

R-095

History of United Church of Christ, Campbellsport

Entered on Computer by Melanie Gildemeister, October 2006

History of the Campbellsport Reformed Church (Compiled by Rev. Gilbert O. Wernecke)

“They who live in history on seemed to walk the earth again.” The circumstances which led our forefathers to organize a congregation of the Reformed faith are not recorded in the records of the congregation: these circumstances have been described to us by those who heard about it from their parents and grandparents.

A number of German and Swiss emigrants had settled in and about the village of New Cassel: some of these had received their religious training in the Lutheran and others in the Reformed faith. They had brought with them from their home land the longing desire to unite in congregations and build churches and dedicate altars where God could be worshipped according to the faith of their fathers and their own belief. For some time it appeared difficult for the people to decide whether to organize a Lutheran or Reformed congregation. It was finally decided to organize the German Evangelical Reformed New Cassel congregation. Several families of Lutheran faith affiliated with the congregation and consequently the members of the congregation have always had a kindly feeling toward the Lutherans, as also to those of other faiths. Before the congregation was organized, Rev. Accola, then Pastor of the Zwingli Reformed Church of Ashford (now Elmore) conducted occasional worship services in the homes of the people.

It was in 1867 when the Rev. J. F. Vergens succeeded Rev. Accola as Pastor of the Zwingli Reformed Church: under his leadership worship services were regularly conducted in the District School house at New Cassel. On July 26, 1868 twenty-seven men met at the school house and organized “The German Evangelical Reformed Congregation of New Cassel.” The desire to build a house of worship was immediately carried out, and late in the fall of 1868 the congregation rejoiced in dedicating a building to the Service of God. This building was the substantial construction of which you find a picture on these pages and served as a sanctuary for the congregation until January 1932. The Church measured 34x50: the approximate cost was three thousand dollars; this sum does not include the labor which the members of the congregation unselfishly donated. According to the records of the congregation, Mr. M. Findeisen donated the lots on which

our old church was located. Among the founders of the congregation appear some familiar names: Peter Johann, president; A. Holzhauer, secretary; David Gudex, Jacob Terlinden, Martin Knickel, trustees; Peter Johann and P. Gaul, Elders; F. Dickman and C. Steinecke, Deacons.

The congregation united with the Zwingli congregation of Ashford into one charge and was served by the Rev. J. F. Vergens until 1874. From 1874 to 1883 Rev. J. C. Huecker was the pastor. On July 1, 1883 Rev. J. C. Huecker preached his farewell sermon, and on July 2 a cyclone demolished the steeple and roof of the church. The roof was repaired but the steeple was not restored until some years later.

Rev. S. Elliker then became pastor of the congregation, 1883 to 1886. It was during this period that the congregation became independent of the Zwingli congregation. In 1887 Student Rucklin, a recent emigrant from Switzerland, was called to the pastorate of the congregation. Because of his peculiar views of baptism disharmony resulted, and after a few months the congregation was again without a pastor. Rev. H. Rusterholz, then pastor of the Ashford (Elmore) church served the congregation until 1888.

In the fall of 1888 Rev. J. C. Huecker, who had formerly served the congregation, was invited to the pastorate. After he had accepted the call the congregation acquired the present parsonage for the sum of One Thousand and Three Hundred dollars. In 1892 the congregation again erected the steeple on the church building: during this same year the Ladies Aid society was organized. In 1893 the Ladies' Aid Society purchased a church bell weighing 1433 pounds at a cost of two hundred and seventy dollars: this bell is now in use in the belfry of our new church. On August 27, 1893, the congregation observed its twenty-fifth anniversary.

Rev. Huecker served the congregation until 1906: his successor was Rev. Calvin M. Zenk, serving from 1906 to 1908. During Rev. Zenk's pastorate several changes were made in the church: The Ladies' Aid Society had a hardwood floor placed into the church: envelopes for contributions were given to those who so desired. The first service in the English Language, according to records was held on August 11, 1907. Catechical Instruction was in both the German and the English language: a Young People's Society was organized. During Rev. Zenk's brief pastorate the number of accessions to the church was very encouraging.

In November 1908 the Rev. William Landsiedel was called as pastor of the congregation. For a few years the question of securing another parsonage was considered, but it was finally decided to renovate the present parsonage. A telephone and electric lights were installed: the pastor's salary was increased from Five hundred dollars to Seven hundred dollars a year. According to the minutes of the congregation a Building Fund was started in 1910.

