MY EARLY LIFE
by Fred Lewis Dennis

Bishop Dennis wrote this short autobiography in 1928 at the request of his cousin Donald F. Carmony, a junior history major at Indiana Central College. Carmony, who became Professor of History at Indiana University, was writing a history of Blue River Chapel, his home church and one of Dennis’ early pastoral appointments. After three years as conference superintendent, 1926-1929, Dennis returned to the pastorate (First United Brethren Church in Dayton) until he was elected bishop in 1941. He held episcopal office in the United Brethren and Evangelical United Brethren churches until his death on January 28, 1958.

Bishop Dennis was known for his “patient and gentle leadership.” Dr. Arthur Core said of Bishop Dennis: “He was known for his courage as a churchman to challenge the wrong and to give utmost support to the righteousness that is a part of the Gospel.” Bishop George Epp preached Bishop Dennis’ funeral sermon in which he described his ministry as “dedicated leadership...friendly, affable, courteous, amiable in response to others, sociable, mindful of others, tender in relationship, firm when necessary, forthright, deep-seated in conviction.” (Information in this paragraph came from Paul W. Milhouse, Nineteen Bishops of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, Nashville, 1974.)

We are indebted to Dr. Fred Hill, professor emeritus of history at the University of Indianapolis and a member of the advisory board of the Center for the EUB Heritage, for bringing this autobiography to our attention. More than seventy years after it was written it is now published.

Like Lincoln and many other great men, I was born in a log cabin. This particular cabin was located in Shelby County, Indiana, about two miles southwest of the village of Gwynneville. The records reveal the date as November 21, 1890. I was the youngest of three children born to John William and Sarah Youngs Dennis, being the only son.

My father was a tenant farmer for the first few years of my life. Upon the death of my mother a few weeks before my fifth birthday, it seemed wise to father to leave the farm and locate in the village of Gwynneville. Here I entered school and attended for nine consecutive years. The second and third years of high school were spent at Arlington, and the last at Rushville.

Following my graduation, I spent some two months in reviewing grade school subjects, then entered Marion Normal School in the spring of 1909 to take the course for beginning teachers. I taught two terms at “Number Nine,” as it was called, in Posey Township, Rush County. Between terms I had taken a second short course for teachers at Indiana Central College in Indianapolis.

It was during this term at Indiana Central College that my “call to the gospel ministry” became clear. Friends often had said I should preach, but it was not so revealed to me until the commencement season at Indiana Central College in June, 1910. My decision was reached after a week of sharp struggle, and evidence of the genuineness of my call has been cumulative during the passing years.

In August, 1910, I was granted quarterly conference license to preach. Rev. J. T. Roberts, D.D., was presiding elder and signed my certificate. Rev. O. F. Lydy was my pastor. During the fall and winter of 1910-1911 I taught a second, and final term of school, at “Number Nine.” In August, 1911, I was admitted to membership in the White River Annual Conference which was in session in the college auditorium at Indianapolis.

I did not desire a pastorate at conference time, having made preparations to enter college. However, two important events a few months later plunged me into the ranks of active pastors. One was my marriage to Miss Anna M. Sullivan of Rush County, which was solemnized by Rev. O. F. Lydy on the evening of December 20, 1911; and the other was the resignation of the pastorate of the Smith’s Valley-Bargersville-Honey Creek Circuit (then known as the Greenwood Circuit) by the Rev. A. M. Shaw. Rev. J. A. Hawkins, presiding elder, called me out of the German class
recitation room of Professor I. J. Good [later president of Indiana Central] to notify me of my appointment. I did not return to finish that recitation, but hastened to make final preparations for the establishment of my own home on my first charge.

On the second Sunday in January, 1912, I began my active ministry. For the seven and one-half months remaining in the conference year I was to receive $300, and $35 from the rental of the parsonage, which was not located conveniently for the use of the pastor. Out of these receipts I was to pay my rent at Smith’s Valley. We remained on this charge one full year in addition to finishing Brother Shaw’s year, then moved to University Heights [the location of Indiana Central College] to resume the broken thread of events.

We lived in University Heights three years. For two years I served as student-pastor of the Blue River Circuit, White River Conference, which was composed of the Henderson, Gwynneville, Blue River, and Liberty appointments. During my senior year in the college I was pastor of the University Heights Church. There is no explanation for this appointment, so far as I know, save the poverty of the University Heights Church that seemed to forbid the appointment of a full-time pastor.

I graduated from Indiana Central College in the Class of 1916. The following September we moved to Dayton, Ohio, where I enrolled in Bonebrake Theological Seminary. During my first two years in the Seminary I was student pastor at the Belmont United Brethren Church, which is in a suburb of Dayton. I relinquished this pastorate at the close of the second year, in order to be free to return to Indiana at the close of the seminary year in May. Accordingly, after commencement in May, 1919, we transferred our battered belongings to the home of my father in Gwynneville, Indiana, to await the fall session of the White River Annual Conference.

