

CHURCH MEMORIES

August 12, 1909. A day that will live forever in the history of the Monarch Reformed church, for on that day sixty years ago the church was organized.

Sixty years is a long time in the life of any organization. For an individual it means almost a life span. For a community it means several generations, and for our country it almost takes us back to the settlement of the West. For the dominion of Canada it means the first church of this denomination within it's boundaries. For classis Cascades it means more years than the age of itself. In fact the fiftieth anniversary of classis Cascades was celebrated right here in this church on October 2, 1962, when the Monarch church had already been in existence for fifty-three years.

Yes, sixty years is indeed a very long time, and many events, and changes can occur in such a period of time. Changes that effect not only the lives of the congregation, but also the way of life. It is pleasant to reminisce on some of the changes that have occurred throughout these years.

For instance when the church was first established, you can be sure that the intention of the members was to let its light shine, but the building was not lit up as it is now with an array of gleaming electric lights. Oh no! How well we remember the holders that were attached to the darkly varnished V-joint walls. In these holders one could place the smoky coal oil lamps after they were properly trimmed and serviced with oil. These lamps would then offer a degree of light so that one could, with a good deal of effort, see enough to read the hymnal. This was the illumination for many years, and then came the invention of the gas lamp. The Monarch church (never backward when it came to a good thing) decided that this form of lighting must be installed at once and not to be outdone it was decided to have no less than four lights in the auditorium and two in the consistory room at the back. Accordingly a supply tank that would store some five gallons of fuel was installed outside the consistory room, on the west side of the church. From this tank a supply line was installed to service all the lamps from this one source of fuel.

Church Memories - 2

I can assure you that this type of installation was considered the ultimate in efficiency for that day and age. In other words the best was none too good for the church. It took a great deal of pressure to keep this outfit operating efficiently and a huge pump located next to the tank outside, which could be held by the feet while both arms heaved the handle up and down, was also part of the equipment. And if the evening was somewhat long, or if the sermon dragged, it did happen that the pressure would drop, sometimes to such a degree that one could no longer distinguish the words in the hymnal. Consequently one of the husky and obliging young males of the audience would then go outside and after a vigorous application of muscle power to the pump, the lights would once again take on a bright appearance.

Another convenience of the present day, and I am referring to our automatic gas furnace, was not always with us you may be sure. How well we remember the old potbellied stove which graced the very centre of the auditorium, so that its radiance could penetrate to the farthest corner, and do it most efficiently. It must be truthfully stated here however that this monster had a nasty habit of scorching those who sat in its immediate proximity, while those who arrived late on a really cold day would just have to sit and shiver during the service. Of course if the minister had a real hot sermon, most everyone was kept in a warm glow! This huge relic of the iron age could absorb coal at the rate of about a hundred pounds at a time and woe betide the janitor when the weather got really cold because that meant he must be in church at about eight o'clock in the morning and fire coal constantly to have some semblance of heat for the regular service.

Today we look about and see the floors covered with linoleum and carpeting but many members will remember all the years when the floors were nothing but wooden boards. The janitor, to keep them looking nice, would give them a good soaking with so-called floor oil. What this mess consisted of I do not know, but oh boy if the stuff was applied a little too generously. You could easily slide half way into church because of the slippery surface. (A remedy perhaps for back-sliders?) And if you were unfortunate enough to get some of it on

Church Memories - 3

your clothes, there was no cleaning process in the world that could remove it. Of course they had no FAB or RINSO in those days.

Also today we sing to the accompaniment of a modern electronic marvel, consisting of tubes, transistors, buttons and what have you, but again this was not always so. How well some of us remember the old wheezy asthmatic organ. While it did serve its purpose, the organist sometimes must have heaved a sigh of relief when he or she finished an especially long hymn or Psalm and could once again relax their feet from the heavy chore of keeping air in the leaky bellows. There were also other problems such as when an enterprising mouse decided to set up housekeeping in the church organ. On the following Sunday the organist heard a strange noise emanating from the bottom of the instrument. When she took a good look at the peddles which she was busily manipulating up and down at that moment, she almost fainted for right at her feet were a bunch of mice trying to make their escape. (It would seem they did not appreciate the good music.) Only a stout heart and great courage kept the music going to the bitter end.

Then we had the long handled offering bags, which were used to take up the collection for so many years. I'm sure if the deacons would use this method for just one Sunday today, our younger generation would think they had lost their marbles for sure. And yet it had an air of secrecy that obeyed the Biblical injunction to "keep your alms before God."

Yes, there are many things that have changed over the years. Some good, others not so good. At one time the church in the community was everything. It was the centre of all the activities in the district. How wonderful were the choir practices and the band practices. Sometimes the visitors would outnumber the members of these organizations. You see, during the intermission it was such a good time to discuss everything from politics to the price of eggs. Also many romances blossomed here and some ripened into happy, lifetime marriages.

One is also reminded of the many happy hours that were spent in the church on festive occasions. We think especially of the Christmas concerts that lasted throughout the entire day. We remember the telling of the Christmas story to the very young and (while they would probably not want to admit it) the rapturous attention that was given by the older folks also. We must not forget the church picnics at the river bottom. Again these lasted all day and how we looked forward for a long time for this day and its togetherness. People had so little in the way of entertainment that they appreciated so much more the opportunity of spending times like these.

And so we could go on and on. It seems that the good old days bring back nostalgic memories, but we also appreciate the modern conveniences of the present day. In the past our ministers had a horse and buggy to make their calls. Today he uses the modern methods of transportation such as a Cadillac.

And so we see that many of these humorous sidelights have occurred throughout the years. But while they are amusing, they are not the important part of the church. The object of the church - to stand fast in the faith, has been kept. We see each generation, though sometimes ridiculed, holding on to that which their parents have taught them. This is to serve God and be a part of his kingdom. Sometimes it is done in weakness, but sometimes in great strength. The church has had many enthusiastic members and workers over the years. To be specific, or to mention individual names, would take up an entire evening and then some. There have also been different organizations that have worked hard and long in the life of this church. Many of these workers have now gone to their reward. They have become a part of the harvest of God's garden. A new generation has sprung up and these are now growing in the garden of God.

The Monarch church is only a very tiny part of this huge garden, and while it does not always yield a rich harvest, as every farmer knows each and every crop that is grown is necessary to carry him through. And

Church Memories - 5

so it is in God's plan. Every church and every individual is important in His eyes. So in closing may I read this little poem entitled "God's Garden"? Somehow it seems to fit the occasion.

GOD'S GARDEN

You may not see Him but He's there;
No flower lacks His tender care.
Some grow in sun or shadows dim
But every bud is known to Him.

He smiles upon the strong of heart,
Or kneels to give some bud a start.
He tends the weak and knows their needs;
He even blesses ragged weeds.

Earth is God's Garden, row on row,
Where mortal flowers come and go.
And every race - in every land -
Is tended by His gentle hand.

History Committee:

J. Dekker

L. Stotyn

J. Warmink