

Little Heaven:
A History of Bethany Bible Fellowship Church
Of Hatfield, Pennsylvania

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On August 14, 1879, almost 100 people pledged money for the building of a church in Hatfield. This was the beginning of what is now Bethany Bible Fellowship Church. "We the undersigned subscribers severally promise to pay the sum severally annexed to our names for the purpose of building an Evangelical United Mennonite Meetinghouse for divine worship at or near Hatfield Station in Hatfield Township Montgomery County Pennsylvania."

A few words of the history of the conference are in order here. Mennonites from Europe emigrated to Pennsylvania in the late 1600s and early 1700s, many of them settling in what is now Montgomery County. These Mennonites organized themselves into what was called the Franconia Conference. In 1847 a disagreement arose which resulted in a split; the new conference was known as "New Mennonites" or "the Oberholtzer group." Some preachers in this new group thought the changes were not enough so they left that conference in 1858 to form the Evangelical Mennonites. In 1879 the Evangelical Mennonites merged with another group to form the Evangelical United Mennonites. At this point a congregation in Hatfield was formed. A few years later, in 1883, another merger resulted in a name change to Mennonite Brethren in Christ, a name that was used until 1959 when the Conference adopted the name "Bible Fellowship Church," the name used today (2024).

Some of the names on the subscription list were people who did not live in Hatfield or anywhere nearby. These were people in the conference that wanted to help establish a new church. Other people in the list were Hatfield area businessmen who perhaps never intended to be a part of the church. When someone "passed the hat" in the community for a worthy cause, people chipped in. The first three people on the list are particularly noteworthy: Joel Rosenberger, Tobias Oberholtzer, and Oliver Rosenberger. Joel Rosenberger and Tobias Oberholtzer each pledged \$200 and Oliver Rosenberger, son of Joel, pledged \$100, hefty sums in those days. Most of the other pledges were less than \$10.

Joel Rosenberger was a farmer in Hatfield for most of his working years. No doubt he was raised in a Mennonite Church. Joel and his wife Mary had five children but only one, Oliver, survived infancy. The other four children are buried in the cemetery of Plains Mennonite in Hatfield Township. However, by the 1860s, Joel was associated with Lower Skippack Mennonite Church which at the time was independent of any conference. It was there that Joel was chosen by lot and ordained to the ministry in 1864. On June 7, 1871, Joel Rosenberger attended the semi-annual conference of the Evangelical Mennonites where he was recognized as an advisory member. At the November 6, 1872 conference, Joel Rosenberger from Hatfield Station was asked to preach, visit families, attend extension meetings, and to seek out new places to preach.

He accepted this invitation. Seven years later, in 1879, the new place to preach that he sought out was his hometown of Hatfield.

Tobias Oberholtzer of Hatfield was most likely raised in Plains Mennonite Congregation where his parents are buried in the cemetery, and Tobias and his wife are also buried. Tobias was a farmer for most of his working years but had worked as a carpenter for a few years before taking up farming.

By 1879 Tobias Oberholtzer and Joel Rosenberger, along with Rosenberger's son Oliver, joined forces to start a congregation of the Evangelical United Mennonites. Joel Rosenberger was already a preacher with this conference. What motivated Tobias Oberholtzer to leave the established Mennonite community to join this newer one has not been discovered. At the November 1879 conference, Hatfield and Quakertown were made into a circuit. Preachers Jonas Musselman and Joel Rosenberger were assigned to this circuit. In March of 1880, conference minutes record "that J. Musselman have supervision over Quakertown and Hatfield with the assistance of J. Rosenberger."

In August of 1879 a solicitation for funds was made in the Hatfield community and in the Evangelical United Mennonite community. The North Pennsylvania Railroad Company had laid tracks through Hatfield Township in the 1850s. A town was beginning to develop around the train station. Large parcels of land were being divided up and sold as building lots. On 28 May 1880, Charles F. Lambert sold for \$90 lot #68 of 76 lots to Joel Rosenberger, Tobias Oberholtzer, and Oliver Rosenberger, trustees of the Evangelical United Mennonite Society of Hatfield Township. Six days later, on 3 June 1880, the trustees purchased lot #67 for \$100 from James M. Romig. Both lots were part of the "Lambert farm" lots. Both lots were on West Broad Street, and the church still owns and uses them.

According to an article in the 11 December 1879 issue of the Lansdale Reporter, the Evangelical Mennonites had already erected a building, though the deeds for the land are dated in May and June of 1880. The official dedication of the building was on Sunday, January 4, 1880, according to an entry in the diary of William B Musselman. The building was simple, but typical of 1879, with no indoor plumbing and no electricity. There was a woodburning stove in the middle of the room for heating. The building was one room with an alcove for the pulpit. This was an outward projection on the wall of the church, big enough for a pulpit and for the preacher to stand behind it. These alcoves typically had windows on each side, providing light for the preacher to see his Bible and his notes. For a number of years on the wall behind the preacher was the motto "Prepare to meet thy God."

In 1882 a Union Sunday School was organized with Harry M. Ziegler as superintendent, and Isaac R. Hunsberger as chorister. Isaac was a dealer in organs. He placed an organ in the church and his daughter was the organist (History of Hatfield, by David K.

Allebach, p23). It was unusual at that time for a church in this denomination to have a musical instrument in the meetinghouse.

In 1883 another denominational merger was accomplished resulting in another name change. The denomination was now known as the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church.

For nine years after 1882, the Hatfield church was on a circuit with another church, as most churches in the conference were. Being on a circuit meant they shared a pastor. During these years most of the preachers had an assistant. In these nine years, Joel Rosenberger is listed as the assistant to the preacher that was assigned to Hatfield. The assistants usually preached at one of the churches while the other preacher took the pulpit at the other. After 1889, the assistants are not mentioned in the preacher assignment lists, but were active in ministry, nevertheless.

In the February 4, 1891, minutes of conference it is reported that Joel Rosenberger asked to be excused because of sickness in the family. The following year he asked to be excused again. The next five years he is absent from conference with no mention of being excused. Finally, in 1897, it is recorded "Resolved, that we do not recognize Joel Rosenberger as a member of our Annual Conference after this." Was he plagued with ill health? Did he have a change of heart concerning his involvement with the church? Was anyone preaching at the Hatfield church? The full story is not recorded in the minutes.

An article in the Thursday, 1 October 1896 issue of the North Penn Reporter mentions this news from Hatfield: "An open-air meeting was held on the lawn at the station by the Mennonite Brethren in Christ on Sunday evening." The Mennonite Brethren in Christ were more aggressively evangelistic than some of the other Mennonite groups in the area. They would try innovative things so more people could hear the Gospel message.