During the summer I worked as an evangelist under the direction of the conference superintendent, Dr. J. E. Shannon. In the midst of my summer work, a committee from the Euclid Avenue United Brethren Church, Dayton, Ohio, approached me with reference to becoming pastor of that church—the pulpit having been supplied by various preachers in the absence of a pastor since the preceding fall. The committee was composed of the late Dr. G. A. Funkhouser, chairman, Dr. A. W. Drury, and three laymen. The first two approaches by the committee were not regarded seriously by me, and were, consequently, declined. A third approach by long distance [probably the writer means by long-distance telephone] convinced me of the sincerity and the urgency of the call.

There was much prayer for light and direction during those days. It was no light thing to sever the strong ties that bound me to my home conference. But, in the absence of any definite statement from the superintendent of the White River Conference, and in the face of the urgent appeal from a committee of godly men, I came at last to conclude that God was author of the call.

On Sunday, August 10, 1919, I preached my initial sermon as pastor of the Euclid Avenue Church. The late Dr. J. M. Phillippi, editor of the Religious Telescope, presided at this service and introduced me to the congregation. Thus began a pastorate of seven years and a few days, which was severed only by my election, over my protest, to the superintendency of the Miami Conference. During this pastorate I had the assistance of Miss Ella F. Hamilton as deaconess, continuously. Rev. Ray G. Upson was employed by the church one year as assistant pastor, being charged with responsibility for the music, community, and young people’s work. I found a church of 764 members, received 782, leaving a membership of 1,139. Several young men dedicated themselves to the gospel ministry. Two are in Bonebrake Seminary now; two are in Indiana Central College; a fifth will enter the Seminary, or accept a full-time pastorate next fall.

The fellowship of these seven years has meant everything to me. The Euclid Avenue Church proved the very embodiment of goodwill and generosity to me, as pastor. A series of visits to outstanding churches in several other cities, from Chicago to New York (at the expense of the church) was climaxed during the winter of 1926 with a visit to the Holy Land, the church paying practically half the expenses of that trip in addition to paying full salary during my absence. In the light of these facts, you are not surprised that I protested my election as superintendent of the Miami Conference during the balloting and withheld my consent for more than a day after the election was announced.

I now am in the second year of my work as superintendent of the Miami Conference. Suffice it to say that I am finding increasing joy in this form of ministry, which joy, I trust, is founded in evidences of progress.

Telescope-Messenger
is published twice yearly by the Center for the Evangelical United Brethren Heritage United Theological Seminary, 1810 Harvard Blvd.
Dayton, OH 45406-4599
Editor: Robert L Frey
Compositor: James D. Nelson
Correspondence should be sent to the editor at
1356 Hidden Creek Rd.
Miamisburg, OH 45342
Email: rlfrey@myexcel.com
Membership in the Center is Ten Dollars per year
OUR RECOLLECTIONS
by Robert L. Frey

Following are two articles written by laywomen, one a missionary who served her entire career on the Red Bird Mission, the other a public school teacher and lay preacher. Neither knew the other although about the same age and reared in the same county only 25 miles apart. Both recall the critically important role their home churches played in shaping their personal character. Similarities exist between their recollections and those of Bishop Paul Milhouse recorded in our Winter 2001 issue. But there are differences between the small rural Woodbine Evangelical Church that Virginia Telfer recalls, the smalltown United Brethren church in Illinois Bishop Milhouse recalls, and St. Paul's Evangelical Church in Red Lion, Pennsylvania of which Marguerite Howard writes. This was perhaps the largest church in the denomination and it remained one of the largest in the EUB church after the 1946 merger.

I knew St. Paul's well as my paternal grandparents were members in the late forties and fifties after my grandfather retired from the Central Pennsylvania Conference. Also, my Dad served two interim pastorates (about six months total) at St. Paul's. I remember the awe that always accompanied my entrance into the beautiful gothic sanctuary, and it has always been an inspiration to me. The huge vaulted ceiling, the warmth and profusion of the dark wood, and row upon row of pews accentuated by a beautiful rose window over the nave gave evidence of a power and majesty beyond my comprehension. Even as a child of eight or ten I was convinced that something important happened here.

I was an infant when my father was moved from the Bryansville Charge which included Woodbine, and I do not recall visiting there in later years. But I was clearly familiar with similar churches such as that of my maternal grandparents, St. John's Evangelical Church near Glenville, Pennsylvania on the Glen Rock Charge. Well into the 1960s men sat on the left side of the center aisle, women on the right side; I can remember the day clearly when I was allowed to "cross over the aisle" to sit with the men. Many of my recollections of St. John's mirror those of Virginia Telfer, including the babble of voices during Sunday school.

St. Paul's and Woodbine were both Evangelical churches; the church Bishop Milhouse recalls was United Brethren. Perhaps there are regional differences—even within denominations, but it is my guess that people growing up in rural, smalltown, and large-membership (1000+) churches of various denominations would have similar recollections. I hope our recollections might spark some of your own. If so, write them down and send them to me.

ST. PAUL'S
by Marguerite Zarfos Howard

The church has been my second love (God first) for some 78 years. Dr. Kenneth L. Benfer baptized me in 1923. My life was steeped in the church: grandfather John Wesley Zarfos was treasurer of St. Paul's Evangelical Church in Red Lion, Pennsylvania, from 1900 to 1926. My parents were teachers there many years and were involved in other church organizations. My parents often hosted ministers and missionaries in our home. Until I left for North Central College (Naperville, Illinois) I was active in the children's department at St. Paul's.