In the fall of 1913, after the Rev. Landsiedel had resigned, Rev. William became pastor of the congregation. It was in 1917 when action was taken to have an occasional service in the English language. In 1920 the furnace was installed in the parsonage. Rev.

Zenk also served the Filmore Reformed Church: for several years he was Professor of Music at the Mission House College and regularly spent several days of the week at the Mission House. In the spring of 1927 Rev. William Zenk was called to the Church Triumphant. The widow with her children continued to live in the parsonage until another minister was called.

Rev. John Scheib served as pastor from 1927 to 1930. In 1929 the Women's Missionary Society and the Girls Missionary Guild were organized. The Every Member Canvass and Duplex Envelope System were introduced. During Rev. Scheib's pastorate the congregation voted to use the German language at one service during the month, all other services were conducted in the English language.

The present pastorate began in August 1930. The Comrades, a society for the Young People, was organized in the fall of 1930. The hope of a better equipped church building was renewed when a Building Fund was started in January 1931. During 1931 the Constitution of the congregation was translated and revised: the name of the congregation was changed to "The Campbellsport Reformed Church." At a special meeting of the congregation in December 1931, the Trustees were authorized to sell the lots on which our old church was located to the Sisters of St. Francis, St. Joseph's Convent, for the sum of Six thousand dollars. On Sunday, January 24, 1932, a farewell service was held in the old church, and since that time the congregation worshipped in the Methodist Episcopal Church of Campbellsport. The congregation is greatly indebted to the Methodist congregation for the hospitality they accorded us during the past months. At a meeting of the congregation the Building Committee was instructed to secure plans for a building of brick construction costing between Ten and Twelve thousand dollars. The plans for such a structure were almost completed when financial difficulties compelled us to delay building operations. For a few months discouragements came on after the other: but the longing desire to build a house of worship and the faith in Almighty God urged us on: new hope and new courage was kindled and in July plans were completed for the erection of a frame building costing approximately Eight thousand dollars. Clarence Jahn of Milwaukee was employed for the architectural work. The New London Construction Company secured the bid to erect the building. The Corner Stone donated by the Reinke Monumental Works of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, was laid in the presence of several hundred people on Sunday, August 21, 1932, with the Rev. Henry C. Nott, D.D., president of Milwaukee Classis, as the Speaker. Today, November 20, 1932, we are dedicating this new building to the service and worship of the Triune God.

A Brief History of the Campbellsport Reformed Church Evangelical and Reformed

Since most of our members still have in their homes a Dedication Program of 1932 in which is found a detailed history of our congregation compiled by the late Rev.

Gilbert Wernecke, then pastor of this church, we did not deem it necessary to repeat what already has been so ably stated.

Our congregation was founded by German and Swiss emigrants who established their homes in and near the village of New Cassel, the present Campbellsport. Occasional worship services were at first conducted in the homes of these new settlers by the Rev. Accola, then pastor of the Reformed Church at Ashford, now Elmore. The Rev. J. F. Vergenz, who succeeded pastor Accola, conducted the first regular worship services in the District School House in New Cassel. This was in the year 1867. In the following year, 1868, July 26th, twenty-seven men assembled in the same school house and organized: "The German Evangelical Reformed Church." A house of worship, substantial in construction and costing about Three Thousand dollars, was built the same summer and dedicated in the fall of 1868. The old church stood where the present St. Joseph's Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis is located. The original lots were donated by Mr. M. Findeisen. The men who formed the first consistory were: Peter Johan, President; A. Holzhauer, Secretary; David Gudex, Jacob Terlinden, Martin Knickel, Trustees; Peter Johann and P. Gaul, Elders; F. Dickman and C. Steinecke, Deacons. Originally the congregation was united with the Elmore Reformed Church under the pastorate of Rev. J. C. Vergenz until 1874. The next pastor was the Rev. J. C. Huecker who served from 1874-1883.

During the pastorate of Rev. S. Elliker, 1883-1886, the congregation became independent of the Elmore church and was served only for a short time in 1887 by Rev. Rucklin, a native Swiss who left the same year because of the doctrinal differences between him and his flock. Pastor H. Rusterholz, then minister at Elmore, shepherded the Campbellsport people until 1888 when the congregation called their former pastor, the Rev. J. C. Huecker. During his pastorate the old parsonage was bought for \$1300 dollars and the present Ladies Aid organized in the year 1892. This society was responsible for the buying of the church bell which still rings in our new church.