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ Conference practiced "believer's baptism," that is, when people declare they believe in Jesus Christ to save them, then they are baptized by complete immersion. The 6 December 1900 issue of the Lansdale Reporter informs us that three converts were baptized in the stream at the railroad bridge. Our best guess as to this location is the bridge not far from South Main Street, near Chestnut Street. The current railroad bridge near that location was built in 1926. A recent exploration of the stream in that area shows several spots that would be deep enough for a baptism by immersion.

It would be appropriate at this point to mention that the Hatfield church had a cemetery. The cemetery was moved in 1954 so that the new (and current) sanctuary could be built. At that time there were only 14 marked graves, with death dates ranging from 1885 to 1935. The remains of these 14 people were moved to a small section of the parking lot. A marker with their names has been placed on the spot. More information on the cemetery and these 14 people can be found in Appendix A. More

people were buried in the cemetery than these 14, such as Joel Rosenberger, but were moved (or the tombstone was lost) before the cemetery was moved.

The first decade of the twentieth century was challenging for the Hatfield Mennonite Brethren in Christ congregation. The primary movers and shakers that started the congregation died a year apart: Tobias Oberholtzer in November 1903 and Joel Rosenberger in November 1904. Their wives died around that time also: Ann Oberholtzer in 1900 and Mary Rosenberger in 1903. Who will lead the church now?

In 1902 J C Roth was appointed to be the preacher in Hatfield and Quakertown, and his address is listed as Hatfield. The following year W S Hottel was the pastor and lived in Hatfield. In 1904 R Bergstresser was the pastor of Hatfield without the extra responsibility of the Quakertown church. The following year saw yet another preacher. L Frank Haas was assigned to the Hatfield and Quakertown churches but was living in Quakertown. It was in 1906 that H K Kratz from the Hatfield congregation was recommended to the ministry. Kratz would later return to Hatfield as the pastor. The next two years saw two more changes in pastor, first E E Kublic then R L Woodring. Both preachers were shared with the Quakertown church. This rapid change in preachers was not unique to the Hatfield church. It happened to other churches in the conference also. It has been observed that a frequent change of pastors hinders the growth of the church.

During these years between 1904 (death of Joel Rosenberger) and a revival of the congregation in the 1930s, there was always a preacher assigned to Hatfield, usually in a circuit with Quakertown. In the 17 October 1907 issue of the Hatfield Times, it was announced that L Frank Haas was again stationed at Quakertown and Hatfield. "This is his third year, and will preach his introductory sermon next Sunday night at 7:30 pm in the Hatfield Mennonite Church, give a Bible Reading at 2 p, day school at 3 p.m." Such notices continued in the newspaper for the next three years. There were no morning services listed, only afternoon and evening until finally the evening services were dropped. This was most likely due to being in a circuit with the Quakertown church. The assigned preacher would take the pulpit in Quakertown on Sunday mornings then head down to Hatfield after lunch. Who wants to go to church at 2:30 on Sunday afternoon? The church dwindled.

A record book of money collected and received stops in March 1908. What happened after that? Oral history says nothing was happening with this congregation for many years. However, an article in the 23 May 1908 issue of the Hatfield Times reported that a special day of services would be held on Sunday, May 24 (1908) with a 9:30 am and 2 pm service, a praise meeting at 7 o'clock, and preaching at 7:30. Feet washing and communion would be observed at 3 o'clock. The services were to be in the charge of Presiding Elder H B Musselman. This is a description of a quarterly conference meeting, not a regular Sunday schedule.

In 1910 the pulpit was supplied by the Gospel Herald Society. This was a group of men who did street preaching, colportage work (sold religious literature), and started churches. In the Thursday, 12 January 1911 issue of the Hatfield Times, this notice appeared: "The Mennonite Church, at Hatfield, which for the last year was supplied by workers of the Gospel Herald Society... was last week transferred to the Quakertown Quarterly Conference, and will in the future be supplied every Sunday afternoon and the second and fourth Sunday night by R L Woodring, pastor of the Quakertown charge." The statistical reports in the annual conference minutes show that Sunday school was no longer meeting.

Some reports in the Eastern Gospel Banner shed light on the Hatfield church's situation. In April 1917 the report read "Here we had a real good attendance by the small class and quite a number of outsiders." In the 29 November 1917 issue, R W Dickert, pastor, reports "we have had a series of evangelistic services at Hatfield, Pa., which were owned of the Lord. Many strangers were in attendance every evening to hear the word of God preached..." In April of 1918 it is said of Hatfield that "this is only a small class." In 1919 attempts were made to start a work in Souderton by holding protracted services (1 May 1919 Eastern Gospel Banner). Did this hurt attendance at the Hatfield church?

A survey of attendance statistics in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Conference yearbooks reveals the sad situation of the Hatfield congregation. The number of members of the congregation stayed below fifteen. Finally, at the October 1922 conference, one member of the church was dropped while the remaining 11 were transferred, most likely to Quakertown who received 15 members by transfer that year. Not only that but the church property at Hatfield went under the control of the board of trustees of the Quakertown church (1922 yearbook, p26). From 1922 up to and including 1933 the Hatfield church was in the list of churches in the statistical reports but without any entries. You might say they "flat lined." The building, however, was not idle but was put to use for the public school of Hatfield for one year, the school year of 1921-1922.

In 1923 attempts were made to revitalize the work in Hatfield. Preaching services were held every Friday night at 7:45 by Rev W F Heffner from the Quakertown church, according to a notice in the Thursday, 3 May 1923 issue of the Hatfield times. In November of the same year Heffner opened the church on Wednesday nights for preaching services. Was this instead of or in addition to the Friday night services? Also noteworthy is that 1904 was the last time the assigned preacher lived in Hatfield.

Finally, in the statistical reports in the 1934 yearbook, Hatfield was listed with entries. There were 14 members, 239 sermons preached, 97 pastoral visits, etc. There was information on the Sunday school also. Most important, the preacher assigned to the Quakertown-Hatfield circuit was now living in Hatfield instead of Quakertown. That

preacher was Elvin H Musselman, grandson of the Hatfield church's co-founder Tobias Oberholtzer. In addition to living in the community, he had a personal interest in the church's growth. The church continued to grow after that.

The following year, 1935, the church received 26 new members into the church fellowship plus ten more by transfer from another church for a total increase of 36. There were now 50 members of the church. The congregation continued to grow for many years after. One of the new members was Daniel K Ziegler who would become a delegate to annual conference. He also served on several conference committees. Daniel K Ziegler was the father of Daniel G Ziegler who would become a preacher in the denomination and later served as Director of Church Extension.

