

Berensford - 50 - 56

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Berensford in the 50's was a S.D. town of about 1500 population located on Hwy 77 between Sioux Falls SD & Sioux City Iowa. It lay on the western boundary of some of America's most productive farm land.

Amongst its inhabitants were a good number of folk of Scandinavian ancestry - Nor. & Sw.

It was amongst the Sw. settlers that the Brooklyn Engr Co was formed, Brooklyn being the township, named after the N.Y. Brooklyn. The congregation was formed of hard working farmers, conservative in all aspects of life, including their religious and political convictions. There were the usual churches in the community: ^{and the} Methodist, Congre, Lutheran, and a small Pentecostal group. Brooklyn Church was located 3 miles SW of town. The building, built in the 1820's was of red brick, a typical church building of the time with the cemetery on two or three acres to the north of the church. Berensford was a town of church going people. Few of its inhabitants were not related to one of the community churches.

Our stay as a family in Berensford was to last five years. One of the characteristics of the Berensford Brooklyn-

church during those years was the splendid group of young people in the church amongst whom our family felt so very comfortable. Our parsonage was in town, ~~a fine room~~ house. It was not a large town, but adequate for us at the time with five rooms on the ground floor and two bedrooms and a half bath on the upper floor.

One of the former pastors, Rev. Milton D. Nelson, had furnished off a room in the basement area to be used as a class room. It was here that we met our weekly catechism classes during the winter season. Also it was a place of meeting for our weekly "Recreation Time" classes. The public school system allowed its high school students one hour per week of school time for religious instruction. We usually met between eleven & twelve on a midweek day. Our classes ranged between twenty and ~~forty~~³⁰ and served not only to afford an opportunity for religious teaching, but also provided an hour of good companionship for the young people. They were always a closely knit group.

While still in Oakland, I had completed class work at BBDS for a master's degree in Theology. One more requirement concerned the writing of the thesis which I did in Berea, writing a history of the Brooklyn Church. It was published by the church for their 75th Anniversary, and later revised for the centennial of the church.

Berea days were days when our family matured in so many ways. Farm life was new to us and the boys particularly appreciated exposure to country living. Employment on the farms was open to them. Here the children learned to drive an automobile. Food in Berea was the best. The church provided a locker in the local cold storage and it was never empty. Eggs and other produce were provided by the ladies of the church. The schools were adequate and the children were given a good education and a good introduction to High School.

The congregation of Brooklyn church was most faithful. We preached Sunday after Sunday to a full church and a good spirit prevailed in the services. The ladies group in the church was very active meeting

regularly. The pastor was always expected to bring a devotional message at these gatherings. We initiated a Mini-Yellowtip meeting once a month, a gathering that still continues as a group within the church. It seemed as though there was always an open door for the preaching of God's word. The Ministry, the things of the church, the attitude toward sacred things was one of respect throughout the community. When the fields would descend from their tractors, removed their caps, and stand at attention when a funeral procession passed within sight. Wednesday night was church night in the community. No school events were scheduled then.

It was in the mid fifties that I was offered a place on the faculty of Trinity Seminary in Chicago. It was the Seminary of an EFC with Dr. Wilbur B. Horton as president at the time. The salary would be \$700 per mo. I had had a great desire to teach but somehow could not find the inner peace about going to Trinity. For two or three months I pondered the proposition but I could not go. As I now look back over the incident I cannot be sure that it was not

in God's plan - Later, when we were securing
the church in Oak Lawn, I taught part time
at Trinity for two or three years. Then
came the ~~new~~ administration with
Dr. Kantze replacing Dr. Dutton and it meant
a completely new administration.

The years at Brooklyn were good years
for us and our family. But as we approached
our fifth year and a call came to serve
the Third Church in Chicago, a restless spirit
came over me and we resigned from
Brooklyn. Somehow a listlessness had come over
me and a new challenge was needed. The
pillar and cloud were moving on.

Elim - Oak Lawn, Ill.

The Elim EFC. had been long established at 78th and Indiana Sts. on Chicago's south side. It had been a stable community but the area was changing with the influx of the black population which was eventually to become the dominant ethnic group on Chicago's south side. As a consequence the white population began to desert the area. Elim EFC found its members migrating southward and westward. The congregation could not continue to exist unless it secured property elsewhere to which its people had access.

In 1957 Elim had been pastorless for a year or so. Property had been purchased at 100th St. + Kostner in Oak Lawn. The property at 78th + Indiana was put on the market and sold to an African Methodist group, a splintered group of black Christians who were to maintain a strong evangelical church on that corner up to the present time. The Elim congregation, having yet no building, met for worship in the McDonald school house which facilities were rented from the local school district. (99th + Kostner)

Accepting the call to become pastor of the Elim congregation, we arrived in Oak

Lawn in September of 1957. A lovely farmhouse located at 4639 92nd St. was to be our home for the 13 1/2 years we were to serve the church. It was, what was called a house of Georgian architecture, completely adequate for our family with three bedrooms on the upper floor. It has seemed that tho we did not own a home while in the active ministry, we were always provided with adequate living quarters in each of our pastures.