Rev. Huecker's pastorate ended in 1906 and his successor was Rev. Calvin M. Zenk. Under his leadership the first English service was held and confirmation instruction given in both English and German. The congregation then called for its next pastor, the Rev. William Landsiedel who served from 1908-1913. Plans for a new parsonage failed but the old manse was renovated and certain improvements were made.

After Pastor Landsiedel's resignation in 1913, Rev. Wm. Zenk became the minister of this congregation. He was endowed with fine musical talents and while serving as pastor here he also was Professor of Music in our Mission House College. He passed away unexpectedly in the spring of 1927. Rev. John Scheib became his successor from 1927-1930. It was during his stay that the W. M. S. was organized, the envelope system introduced, and the transition from the German language to the English completed.

The congregation then called for its next pastor, Rev. Gilbert O. Wernecke. Under his guidance the old church was sold to the Sisters of St. Joseph Convent for the

price of \$6,000.00. The last service in the old church was held on January 24, 1932. Plans for a new church were made immediately, and during the summer months of the same year the present church was erected at the cost of about Ten Thousand dollars. The dedication took place November 20th, 1932. The Building Committee consisted of the following brethren: Herbert Schloemer, President; John Terlinden and the members of the consistory, namely: Elders: Wm. Ferber, Wm. Geidel, Peter Senn, Sr.; Deacons: R.G. Buettner, Fred Schleif, Alfred Van De Zande, Wallace Krueger. (Mr. R.G. Buettner was treasurer of the Building Fund.)

Rev. Wernecke resigned in 1936 to accept a call from the Manitowoc, Wisconsin Reformed Church where he labored only until 1938 when his Lord called him home.

The present pastor, John Mohr, received his call in November 1936 and preached his first sermon on the first Sunday of December the same year. The remaining indebtedness on our new church was finally liquidated when during a morning service on November 21, 1937, the mortgage was burned.

It had long been felt that the old parsonage was not only located inconveniently but that it had served its days of usefulness and consequently was sold for \$1,700.00 in the spring of 1939. Alfred Van De Zande, Adolph Breymann, Herbert Schloemer, Marvin Barnes and R.G. Buettner constituted the Building Committee. On a pleasant Sunday afternoon, November 26, 1939, the new parsonage was dedicated. It is of pleasing colonial style and in its setting harmonized beautifully with our church building. The total cost was about \$6,200.00. It is hoped that the debt, originally \$3,500.00, will all be wiped out next year.

Last but not least we must not forget that when in the year 1939 the Elmore Reformed Church, by reason of a declining membership, (often the misfortune of small country churches) was forced to dissolve, more than 40 remaining members joined the Campbellsport congregation that same year. Thus the old Elmore Reformed Church, really the mother of our present congregation, has not ceased to exist but continues to live united with us again.

This brief history of the Campbellsport Reformed and Evangelical Church has dealt mainly with building, given short accounts of the 10 pastors who served in its 75 years of existence and showed how the old had to make room for the new. But a church is not only a place of worship and a parsonage. It is a LIVING body of men and women, young men, maidens and little children who are united in a living faith in Jesus Christ, the living Lord of the Church and thus incorporated into the Body of Christ, which here on earth, is His church. Lives have been built up in the Christian faith in past generations and as a faithful church we will continue "to build upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." (Ephes. 2:20)

And what more shall we say? Of all the faithful members who gave of their time and means for the maintenance of the congregation, our Ladies Aid Society and other organizations who helped to reduce our debts, the members of the Building Committees

who directed the building programs and bore the responsibilities, the consistories who served their fellow members unselfishly, the Sunday School teachers who devoted themselves to the religious teaching of our children, the members of our choirs who used their talents to make our worship services more beautiful and inspiring – “For the time would fail us.” We think of the faithful pastors who proclaimed the World of Life as ambassadors of Christ. We are grateful to Almighty God for our forefathers and for so rich a heritage, and are confident that as He has blest this congregation in the past, so will He in the years to come.