By this time, the church was being called "Little Heaven" and had a reputation of being a little rowdy, though not in a bad sense. The congregation was rather vocal in their participation in the church service, responding to the preacher with an "AMEN!" Opportunities were offered for individuals to give a word of testimony, sharing how the Lord saved them or answered a prayer. Hymn singing would be enthusiastic. At prayer meetings, everyone would pray out loud at the same time. In the warm weather the windows of the church would be open, and any passers-by would hear all the clamor.

In 1936, because of growth in the church, a basement was dug out under the church. An automatic oil burner was installed in the basement, the heat radiating through a grate in the floor. Restrooms were installed also, to the relief of many. ("The Morning Call" of Allentown, Pa., 13 January 1936, page 15). Also in 1936 the Hatfield church was no longer in a circuit, no longer having to share a pastor with another congregation.

Some of the outreach activities of the church included conducting street services in Hatfield, much to the surprise and curiosity of the locals. Other street meetings were held in Sumneytown. The Daniel K Ziegler family participated in this. At the bottom of the hill there were rough and tumble men who were drinking. Sometimes things were thrown at these street evangelists.

Ernest W Bean served as the pastor from 1937-1942. According to his obituary in the 1987 Bible Fellowship Church yearbook, Bean was involved with a building program while he was pastor at Hatfield. This was the addition on the West side of the building that functioned as the overflow room. There was a folding wooden door that closed off this area when not needed. This overflow room was where the women met for foot washing at the Quarterly Conference meetings while the men used the main meeting room.

H K Kratz was the assigned pastor from the fall of 1943 until the fall of 1949. Kratz is remembered as a kind man with a concern for everyone. Having been born near Souderton he was somewhat local to Hatfield. The congregation of "Little Heaven"

recommended him for the ministry when he was a young man. He served as pastor for the Mennonite Brethren in Christ in several churches in Montgomery County and in the Lehigh Valley. His pastorate at the Hatfield church was at the end of his ministry, having come full circle.

During the 1940s, David Cassel and his wife began attending the church. Mr. Cassel owned a meat packing business which he later sold to the Clemens family. The business is now called Hatfield Quality Meats. David had been a preacher at the Hatfield Church of the Brethren. The rumor is that he prayed too long so was asked not to be the pastor at that church. Therefore, he attended the Hatfield Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church. He and his wife would bring their grandchildren, Alva and Carol Cassel. Mrs. Cassel kept her pocketbook stocked with things to keep her grandchildren occupied. Alva Cassel grew up to be a preacher in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, now called the Bible Fellowship Church.

Carol Cassel Foster remembers the Sunday school tradition of putting pennies in a bank when it was one's birthday, the number of pennies corresponding to the age of the person. A memorable man by the name of Nate Fetterolf had a birthday every month.

The Stanley Walter family attended Sunday school at Bethany, though Stanley himself did not attend. His wife Ruth would bring the children. If she missed a week, she would be there the following week with a new baby; she had 14 children in all. Ruth's daughter Emma remembered in the Sunday school opening exercises standing up to sing a song. She placed her Bible on her chair and placed her nickel for the offering on top of her Bible. When the song was done, she turned around to see her Bible on her chair, but the nickel was gone. The Walters had a farm on Cowpath Road and Township Line Road. Ruth frequently shared produce from her large garden with the pastor as part of her support of the pastor.

In 1949 about one third of the congregation, wanting to start a ministry in Lansdale, left and started Calvary Bible Church with John Greenleaf as their pastor. This congregation is now (2024) known as Calvary Baptist Church, located on Valley Forge Road near Sumneytown Pike. It was painful for the Hatfield church to see these people leave, however the Gospel is preached in more places.

The following year a parsonage was built for the church. Before this, the church rented a house for the pastor, first at 24 N Maple Ave and later at 70 W Lincoln Avenue. Both houses are in Hatfield Borough. The new parsonage at 75 W Broad Street was built on a lot adjoining the church property. It was completed in 1951 with the family of preacher W A Heffner as the first occupants. W A Heffner was the son of the earlier preacher W F Heffner.

A renovation project was also started in 1950: the installation of a new heating system, new hardwood floor, new pews, new bulletin board on the lawn of the church, and the

neon sign that reads "Jesus Saves." Sometimes the local people referred to the Hatfield church as "the Jesus saves church."

One of the outreach activities in the early 1950s was going to Memorial Park in Lansdale to show Billy Graham movies. Trucks from George Didden Greenhouse would haul chairs to the park for those films. One time they were rained out but were able to use the Masonic Hall. W A Heffner, pastor from 1950-1953 was energetic, organizing and leading these evangelistic endeavors. The youth group for teenagers was organized at this time.

In 1952 the creek behind Frick's meetinghouse on Orvilla Road was being used for baptisms. Ten-year-old Nancy Trumbore (now Brewer) was baptized there. The crowd that gathered included a beloved great-uncle, Sam Weierman. Sam was a rough character, a heavy drinker who would get into fights, a gambler, a chain smoker, and general tough guy. He attended the baptism because of his fondness for his great-niece. When the baptisms were finished, the crowd started to disperse. Sam spoke up and asked the preacher, W A Heffner, to baptize him. Heffner talked with him to be sure Sam understood that the baptism was a public testimony of one's personal faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, he did, he answered. Heffner reminded Sam that he was wearing a nice suit, did he really want to be baptized? Yes, he did; he did not care about the suit. So Sam Weierman was baptized then and there. He immediately gave up drinking, fighting, and gambling. He was a changed man.

In 1954 the current (2024) sanctuary was being built. Church member David N Cassel oversaw the building's construction. Church members William C Vache, Clyde H Snyder and Daniel K Ziegler were some of the men on the Building Committee. W A Heffner was the pastor when construction started but was assigned to another church before the building was complete. The building was dedicated in 1955 when A L Seifert was pastor. At that point the original building continued in usage as a chapel area for the junior department in Sunday School and for Sunday early evening Youth Group meetings. It was renamed Youth Chapel. Included in the construction of the new sanctuary was the installation of a baptistry. This was a new thing in the Bible Fellowship Church. No more creek or swimming pool baptisms!

The youth group in the 1950s enjoyed a tight fellowship. With about 25 in the group, they held a social every month and participated in evangelistic outreaches along with others in the church. A lot of pairing off ending with marriage came from this youth group.

