

Council Community Church 1901-2001

By Dick Parker

Between 1868 when the Moser family settled at the fork in the trail, and the turn of the century, Council had grown into a rowdy little town of some 480 people. The population fluctuated, because miners, trappers, teamsters, cowboys, sheep men, loggers, sawmillers and farmers were constantly coming and going in their various directions.

During the 1890's most of the ground facing the four sides of the "town square" was occupied by businesses. There were several stores, a couple of cafes, a hotel, barber shop, dental office, rooming houses, a dance hall, a blacksmith shop, seven saloons, and a lesser number of "houses of ill fame." The mining towns of Cuprum, Decorah, Landore, and Iron springs were booming. Freight to the mines went through Council, as did pack trains to the mines in Warren, and the surrounding area. With this mixture of people, there were brawls, shootings, sometimes even murder. Council was known as a town that "had a man for breakfast every morning."

Rev. George Pemberton was a young preacher that held services around the area in different schoolhouses, never having a regular pastorate. Sometimes guards had to be posted outside the building to keep the town toughs from throwing rocks against the walls or through the windows to disrupt the services.

In the early 1890's a Sunday School was started by Miss Minnie Peterson and Mrs. Lucy Mc Mahan. They, along with many members of the community saw a need for a regular church in Council. Records show that on July 21, 1901, the Rev. Guy Foster, resident Pastor of Indian Valley Church, assisted by Rev. H. A. Lee, superintendent of Idaho Sunday Schools, organized a church with 13 charter members. Five were Congregationalists, two were United Brethren, two were Methodists, one was Presbyterian, and three joined on confession. All but two of these charter members were women. Most of their husbands joined soon. At a business meeting on August 2, 1901, it was unanimously voted to name the church "The Congregational Church of Council." The church was incorporated on August 4, 1901 according to the laws of the State of Idaho. At this time, Council was still in Washington County. At a business meeting held August 25, 1901 the trustees were given authority to fully canvass the residents of Council in regards to building a church building. In September of 1901 it was voted to ask the Congregational Building Society for \$500.00 to build a parsonage. The building material for the parsonage cost about \$700. No. 1 lumber was \$12 a thousand board feet. Nails were a nickel a pound. The parsonage was finished in 1902, and attention turned to the construction of a church building. A \$500 dollar grant was requested from the Congregational building society. The new church building was dedicated to the Lord on January 18, 1903. Before the dedication it was reported by the building committee that the church was \$160 behind in its bills. A collection was quickly taken and the new building was dedicated free of debt.

Rev. Guy Foster was the first pastor. His salary was set at \$800 per year. He served until 1905. Rev. Howard Stover accepted the call to be the second pastor of the church. He was ordained in Ontario, Oregon, on his way to Council. Meanwhile, the church bell had been purchased in 1904 for \$125. It was described as a "sweet toned bell". The bill of lading stated that it was guaranteed for 15 years.

Rev. Stover was a dedicated, hard working young pastor. He liked fast horses and didn't care if they were broke or not. His runaway teams kept folks alert on the dusty, narrow roads in the area. It was hard to tell if he was out of control, or responding to an emergency. He helped with work whenever needed. In 1909 he was given a vote of thanks for painting the parsonage. His report in 1907 showed that he had officiated at 9 weddings, 7 funerals, and had preached 171

sermons in Council, Meadows, Indian Valley, and Mackay District. 17 new members had been added to the church, He had made 517 visits, and had received \$400 in salary. A motion was made that each member give 75 cents to make up what was lacking in salary. He wore out a buggy a year, and that didn't count the ones he crashed. He left in 1914. Was a pastor in Salem, Oregon for many years and had the reputation for fast driving there, too, but in Chrysler cars.

Robert Wafler was hired as church janitor in 1907, at a salary of two dollars a month. When he retired in 1948 his salary had increased to seventy-five dollars a year. Rev. C. Edwin Cox was the next pastor. He was a young man with a young family. He stayed a year and was succeeded by Rev. J.S. Edmonds. He and his wife were elderly and were here about a year. He retired from ministry and moved to Portland. The record says he built a new house and enjoyed several years of retirement, before being called "To the Great Beyond". Rev. Emil Iverson answered the call to be pastor of this church in the spring of 1918. He was a widower with a grown family. While here, he married Mrs. Maude Gregg who was County Superintendent of Schools. During the flu epidemic of 1918 he helped with nursing and home chores "far beyond the line of duty". In the summer of 1921, Rev. Iverson went on vacation and never came back. The deacons and trustees filled in and waited hopefully for his return, but in a couple of months, they received his letter of resignation. Mr. Silas Hagler came from Boise as a supply pastor and stayed until 1923. This was the beginning of his ministerial career. He went back to Boise and served as Chaplain at the Veteran's Hospital. City water was brought into the parsonage in 1923, and a piano was purchased in 1926. It was purchased on time with \$150 down payment and the rest to be paid "as convenient to the payees." Price for piano and stool was \$300.