This is but a brief, historical sketch of the Campbellsport Evangelical and Reformed Congregation. It is being written at a time when our country is engaged in a gigantic world war. Our rejoicing is mingled with a deeper note of seriousness when we think of the 13 young men of our church who are in the armed service of our country. Their names have been written on the Honor Roll placed in the vestibule of our church. These men are our sons, brothers and friends and as members of our church we shall remember them in our prayers. May God return them safely to our homes and to our church! God, our Father: “Grant us peace.”

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”
(Psalm 46:1)

-Compiled by John Mohr, Pastor

Our New Church

Our new Church of Colonial Architecture was designed by Architect Clarence Jahn of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The construction work was under the direction of the New London Construction Company, Schoenrock Brothers, Mr. George Jahnman had charge of the carpenter work. Local labor was employed whenever possible. The Building Committee consisted of Mr. Herbert Schloemer, as President, Mr. John Terlinden and the Members of the Consistory. Our beautiful new Church building is an evidence of the untiring labors of all responsible parties.

The History of the Congregation

The German and Swiss immigrants who established their homes in or near the village of New Cassel (present day Campbellsport) founded a church, which would become the Campbellsport United Church of Christ. Occasional worship services were first conducted in the homes of the settlers. The Rev. Accola, Pastor of the Reformed Church of Ashford (now Elmore) presided for the services. The Rev. J.F. Vergenz succeeded Pastor Accola and conducted the first regular worship services in the District School House in New Cassel in 1867.

On July 26, 1868, twenty-seven men assembled in the school house and organized "Die Deutsche Evangelische Reformierte New Cassel Gemeinde." A house of worship, solidly constructed of fieldstone and costing \$3000, was built the same summer and dedicated in the fall of 1868. This church stood where the present St. Joseph Convent of the School Sisters of St. Francis is located today. The original lots were donated by Mr. M. Findeisen. The men of the first consistory were David Gudex, Jacob Terlinden, Martin Knickel, trustees; Peter Johann and Peter Gual, elders; and Friedrich Dickman and C. Steinecke, deacons. The congregation was united in a two-point charge with the Elmore Reformed Church under the pastorate of Rev. J.C. Vergenz. In 1874, Rev. Vergenz was succeeded by Rev. J.C. Huecker, who served from 1874 to 1883.

The congregation became independent of the Elmore Church during the pastorate of Rev. S. Elliker, who served from 1883 to 1886. Rev. Rucklin, a native Swiss, served only a few months in 1887, and left due to doctrinal differences with the congregation.

Rev. H. Rusterholz, Pastor of the Elmore Reformed Church, served as interim pastor until Rev. Huecker, a former pastor, was persuaded to return and serve the congregation. During his pastorate, the congregation purchased the "old parsonage," a building at 218 S. Jenny Street (on the corner of Jenny and Forest Street.) The cost was \$1,300. The Ladies Aid was organized in 1892 and was provided for the purchase of the church bell which still calls us to worship each Sunday. The bell weighs 1,433 pounds and was purchased at a cost of \$270. Rev. Huecker's pastorate ended in 1906.

Rev. Calvin M. Zenk became pastor. He conducted the first worship service in English while providing catechetical instruction in both English and German. Rev. Zenk organized a Young People's Society. The Ladies Aid was responsible for the monies necessary for a new hardwood floor in the church.

Rev. William Landsiedel was called as pastor in November, 1908. The question of a new parsonage was raised, but it was decided to renovate the old one, installing electricity and a telephone. The pastor's salary was increased from \$500 to \$700 a year. Pastor Landsiedel resigned in the fall of 1913.

Rev. William Zenk, brother of Calvin, was called by the congregation. Official action was taken in 1917 to have services in English once every month. A furnace was installed in the parsonage in 1920. While at Campbellsport, Pastor Zenk also served the Filmore Reformed Church, and for several years, was the professor of Music at Mission House College, rural Sheboygan. Pastor Zenk died in 1927 and his family remained in the parsonage until the new pastor was called.

Rev. John Scheib served from 1927 to 1930. During his pastorate, the congregation voted to worship once monthly in German, all other services to be conducted in English. In 1929, the Women's Missionary Society and the Girl's Missionary Society were organized. The Every Member Canvass and the duplex envelope system were introduced during this time.