In the early 1950s it was decided to adopt the name "Bethany," the full name of the church being Bethany Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church.

In 1959 the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Pennsylvania Conference officially changed their name to The Bible Fellowship Church. This change came after much reflection,

realizing they were no longer Mennonite and no longer Brethren in Christ, having made some changes to their doctrinal statement over the years. On February 20, 1960, the Hatfield congregation, "Little Heaven," officially changed their name to Bethany Bible Fellowship Church of Hatfield, Pennsylvania.

For several years in the 1960s Bethany entered a float in the Lansdale Mardi Gras parade that kicked off the Christmas season. This was a project of the Couples Fellowship Group.

The Borough of Hatfield bought a piece of land on Wayne Avenue next to the church on which to install a water tower for the town's water supply. On the water tower was one of the town's very loud fire sirens which was a big disruption during services. There was a dread of the siren sounding during a wedding but as far as is known, that never happened.

Another disruption of services occurred on summer Sunday nights from Hatfield Speedway, about ¼ mile away. "The roaring sounds of the racing cars and the clouds of red clay dust that would come billowing toward church more than once prompted the closing the windows on the side toward the racetrack!" (quote from Eleanor "Nell" Ziegler Ruch).

In the 1960s, if you didn't get to church on time, you didn't get a seat. In 1965 the church purchased an adjoining property for additional parking spaces and providing additional facilities.

March 2, 1966, was a memorable evening for those in attendance at prayer meeting at Bethany. Daniel K Ziegler, owner of George Didden Greenhouse, board member of the church, "mover and shaker" in the denomination, was speaking that night. He and his wife had returned from a three-week Wycliffe Jungle Tour trip to learn about Bible Translation work in Mexico. On this night Ziegler was giving a report on that trip when three minutes into his presentation he went pale and fell down dead! A powerful reminder to us that tomorrow is not guaranteed. We need to believe in Jesus to save us, securing us a home in heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me." John 14:6.

Russell Allen was the pastor from the fall of 1966 to the fall of 1967. After the Allen family left, the church made an addition to the parsonage. The Ronald Mahurin family lived in the "annex" (a house owned by the church, used for extra space) until the addition was complete. At the time, both the Allen family and the Mahurin family had 4 children each. (Melissa would be born while Ron Mahurin was pastor at Bethany). It became a point of friendly razzing between the two families. Dave Allen, son of pastor Russell Allen, declares that although the number in the families was the same, the Allen family was "bigger," being heftier people.

Ron Mahurin was the pastor from 1968 to 1977. One of the ministries during his pastorate was a ministry to the deaf community. This was led by Ken Crush who was very skilled at lip reading. The ministry began as interpreting the service to the deaf people but later became a totally separate service. At its peak, the group had 30-35 regular attenders.

In 1971 Bethany Bible Fellowship Church got a boost from the establishment of Biblical School of Theology (later called Biblical Theological Seminary) in the former Hatfield Joint Consolidated School building. Mrs. Grace MacRae, wife of BTS founding president Dr Allan A MacRae, taught a women's Bible class. During some of those years about 100 women attended. "Mrs MacRae was an exceptional Bible teacher, always providing understandable spiritual food for the seasoned Christian and simple enough for the one just new to faith." (Nell Ruch).

Because Bethany was so close to Biblical, many students became acquainted with the Bible Fellowship Church and became pastors in the BFC. Some of the faculty ministered in the BFC as pulpit supply preachers, interim pastors, and Bible conference speakers. Professor Robert Dunzweiler and family faithfully attended Bethany. Dunzweiler became known for his Bible teaching at Pinebrook Bible Conference. Professor Dr. Robert C Newman was a member of Bethany and served as an elder. In the early days of the seminary, Bethany BFC pastor Ron Mahurin was a frequent chapel speaker.

The men's Sunday school class met in the balcony in the sanctuary for many years. After a while, the balcony was closed off because it was thought it wasn't needed for use during the regular Sunday services.

John Herb was the pastor at Bethany from 1978 to 1987. During his pastorate, in 1980, the original building lost its "peak" in order to create classrooms in that space which would become the second floor. Adding a kitchen was included in the renovations. The fellowship hall was "maxed out" for space.

By 1970 the Bible Fellowship Church no longer assigned preachers to churches, a consequence being that churches were sometimes without a pastor for a time. Norman Jerome served as interim pastor in 1977 and 1978. David Brewer served as interim pastor in 1988 until 1990 when Howard N Wells became the pastor.

A ministry to internationals in the community was started by Howard Wells and others. Classes for ESL (English as a Second Language) were started. In addition to ESL classes, an International Community Day was held for several years. This event featured displays of cultural artifacts and foods from countries that are represented in Hatfield and the surrounding area. The event was held outdoors, with the purpose of informing people and to have a community presence.

In 1995 the Borough of Hatfield no longer used the water tower which was on Wayne Avenue next to the church property. The water tower was dismantled, and the property was sold to the church.

Another addition to the church building was the gym, also called The Family Life Center. This was added to the east side of the original building and dedicated in 2007, in memory of Lee Boyles in appreciation for his leadership in planning the facility. This building is used for many activities and events that are useful for the goals of the congregation.

The church also acquired two houses adjacent to the church property, one to the north and one to the east. The houses are currently rented out to Indian Creek Foundation for use as housing for special needs clients.

By 2004 growth in the church led to the hiring of Louis Curcio as youth director and assistant pastor. Lou started an Upward Basketball league which would run from December to March each winter and was for boys in 7th-9th grades (another local church ran the same program for boys up to 6th grade). The church hosted a Push the Rock basketball camp for one week every summer for boys and girls aged 8-14 years. A yearly 3-on-3 basketball tournament was held also. Curcio served until 2012 when he became the pastor of a church in New Jersey near his hometown.

Two years later Joel B Klase was hired as youth director and assistant. He served along with Howard Wells until 2019 when Howard retired. Joel then replaced Howard as pastor. Joel is the grandson of former pastor Ron Mahurin and now lives in the parsonage where his mother Laura spent some of her childhood.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected Bethany Bible Fellowship Church as it did other churches. Live streaming services began. The children's clubs and other activities were cancelled and have yet to restart. The Third Thursday program has been started as a fun program and get together for whoever is available during the day; various programs are presented. Home Fellowship Groups have resumed as has the Tuesday morning and Wednesday night prayer meetings. The Women's ministry has restarted which includes a "secret sister" exchange. A ministry for men is the KNOT groups: Knowing each other, Needing each other, Opening up to each other, and Trusting each other. These are groups of 3-4 men for encouragement and accountability.

