*HYMN "Forward Through the Ages" No. 555
A HERITAGE FILLED WITH HOPE Sue Fisher
OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Joshua 4 : 1 - 8, 18 - 24
MESSAGE "THE VOICE OF THE STONE - 1998"
ANTHEM "Simple Gifts" Kenneth Lenz
Bells of Hope, flute / Lisa Helock

RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS OF HOPE FOR 50 YEARS AND MORE

A CELEBRATION OF OUR FAMILY :

- those who became members of Hope prior to 1983
- those who have united with Hope since 1983

A LITANY

Pastor : Almighty God, you have raised up servants to proclaim the gift of redemption and a life of holiness.

People : FOR OUR SPIRITUAL FORBEARS, SUSANNA, JOHN, AND CHARLES WESLEY; BARBARA HECK, JACOB ALBRIGHT, PHILIP WILLIAM OTTERBEIN, AND MARTIN BOEHM, INSPIRED BY YOUR SPIRIT, WE GIVE THANKS.

Pastor : In their ministry, through their difficulties, and in spite of their weaknesses, you were their hope and their salvation.

People : YOU LED THEM AND THEIR FOLLOWERS TO CREATE THE HERITAGE THAT IS OURS.

Pastor : We praise you for the women and men, young and old, who followed them, who gave themselves unselfishly for the welfare of the Church, whose commitment and vision encouraged and supported the Church. Their talents, enthusiasm, idealism, and dedication infused the Church with energy.

People : THEIR OUTSTANDING GIFTS AND WITNESS SHAPED OUR THOUGHTS AND LIFE. WE PRAISE YOU FOR THESE COUNTLESS MEMBERS OF YOUR CHURCH, WHOSE NAMES WE NOW REMEMBER ...

Silence is kept to remember the names of the saints.

Pastor : And we give you thanks for the place of our rich tradition among the churches which comprise the Body of Christ.

People : WITH ALL YOUR PEOPLE THROUGHOUT CREATION, GIVE US A NEW VISION, NEW LOVE, NEW WISDOM, AND FRESH UNDERSTANDING, THAT WE MAY SERVE YOU MORE FULLY; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

PASTORAL PRAYER

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Offertory

*Offering Response "Praise God" No. 94

*Prayer of Dedication

*CLOSING HYMN "Go Forth for God" No. 670

*BENEDICTION

*THE EXTINGUISHING OF THE CANDLES

*POSTLUDE

**Congregation Standing*