Rev. Gilbert O. Wernecke began his pastorate in August, 1930. The Comrades, a society for young people, was organized that fall. Hope for a more adequate church building was renewed when a Building fund was reactivated in January, 1931. During 1931, the constitution was translated into English and revised. The name of the congregation was changed to the Campbellsport Reformed Church. In December, 1931 at a special meeting, the trustees were authorized to sell the lots on which the old church building stood. The Sisters of St. Francis bought the property for \$6,000. The last service in the original church building was held on January 24, 1932. The building committee consisted of Herbert Schloemer, John Terlinden, William Ferber, William Geidel, Peter Senn, Sr., R.G. Buettner, Fred Schlieff, Alfred Vande Zande, and Wallace Krueger. Under their direction, a new church building was constructed. The building cost approximately \$10,000. Dedication services were conducted November 20, 1932. Rev. Wernecke resigned in 1936.

Rev. John Mohr was called in November, 1936, serving until 1949. During his pastorate, the mortgage on the church building was liquidated. The old parsonage, "being inconvenient and having served its usefulness" was sold. The present colonial-style parsonage was constructed at a cost of \$6,000, and dedicated on November 26, 1939. During this time, the Elmore Church was forced to dissolve. Thus, the Elmore congregation, which was "the mother" of our first congregation, united with us in spirit, living on in the mission of her offspring. In 1944, George Mohr, son of the pastor, was ordained to ministry in Evangelical and Reformed Church.

Rev. Leonard Stockmeier accepted a call to serve and began his ministry after graduation from Mission House Seminary. He served until December, 1955.

Rev. Dale Kuck began his ministry in the summer of 1956, also after graduation from Mission House Seminary. He tendered his resignation in 1959, leaving to return to school and further his education.

In November, 1959, Rev. Edwin Becker began his ministry, which was cut short by his untimely death in September, 1962. During Rev. Becker's pastorate, groundwork was laid for the construction of the Christian Education Building and the remodeling of the chancel. The new United Church of Christ church school curriculum was introduced and accepted during his ministry.

Rev. Paul Kehle was called on March 17, 1963 and began his ministry on June 16, following his ordination. The plans for the new building were completed, and the ground broken on July 7, 1963. Dedication services for the Christian Education Building and the redesigned and newly appointed chancel area were held on January 5, 1964. The new educational facilities feature flexible arrangements for eight classrooms, an office and library, the pastor's study and a new kitchen, all with new hot water heating. All were welcome additions to the church property. Rev. Kehle concluded his pastorate in 1968.

Later in 1968, Rev. George Hoffman began his ministry. During Rev. Hoffman's pastorate, the congregation participated in a year long pulpit exchange with a congregation in Germany. From 1972 to 1973, Rev. Wilfred Mahler served as the exchange pastor. Under Rev. Hoffman's guidance, the preliminary study to offer first Communion to children of the congregation was started. Rev. Hoffman left in 1974 to return to school for advanced study.

Rev. Carl Jensen was called by the congregation and began his ministry in 1975. It was during his pastorate that the first Communion program was initiated. This program provides instruction for children in the fourth grade and enables them to participate in taking Communion at worship service. During this time, the ecumenical worship services evolved, joining the Campbellsport UCC and St. Matthew's Catholic, First Baptist, First Methodist, St. Joseph Convent, Salem UCC and United Brethren, Eden in joint Lenten and Thanksgiving services. Rev. Jensen resigned in 1983.

Rev. David Arndt was called as pastor in 1984, serving until 1986. During his pastorate, Daughters of the Guild, a group for young women, formed.

In 1985, Deborah Bartelt, a daughter of the congregation, was ordained to ministry in the United Church of Christ.

Rev. Dean Roy Miller was called to serve in 1987, completing his ministry with his retirement in 1990. Rev. Miller's pastorate is especially remembered as a time when the congregation began to focus on its vision for the future.

In 1991, Rev. Barbara Loose was called to serve the congregation. Since that time, the congregation has achieved growth in its organizational life, adding three new committees and increasing its community outreach by providing meeting space for a Community Grief Support Group. The congregation has also provided meeting space for the Community AA and Al-anon groups since 1976. In November, 1992, the congregation celebrated the affirmation and authorization of Carole Marchant Ferber's ministry as Lay Preacher and Worship Leader.

We have witnessed and shared in the ministry of twenty-one pastors in the first 125 years. On the pages on our record books, we have written the baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals of the consecrated Christians who have given us our heritage.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses," may we be inspired to "run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."