In summary, frequent change of pastors and having the pastor live in another town hinders church growth. A church that has dwindled can be revitalized. Ministry programs come and go, but the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ remains the same.

Appendix A cemetery information

Appendix B list of preachers

Appendix C list of people from Bethany that went into full-time Christian work.

Appendix A Cemetery Information

Florence E. Benner 1903

Abraham S. Gehman 1900

Emma R. Gehman 1895

Jacob D. Kindig 1904

Mary A. Kindig 1896

I. Kindig

Samuel D. Oberholtzer 1886

Bertha M. Pierson 1935

Abraham D. Stover 1907

Martha Stover 1885

Emma Ruth 1895

John D. Yoder 1911

Lizzie F. Yoder 1894

Annie B. Yoder 1902

Appendix B List of Preachers

1880-1881 Jonas Musselman

1882-1883 Abel Strawn

1884-1885 Abraham Kauffman

1886 Abel Strawn

1887-1889 George A Campbell

1890 Joshua E Fidler

1891 A B Gehret

1892-1894 Milton A Zyner

1895	Sylvester B Knerr
1896-1897	George A Campbell
1898-1899	W K Ziegler
1900-1902	J C Roth
1903	W S Hottel
1904	R Bergstresser
1905-1906	L F Haas
1907	L F Haas/E E Kublic
1908	R L Woodring
1909-1910	Gospel Herald Society
1911-1913	Oswin S Hillegass
1914-1915	M W Ettinger
1916-1918	R W Dickert
1919-1924	W F Heffner
1925-1929	J B Layne
1930-1936	Elvin H Musselman
1937-1942	Ernest W Bean
1943-1949	H K Kratz
1950-1953	W A Heffner
1954-1959	A L Seifert
1960-1961	Carl C Cassel
1962-1965	C E Kirkwood
1966-1967	Russell T Allen
1968-1977	Ron C Mahurin
1978	Norman Jerome, interim for six months
1978-1987	J H Herb
1988	David Brewer, interim

1989-2003	Howard N Wells
2004-2011	Howard N Wells/L S Curcio
2012	Howard N Wells
2013-2018	Howard N Wells/Joel B Klase
2019-	Joel B Klase

Appendix C: people from Bethany that went into full-time or part-time Christian work

Allen, Daniel and Vonnie: pastor, evangelist, missionary in the BFC

Allen, David and Donna: pastor, executive director of the BFC

Baker, Bert: pastor in the BFC

Block, Maria: Colportage Work

Boyles, Lee: served on several Bible Fellowship Church boards

Cassel, Alva and Laura (Ziegler): pastor in the BFC

Gaerthe, Harriet: Gospel Worker Society

Grossman, Randall and Nancy: pastor in the BFC

Harris, Richard and Mary Jayne: pastor in the BFC

Kline, Richard: pastor in the BFC then for other churches

Kratz, Harvey K and wife: pastor in the BFC

Nilsson, Donal: taught at Pinebrook Junior College and Nyack College

Overpeck, Leon and Ruth: pastor in the BFC

Rawn, Olive: medical missionary from the BFC

Rawn, Raymond and Evelyn: worked at Pinebrook Bible Conference. Ray worked in the kitchen and maintenance; Evelyn was the cook.

Ritter, Ralph and Carolyn: pastor in the BFC

Ruch, Russell and Eleanor (Ziegler): assisted in church planting in Illinois and for the BFC

Schell, Glenn: Music minister in a Southern Baptist Church in Texas

Shinlever, Catherine (later Fairheller): matron at the Home for orphans and widows

Snyder, Carolyn: wife of pastor Ralph Ritter
Snyder, Clyde W and Carol (Ziegler): Pinebrook Junior College faculty and administration
Snyder, David: faculty at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI
Studenroth, John and Laura: Pastorate, collegiate ministry.
Venable, Janet Kreuzburg: overseas missionary with husband Fred
Weaber, Joan Emmerick: wife of pastor Harold Weaber
Wickstead, James and Barbara: pastor in the BFC
Ziegler, Daniel G and Jacqueline: pastor, Church Extension director in the BFC
Ziegler, Daniel K: member of the founding board of directors of Berean Bible School.

Sources:

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Johnson, Robert, 10 July 2024
Killian, Bonnie Bean, 22 July 2024
Klase, Joel, 2024
Knecht, Ronald, 16 June 2024
Moyer, Lester, 18 July 2024
Rawn, Raymond, 2024
Rawn, Evelyn, 2024
Ruch, Eleanor "Nell" Ziegler, multiple dates 2023-2024
Schoonover, Virginia, 2024
Sellers, Emma Walter, August 2023
Snyder, Carol Ziegler, 2024
Stevens, Larry, multiple dates

Walter, LeRoy, 4 July 2024

Vache, Doris, 2023

Books:

Allebach, David K., History of Hatfield, 1944. Reprinted in 1975 by the Hatfield community Bicentennial Commssion.

Bonekemper, Edward H. II, Ed. & Pub., Update 1976, Hatfield History (Township and Borough, 1742 – Incorporated – 1898). Hatfield, Pa., The Hatfield Community Bicentennial Commission, 1976.

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Hatfield Times

The Hatfield Invincible

Eastern Gospel Banner

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The Morning Call (Allentown, Pa newspaper)

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The diary of William Brunner Musselman for the year 1880

Little Heaven:

A History of
Bethany Bible Fellowship Church

1879
Hattfield August 14

We the undersigned subscribers
severally promise to pay the sum
severally annexed to our names
for the purpose of building an
Evangelical United ^{Methodist} Meeting
house for divine worship at
or near Hattfield Station in
Hattfield Township Montgomery
County Pennsylvania

Joel Rosenberger	x	2 00	00
Johann H. Bismolter	x	2 00	00
Oiver Rosenberger	x	1 00	00
Maria Lambert	x	5	00
Charles Lambert		10	00
Isaac Hankey		10	00
Matilda Baker	x	1	00
M. H. Houck	x	2	50
Jacob L. Hindig	x	1	00
Ernest Kieble		2	00
John H. Krupp	x	10	00
William Delp	x	2	00
Philip Boyer		1	00
Jesse B. Diki		5	00

Joel Rosenberger

Tobias Oberholtzer

January

Sunday, 4

1880

Was in Hatfield
at the depot for time
all day. Started to
go home from
depot No 4 at
3 o'clock, on Monday
morning.