We used the school house facilities for worship for a year and a half when our new building became ready for use. The building was dedicated _____ with the usual festivities. One very happy part of the events of dedication Sunday was the evening service when twenty-five were baptized, professing their faith in Christ - many of them being new Christians. The blessing of God seemed to rest upon the congregation for the very beginning of our work in Oak Lawn. The A. S. professed worship services were such as to fill the church within five years of dedicating the building. The African Church who had purchased the property in Chicago faithfully

met their financial commitments. In five years Elim was free of debt.

The work continued under our ministry until 1970 when we felt constrained to accept the call to pastor The B.F.C. of Seattle, WA. Elim was a well organized church. The leadership of the church was both dedicated and competent. No controversies threatened to divide the congregation. It was always a habit for the ~~same~~ officers or committee members to greet each other with a hand shake after each meeting. None left without a hand shake from each other.

Several good musicians were members of the congregation so that the music at the services was always of the best quality. The VAS conducted by the ~~Int.~~ Chr. Ed department were always a high lite of the summer season. The schools were well attended and of two weeks duration. Elim had good fellowship with other churches in the community so that several cooperative ventures brought members from the various churches together for mutual blessing. One year a united choir sang the Messiah. Lenten services were shared.

When we had been at Elin for several years, the church graciously gave us a world trip. wherein we visited all of our Free Church mission fields except the South American areas. Paul was in Shona with the Peace Corps at the time and we spent a few days with him and his colleagues as our first stop on the way. Congo was experiencing its revolution at the time but we experienced only minor inconveniences as we visited with Doni Anderson, one of our Elin girls, and her co-workers in what is now Zaire. From Africa we flew to Germany, spending a couple days with the David Heinrichs there. We took a week to visit the Holy Land.

A couple at Elin ^{with} whom ~~had~~ ~~met~~ ~~on~~ ~~a~~ ~~great~~ ~~deal~~ ~~of~~ ~~years~~ we had a gracious relationship was the ~~George~~ ~~George~~ and Grace Walker. It was their initiative which encouraged the church to send us on our missions trip. They made the same trip only in reverse order, meeting us in the Holy Land where we shared the week with them.

In the Holy Land we experienced a week such as none other in our lives.

We stayed at the New YMCA Hotel, close up by the Mandelbaum Gate. Jerusalem was at that time still a divided city. Deep emotions gripped us as we visited the Mt of Olives, - the temple area, the washing well - Most of all, the Garden Tomb.

We had landed at Beerit, a most beautiful city before its present devastation. The Home of Orphan boys, a home for orphaned Arab boys was located there. The Ho of O. also had a home for children in Hong Kong. Mr. George Hedberg was ^{at} the head of the work, ~~so~~ a member of our Elion Church. He had so graciously arranged for us to visit the Home and to arrange for our hospitality by the workers of the Home. Mr. Klefsas was our host. One of the great thrills of our entire trip was to visit the ruins of Beal Back and to become acquainted with some Bedouin folk. We shared a cup of coffee with them ~~but~~ the strongest drink we have ever tasted.

On one of our last days in Israel, I ate a salad - something one should never do in the mid east or Orient. I felt sick and as we boarded a plane at Tel Aviv for the flight to Singapore, I

fell into a deep sleep which lasted for the next twenty-four hours.

The Orient — how shall we describe it? We were to live in the Orient for ten months but we did not know that at the time. We were cared for in Singapore by our missionary here, Mr. McManey. The usual tourist sights were fascinating, particularly the soldiers cemetery of so many soldiers and sailors who lost their lives in the Second World War. At one of our churches we saw an interesting baptismal facility — a large tank standing in the open beside the church where baptisms were performed out in the open. We were informed that the church itself was composed of several young families, all of them quite progressive, professional people.

~~The Philippines~~ Cebu in the Philippines is where our Free Church work was then located. We found the missionaries quite discouraged here. We did have the opportunity of sharing in the dedication of a piece of land where the church in Cebu had purchased for a camp ministry. We were impressed by the fine group of young folks

HK was our next stop, a city to which we were to return later.

The Japan field was an inspiration & we were limited to the Tokyo field area, tho there was missionary work being done in Kyoto and elsewhere. We met a good number of the younger set. They were so open, so anxious to practise their English, so intelligent and alert. I wonder where some of those promising young people are today and if they are the strong leaders in the church in Japan that they ~~prom~~ should promise of being.