



# Christians in Service

## 100 Years of Faithfulness

by H. D. Fischer

In the late 1800's, many German-Russian immigrants settled in the Eureka, South Dakota area. Although of varying religious persuasions, several families became close friends. Their visits to homesteads turned into Bible studies. Because of their devotion to God and His Word, they soon discovered similarities in their interpretation of the Bible.

Early in their association, these people felt they should be known as the Church of God, in accordance with Acts 20:28. They were committed to keeping the Saturday Sabbath. They believed in a born-again experience through repentance and conversion. They believed in restitution and in making peace with their fellow men.

In 1898, the early church pioneer families of George Dais, John Brenneise, Philip Kiesz, Frederick Miller, and Peter Schrenk met in homes for Bible studies. They soon established contact with Sabbath-keeping families in various parts of the Dakotas and Montana. By 1918, the homes were too small to hold the people, so a church building was erected five miles north of Eureka. The new congregation consisted of about eighteen families.

By 1924, these families made contact with the *Bible Advocate* in Stanberry, Missouri. You can imagine the delight of the group in Eureka as they learned of others in different parts of the United States who were also called Church of God and believed as they did.

In 1925, the first campmeeting in the Dakotas was conducted on the prairie on the church property north of Eureka. This experience was so

enjoyable that similar campmeetings were repeated nearly every year for the next fifty years, attracting friends from miles around.

In the early years, the *Bible Advocate* and Sabbath School quarterlies were translated into German. Members of the congregation provided the translations and bundled and distributed copies to other communities in the United States and Canada.

In 1948, the Eureka congregation decided to accommodate their growing families by constructing a new building in the city of Eureka. That building still serves as the Eureka church home.

Since its humble beginnings nearly one hundred years ago, the Eureka church has faithfully served as a lighthouse to its community. From this congregation has come more than a dozen ministers who have been documented by the General Conference of the Church of

God (Seventh Day). From the time of its initial affiliation with the General Conference, the Eureka congregation has faithfully and generously supported the programs of the Conference.

A special church reunion celebration is being planned for June 24-26, 1994, in Eureka. Those affiliated with this pioneer congregation will gather to express appreciation and thanksgiving for the blessings of God. Special worship and praise services will be conducted with lots of old-fashioned gospel music in German and English. A bonus will be the good German food for which the area is famous.

All those who have ties to the congregation, whether through family or membership, are invited to attend. Questions about the reunion should be directed to Albert Fischer, Box 626, Eureka, South Dakota 57436; phone 605-284-2647.

## Calendar Notes

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|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>July 18-25, 1993</b>       | — Retreat, Umstead State Park, Raleigh, NC              |
| <b>July 18-25, 1993</b>       | — Sis-Q Meadows Senior Youth Retreat                    |
| <b>July 25-Aug. 1-8, 1993</b> | — Sis-Q Meadows Junior Youth Retreat                    |
| <b>July 25-30, 1993</b>       | — Central District Youth Camp, Fairbury, NE             |
| <b>Aug. 8-15, 1993</b>        | — Michigan Youth Camp, Yankee Springs Recreation Center |
| <b>Aug. 27-Sept. 1, 1993</b>  | — Sis-Q Meadows Senior Adult Retreat                    |
| <b>Sept. 10, 1993</b>         | — SST fall quarter registration and orientation         |
| <b>Sept. 13, 1993</b>         | — SST fall quarter begins                               |

# 100 Years

The Church of God (Seventh Day) in Eureka, South Dakota, celebrated their centennial anniversary June 24-26, 1994. Former church members and friends returned to Eureka to help the local congregation and community recall many memories of the past.

The celebration services on Friday evening and Saturday morning and afternoon were held at the United Methodist Church in Eureka. The ladies of that church prepared and served the noon and evening meals for approximately 275 attendees.

Services featured many special musical numbers, including one by a volunteer choir. Former pastors spoke briefly. They included Elder Wesley Walker of Ft. Smith, Arkansas; Elder Delvin O'Banion of Joplin, Missouri; Elder John Kiesz of Cañon City, Colorado; and Elder Ray Moldenhauer of Lodi, California. Also included were Elders Jerry Morgan of Gackle, North Dakota, and Harris Kinzler of Fredonia, North Dakota, who in recent years have often filled the pulpit in the absence of a pastor.

Elder Calvin Burrell, president of the General Conference of the

## by LeRoy Dais

Church of God (Seventh Day), congratulated the Eureka congregation for their many years of service to the Lord and to the community. He also gave special recognition to the two oldest members of the congregation: George G. Dais (98 years) and Christ Dais (93 years). They are sons of one of the founding families of the congregation.

A history of the Eureka congregation was read and several tributes were expressed.