Monday, 5

Hatfield Mennonite Brethren in Christ





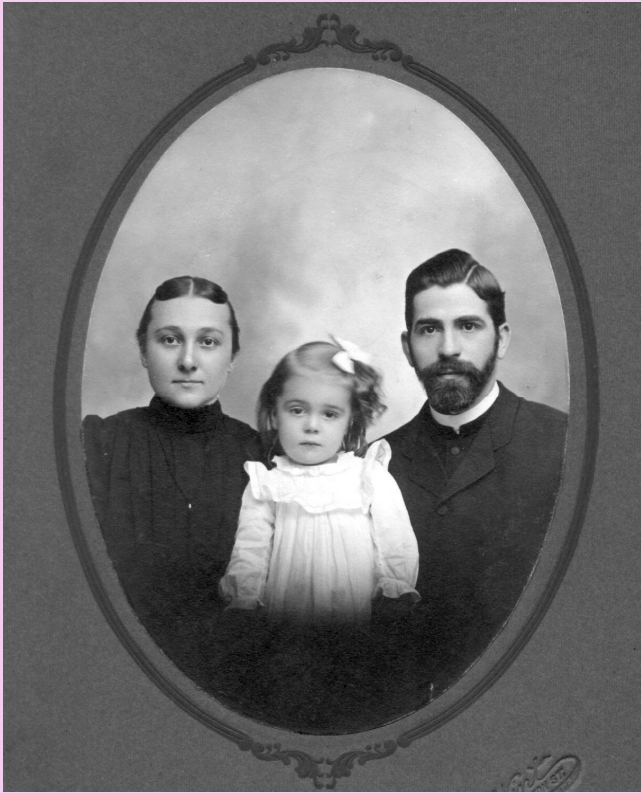
Nell Ruch on Chestnut Street near the railroad bridge





Cemetery of Bethany Bible Fellowship Church

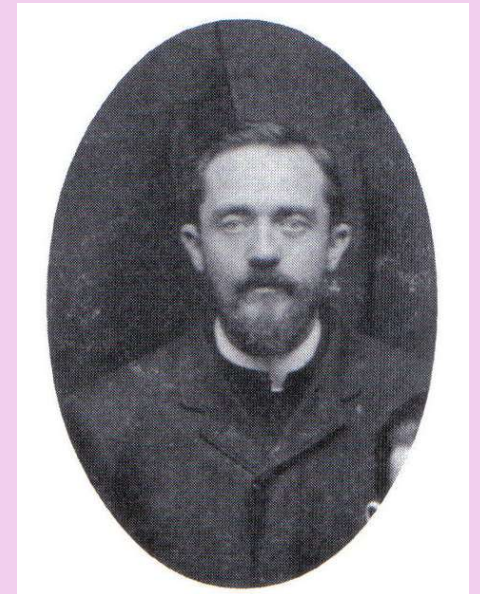




J C Roth



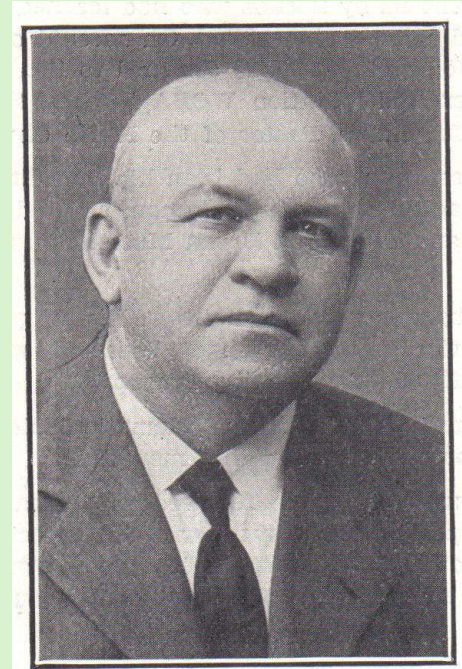
W S Hottel



R Bergstressor



E E Kublic



R L Woodring

M. B. C. Church Notes.

The Mennonite Brethren in Carlisle will have a special day in the church at Hatfield, Pa., next Sunday May 24. Services 9:30 a. m. and 2 o'clock p. m. Praise meeting at 7 o'clock and preaching at 7:30 o'clock in the evening. The ordinance of Feet Washing according to St. John 13, and communion will be observed at 3 o'clock p. m. The services will be in charge of Presiding Elder, H. B. Musselman of the Bethlehem District, Bethlehem, Pa. A glorious time is expected and everybody is heartily invited to come and bring their friends along. E. E. Kublic, pastor.

23 May 1908
Hatfield Times

Gospel
Herald
Society





R W Dickert

W F Heffner



Elvin H Musselman



The church, originally known as "Little Heaven" is but a small chapel type of church, and the fast growth of the membership of the church made it necessary for the addition. Rev. E. H. Musselman had formerly been pastor of the Grace Mennonite church at Quakertown and is a cousin of Radio Pastor Rev. B. Bryan Musselman of Allentown.