Rev. Thomas Gordon and his wife came in the spring of 1923 and stayed until 1926. The treasurer's report for 1923 shows total receipts of \$1023.50. That year it cost \$25.00 for lights, the water bill was \$4.05, pastor's salaries totaled \$657.00. Insurance on the church and parsonage cost \$38.00. A note at the bottom of the page says, "There is a balance of \$.01 which is unaccounted for. The church had grown to 68 members and there were 90 attending Sunday school.

Rev. Gordon and his wife did a lot of ministry with the children, with vacation Bible Schools, Boy Scout meetings, camping trips, and other activities, always teaching the love of Jesus. A picture in the church history book shows a Vacation Bible School with about 75 or a hundred children attending. Rev. Sears came here in 1926 and remained until 1933. During his time here, an addition was built to the church, and divided up into a kitchen area and cloakroom. Rev. Arthur Horton and his wife came from South Carolina in April of 1933. A C.C.C. camp was established on the Middle Fork, and Rev. Horton undertook to provide programs of music and entertainment for them while they were here. Several of these young men came to church, for a while, but they couldn't read English, and stopped coming after several weeks. Rev. Horton resigned in September of 1934 and accepted a position in a college in the midwest.

Rev. Roberts and his family came in 1935 and stayed until 1936. He accepted a call from a church in New Plymouth, because he thought their son would have a better chance for an education in the lower country. He suggested the church call Eunice Trumbo, who was assisting a minister and his wife in conducting Daily Vacation Bible Schools in the coal mine country of West Virginia. When she graduated from the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1930 she was only the third woman to ever achieve a degree from that school. She was originally hired to fill in for three months, but the whole town fell in love with her and she decided to stay. Her ministry lasted for over 20 years, during which time she visited the hospital every day, bringing a warm smile, a funny story, a prayer, a small plant for each new baby born, (over 1000 during her time here) or whatever was needed to help and comfort the patient. She was a member of every

charitable organization in town, and was a capable and Bible teaching preacher. She taught vacation Bible schools, year after year. One little boy was heard telling his friends, "You better come to school and hear Miss Trumbo's stories about heaven. She knows all about it. She's been there". There are many articles about her ministry, in our Church Scrapbook. She was here about eight years when she decided to retire. She was given a big retirement party, and our local attorney, Carl Swanstrom made a speech about her and her ministry. She said that that was a fine eulogy and all they had to do now, when she died was bury her without ceremony. She went back East and visited her family for a couple of months and since the church had been unable to find a replacement for her, she "unretired" and stayed until 1957. In a short time after the beginning of her stay here, it became apparent that the church was not adequate for the needs of the congregation. It became her dream to see a new church built during her ministry here. That dream became a reality when the Church Council, after many meetings, prayers, and much soul searching decided it was not economically feasible to rebuild or add on to the present church. It was decided in 1951 to canvass the area and see what funds were available. The committee came up with \$8000 in pledges and construction started immediately. In the early 1940's, Frank Galey, a member of our church was visiting his family in Pennsylvania. Their old church was being torn down to build a new one. Frank noticed the beautiful stained glass windows in the old building and asked if they were going to be used in the new church. They were not, so he asked if they might be saved for him. Even back then they realized there would have to be a new church built. Frank's relatives arranged to have the windows shipped to Council, and they were stored in the courthouse, during World War II. They were remembered, and the plans for the new church were drawn up to include them. No telling how old these windows are, but they are a beautiful part of the church. Many dedicated people worked on the planning and construction of the new building. Earl McMahan put in just about full time as superintendent of construction and doing much of the work. Russell Evans was a local building contractor. He furnished building materials at cost and donated much of his time, and also some of his crew's labor. The first service in the new church was held on Easter Sunday of 1952. The formal dedication of new church was held October 24, 1954. By that time the old church had been torn down and the parking lot had been established. Miss Trumbo's ministry continued until her final retirement in 1957. She moved to California and was living with a brother and his family, when a cabin at Pilgrim Cove in McCall was built and called the Trumbo Cabin. She came for the dedication on that cabin, and after the ceremony came to Council to visit some of her many friends. While here, she became very ill, and passed away in the hospital here on August 28, 1959, at the age of 83. It seemed fitting that she would go home to be with the Lord, from the community where she was "at home" for so many years.

Miss Trumbo had hoped that her replacement would be able to carry on the great work she had started, and it seemed like her dream was realized in the person of John Brooke and his family. Mr. Brooke was a dedicated young minister with a wife that supported his ministry. His was the first ministerial family to have a baby born in the new hospital. He was pastor of our church from 1958 until 1962. At that time many Congregational Churches were joining the United Church of Christ. Our church decided not to join. At that time this was the only Congregational Church in Idaho that didn't join the United Church of Christ. We joined the Northwest Conference of Congregational Churches and continued in that conference until about 1998.