On Saturday evening, a memorial service was held at the Church of God (Seventh Day) cemetery, five miles north of Eureka. This was the site of the first church building. At the outdoor service, Harvey Fischer reminisced concerning some of the happenings at that site in past years, and Elder Calvin Burrell admonished those gathered to remember the faithful lives of those who founded this congregation and brought it to this time. He also dedicated a large memorial stone that was recently placed there.

On Sunday forenoon, a large group met at the Church of God facility. Individuals were given opportunity to further reminisce and share in testimonies and songs. Several German songs were sung. Many expressed deep gratitude for the roots they have in this faith and in this community.

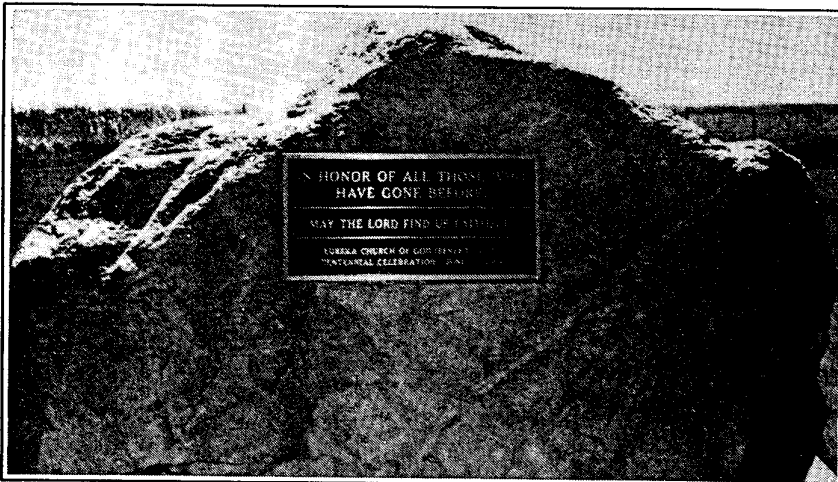
## Early History

During the 1800's, several German-Russian immigrant families in the Eureka rural community became close friends. Their visits often turned into Bible studies. Though they came from various Christian backgrounds, they soon discovered many similarities in their thinking and approaches to life. Their studies brought them to common understandings of the Scriptures.

The pioneer families of George G. Dais, Sr., John Brenneise, Philip Kiesz, Fredrich Miller, and Peter Schrenk united to form the Church of God ("Gemeinde Gottes" in German) in Eureka. Their goals were to share their convictions about Bible truths in their community, and to worship together in Spirit and in truth. For many years, these families met in their homes for Bible study and worship services on Sabbaths.

As the children grew to adulthood, the church group increased and other families, such as the Straubs and Fischers, joined. In 1918, the members erected a new frame church building five miles north of Eureka. A second building was added to house the teams of horses when it was necessary to travel by horse and buggy or by sled.

Regular Sabbath routine included Sabbath School at 10:00 a.m., followed by lunch at noon. Worship



# in Eureka

service was conducted in the afternoon. The Eureka church did not employ a pastor, so the men of the church took turns speaking. Prayer sessions and testimonies about their experiences with the Lord were important parts of each service.

In the winter of 1923-24, this congregation was visited by Elder A. N. Dugger, a minister of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) of Stanberry, Missouri. He was also editor of the *Bible Advocate*. After spending hours in Bible study with Elder Dugger, the members of this congregation were amazed how closely their beliefs agreed with this national organization on such subjects as the grace of God, salvation through Christ, baptism by immersion, the Ten Commandments, and other doctrines.

The Eureka group had not heard of the Church of God (Seventh Day) prior to this time. They were delighted to find out that others understood the Bible in the same way they did. After a delegation from the Eureka church visited the Conference offices in Stanberry, Missouri, they agreed to become affiliated with the General Conference.

In 1925, a campmeeting was held at the church site. Ministers came from various parts of the country to speak and visit. Campmeetings became an annual affair at this site, with folks coming from many states and from Canada to worship and have fellowship with other believers. These meetings also provided excellent opportunity for young people to become acquainted. Many romances started, and a number of them blossomed into marriages. There was usually a baptism in a nearby pond on the last day of campmeeting.

Fall or winter revival meetings also were times of outreach and spiritual renewal among the members. Many first and renewed commitments were made in those meetings.

The congregation grew, though many members moved to other parts of the country and carried their Christian witness with them. Over the years, about two dozen men with roots in this congregation have become either documented ministers or served as laymen in an official

capacity with the national Church organization.

In 1948, a new church facility was built on the corner of Seventh Street and K Avenue in Eureka. The congregation still meets in this church home every Sabbath. Although the church has not had a pastor since 1989, the members are faithful in their attendance and worship.

*LeRoy Dais is an assistant editor of the Bible Advocate.*



From left to right: Sam Kiesz, Emma Moldenhauer, Nathaniel Kiesz