E W Bean



H K Kratz



Alva
Cassel



Walter family



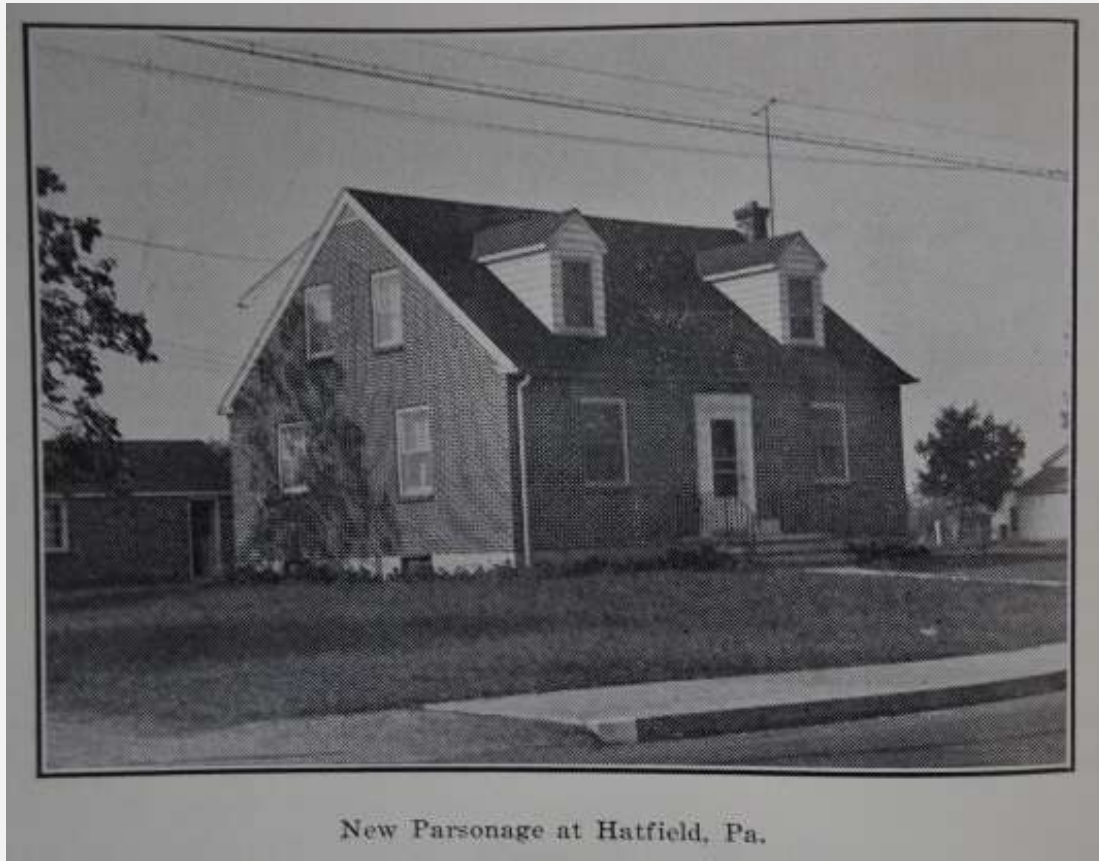
24 N Maple Ave



70 W Lincoln Ave



75 W Broad St



New Parsonage at Hatfield, Pa.