When Reverend Brooke left, Reverend Bev Greer assumed the duties of pastor and was here for several years. He was a Southern Baptist and was very adamant about Eternal Security. Some of the members didn't believe in this doctrine, and Rev. Greer decided to leave. Rev. Dick

Martin candidated for the job. He was another staunch believer in eternal security, and when the congregation didn't give him enough votes to be elected, it caused a split in the church. Several families left this church and started the Council Bible Church with Rev. Martin as pastor. The deacons of the church filled the pulpit for quite some time. Rev. Howard Olson came as Supply Pastor for a while and then Lawrence Burger was hired as pastor. He stayed a year or so, then he left and Dick Hayward was hired. He was here about a year and a half. When he left Leonard Bergstrom came to town. He was a very personable, lovable Pastor. His wife, Charmagne and he seemed to fit into our community like they had been raised here. He was a charismatic preacher and many people were brought to the Lord, during his stay, here. He stayed seven years, until illness forced him to leave the ministry for a couple of years. He came back into the ministry and accepted the call to a church in the midwest. He finished his time in ministry in Bazine, Kansas. He and Charmagne now live in retirement in Colorado. Our church was without a pastor for almost a year and a half with the deacons and guest pastors filling the pulpit. Ron Davis from Denver, Colorado was hired in the spring of 1983. He never fit in to the community, or the church, and was finally asked to leave. We were without a pastor, again for a while, until the Freedman family moved into the parsonage. Wayne and Marj, their two daughters, Kala and Jody, and their son Kyle soon became "Councilites." In John Brooke's history of his ministry, here, he mentioned that his was the first pastor's child born in the new hospital, and Ryan Freedman was the last. They are still here, after fifteen years, and hopefully will be for many years to come. Wayne is a Bible believing preacher, and excellent teacher, and he continues the tradition started by Rev. Stover so many years ago. If you need help, whether it be spiritual or physical, he is there. He travels to hospitals in the lower country to be with members of the church family that are sick, or having surgery, he helps with woodcutting, branding, haying, and many other ways. Above all, he is a dedicated Christian. His family shows the benefits of his training. Marj is an accomplished musician, and works with our Missions program, and many other ways in our church and community. Late in 1997, it was decided to call Scott Lundy as associate pastor. He rotates with Wayne every couple of weeks in the pulpit and has been a real addition to our church. He and his family, wife Sheryl, and two sons, Zeb and Sam have built a home here, and we hope they stay forever.

BUILDINGS

The education building was started in 1959. A dormitory building at Oxbow was purchased, dismantled and moved to Council. Council Hardware furnished material at cost. Russell Evans donated his time in putting up the building. Charging only for his crew. His crew erected the main part of the building and roofed it. Members of the congregation finished the inside. This left a space between the church and the education building with just a roof and a cement floor. Sometime in the late 1980's runoff from a heavy snow, followed by a hard freeze, heaved the ground under the floor of the "breezeway" It was decided to enclose the area and make a new room between the church and the education building. This entailed putting in a ramp to get to the basement. This was accomplished by the men of the church, and has been used for a recreation room, ever since. Freedman's were the last pastoral family to live in the parsonage. They eventually built a house of their own, and the parsonage was rented out for a number of years and then used for a youth center. It finally became uninhabitable and was torn down in about 1992. (all these dates are just a guess). It had a great deal of remodeling done in the '70s. A new kitchen, a utility room and a downstairs bedroom and bathroom were added on. It served the church well for many years. Many weddings were done in the living room, by Miss Trumbo. It

served as a Bible study headquarters, a counseling office, and just a place to go and visit for many years. Right now, we are in prayer about the possibility of building another new church. Our present facility is pretty full, sometimes. Our present church is beautiful and has so many memories for some of us, that we hate to see the change, but if the Lord thinks we need a new church, I'm sure it will happen.

MISSIONS AND PROGRAMS

Several years ago, it was decided that the church would give 10% of our tithing income to missions. The mission committee decides how this money will be apportioned. We have a couple of missionaries that we have supported for over 20 years. The last few years we have sent teams to Kino Bay in Mexico to help with building projects there. We support two pastors, so they can minister full time in that area. We have church services in our local hospital nursing home twice a month. Our Sunday school is very popular with the young folks, and is taught by a very dedicated group of people. We try to have a couple of outdoor services each year. These are well attended. We are so blessed to live in an area that is so beautiful, and there are many places we can do this. We have several young families in our church, now, and a real ministry going on with our teens. I think the original founding fathers (and mothers) would be proud of this church on its 100th birthday.