1950



2024

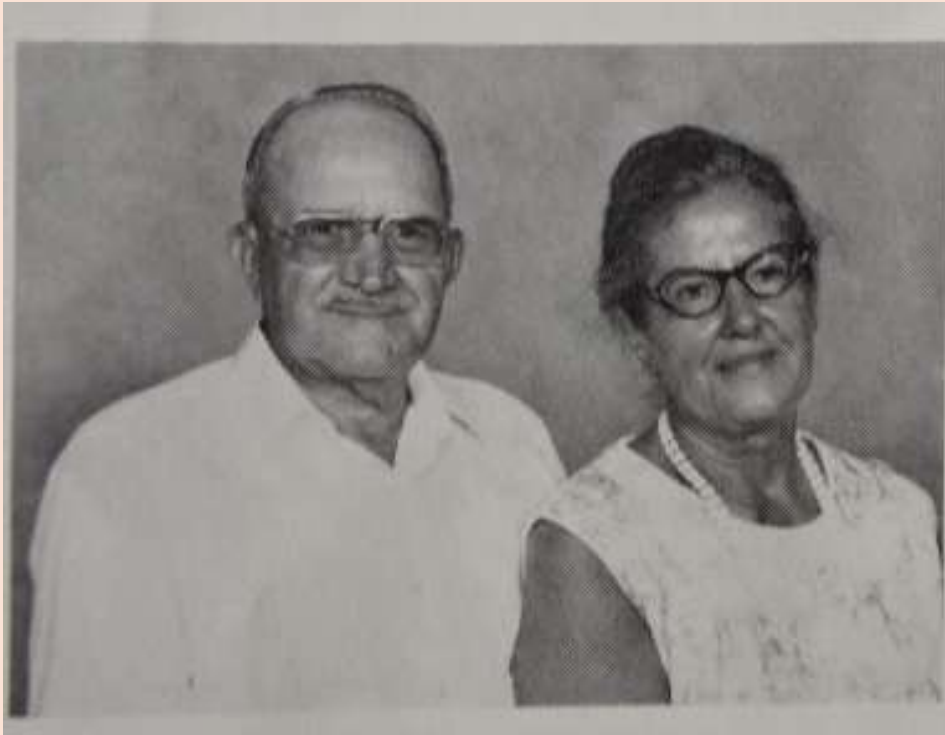
W A Heffner



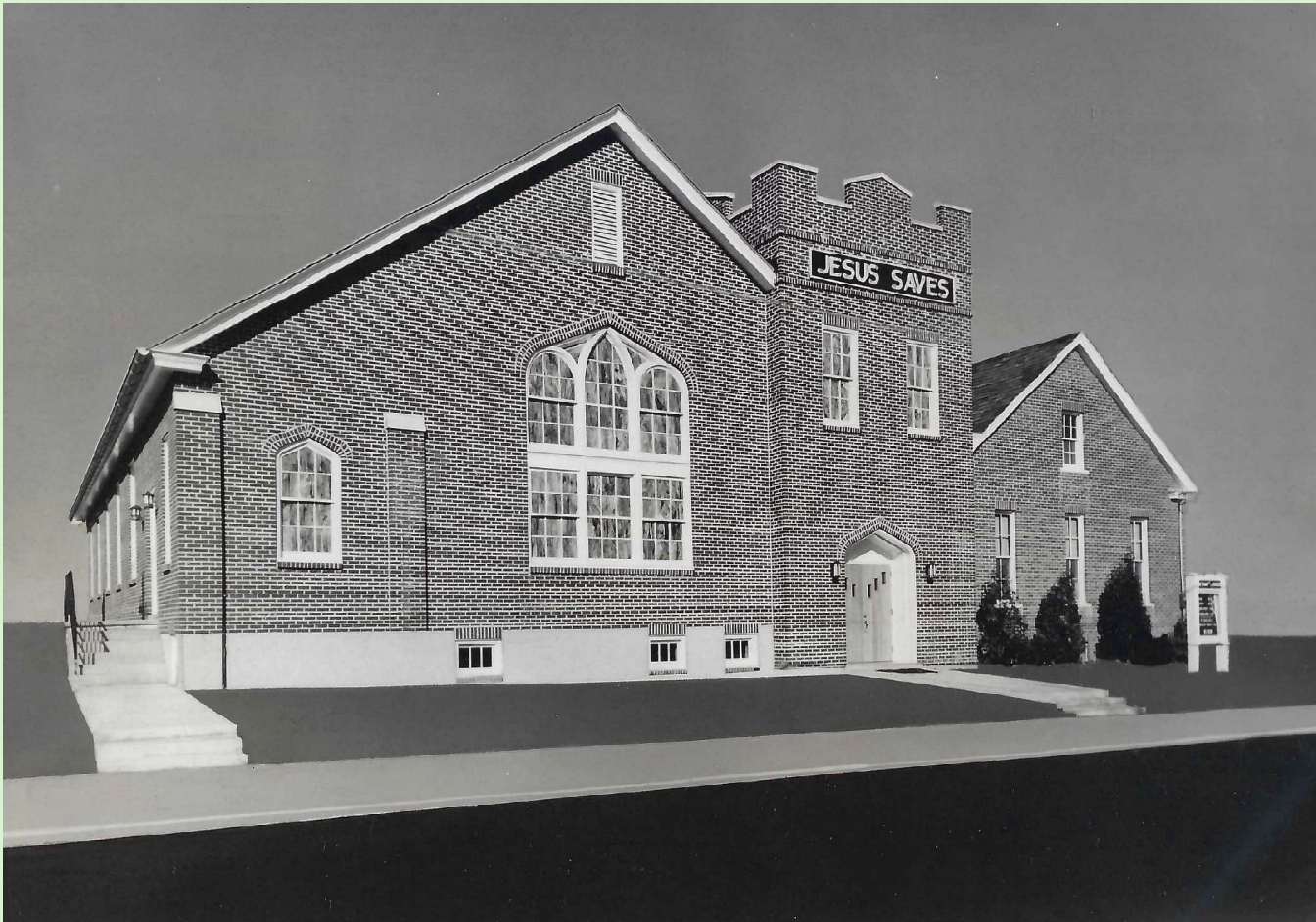


Nell Ruch at
Creek behind
Frick's meetinghouse

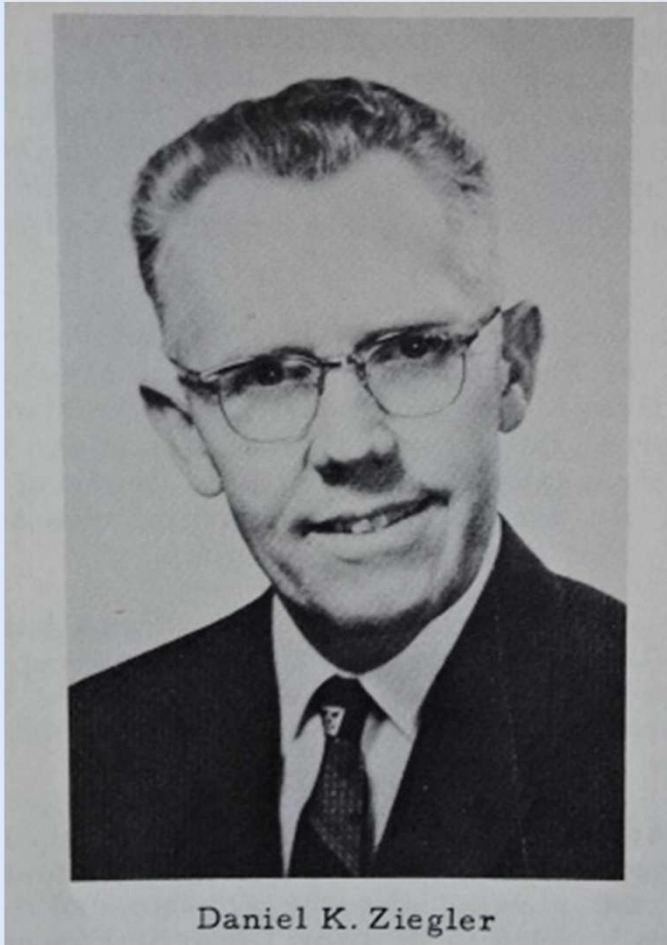




WEIERMAN
Sam P.
Martha



1955

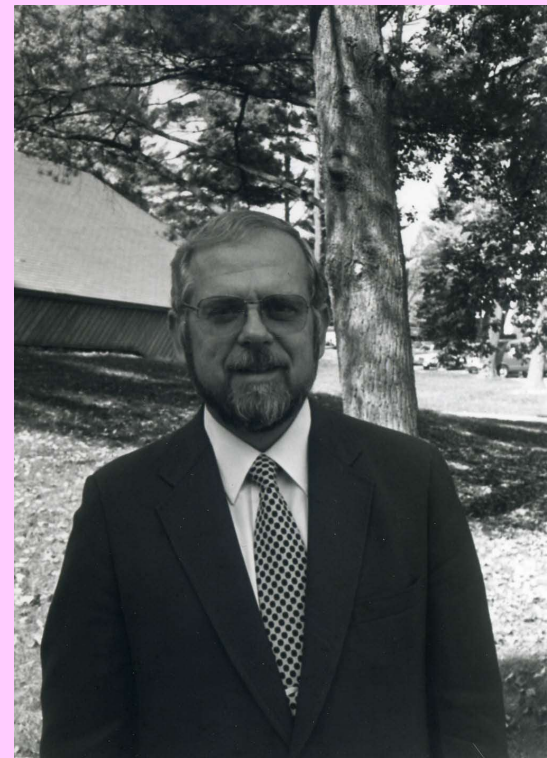


Daniel K Ziegler

Russ Allen



Ron Mahurin



Biblical Theological Seminary

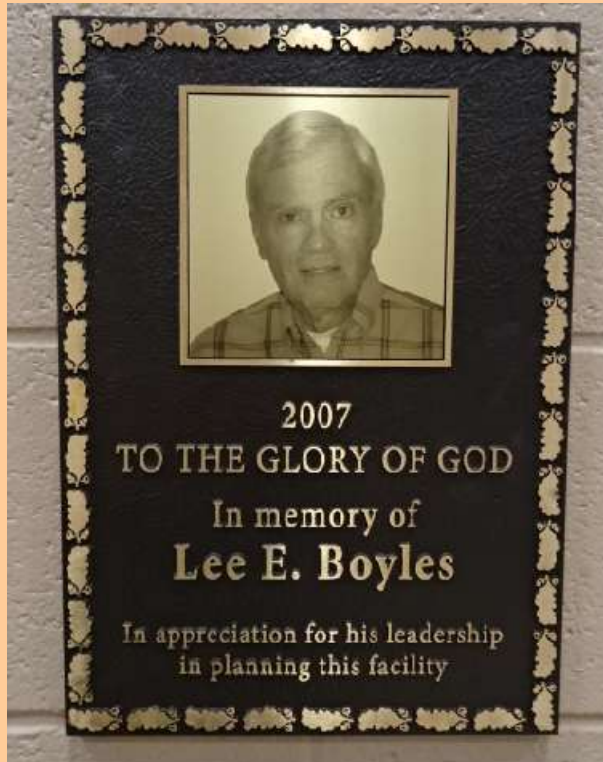


John Herb





Howard Wells



Joel
Klase