While at North Central College I was a student assistant to Dr. Milton Bischoff. His brother, John, was Superintendent of Red Bird Mission in Kentucky. I learned the need for teachers at Red Bird was great, and I felt called to go there which I did upon graduation in 1950. I never returned to live in Red Lion after 1950, but my heart is still in the church of my youth.

Life in St. Paul's was always full and enriching. My mother and I never missed weekly prayer meetings. We knelt to pray, and the prayers of the elders were filled with praise and adoration. They were also a witnessing experience for many in attendance.

We had spring and fall revivals with great evangelists as guests. Music played a great part in the services. It was then that I learned the hymns and gospel songs. Men and women from the church formed vocal and instrumental trios and quartets and enriched the services. Talent from other church and professional groups often added variety to the services.
Ironically, until World War II the town of Red Lion was known for the production of cigars. It was claimed that more than 20% of the world’s supply was produced in Red Lion. The ministers at St. Paul’s were required to preach against the use of tobacco and alcohol twice a year. They skillfully softened this message in these sermons, and factory owners and workers nodded in agreement and put their offerings in the plate.

On February 3, 1935, when I was twelve years old, a new sanctuary was dedicated. It was fashioned after European gothic cathedrals with its stained-glass windows and pipe organ. An older sister was studying piano and took organ lessons from Emory Ritz, St. Paul’s organist for many years. She always asked me to go along when she practiced because there were surprising sounds of settling in the new building that scared her!

St. Paul’s had a strong Sunday school program that included all ages. The children were given tickets for saying Bible verses. The tickets were exchanged for prizes: certificates, plaques, and Bibles. Each class was organized with officers, and monthly meetings and outings were enjoyed. St. Paul’s had an orchestra that accompanied hymns and provided special music each week in Sunday school. For a few years I played flute in it.

My mother was a leader for a mission youth group. At one time this group was known as Christian Endeavor and later as Youth Fellowship. I attended several large youth conventions. One summer, 1946 I believe, I went to Oakwood, Indiana, to a mission convention. While I did not go forward at the consecration service, it was here that I gave God my life for service. At the closing service, which was by a lake, a display of the Aurora Borealis took place, and we all felt the moving spirit of God. Rev. and Mrs. Joseph W. Krecker [Rev. Krecker was the minister at St. Paul’s at the time and was later the long-time editor of the original Telescope-Messenger] took me with them to this event.

St. Paul’s Church always had a strong men’s program during those years [1930-1950]. Boy Scouts were a part of the church since 1922. I worked with the Camp Fire Girls for about five years during the 1940s. The first Women’s Missionary Society was formed in 1905. Missions continued to be a big part of the church, and St. Paul’s supported individual missionaries as well as the overall denominational mission programs. Some members of St. Paul’s served on mission fields at various times.

The decade of the 1940s were prime years at St. Paul’s church. The membership reached 1,200; involvement in the church’s programs was high; and many persons went into Christian service from those years. During World War II our church supported its members who were in the service. We issued a monthly newsletter and sent care packages to our men and women overseas. Soon gold stars appeared in windows [indicating the death of a service man or woman]. One young man who had been in the Bataan “death” march did not return; others were lost as well in both Europe and the Pacific.

When the Evangelical and the United Brethren churches united it seemed natural. We had known of Philip Otterbein’s work. But when the EUB church joined with the Methodist Church, I was not happy. I felt we lost our identity and were “swallowed up.” Methodists seemed distant, and we had not had any association with them. Through the World Outreach magazine, however, I have gained a kindred warmth for the United Methodist Church.

WOODBINE

by Virginia Kilgore Telfer

Nestled a few miles north of the Mason-Dixon Line in Southern York County, Pennsylvania, beside Muddy Creek (a tributary of the Susquehanna River) is a tiny village called Woodbine. A country store, a garage, the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad, and a picturesque white country church formed the nucleus for proud Pennsylvanians of Welsh, Irish, and German descent with some disdain for those who might come from “south of the border” (Maryland).

Our family lived in a rural area about two miles from Woodbine at a crossroads named Bald Eagle, but come Sunday mom you would find us at the Woodbine Evangelical Church. Dad would drive us in the Olds, or as we children grew to be teenagers we would often walk the shiny dusty road under the cool forested area that bordered the highway.

There is no doubt that what transpired in that small community church formed the faith structure of my life. Opportunities to grow freely by speaking, singing, playing the violin, offering ideas, and being encouraged by grownups was a tremendous incentive.

Woodbine Evangelical Church was part of the Bryansville Charge. The pastor lived in the parsonage at Bryansville and served four churches: Woodbine and Bryansville in Pennsylvania, Goodwill and Tabernacle in Maryland. Rev. R. A. Babcock, Rev. Clair Leber, and Rev. George W. Frey, Jr. had a great influence on me. Rev. and Mrs. Frey, Jr. [Rev. G. W. Frey, Sr. served this charge from 1922 to 1925] became lifetime friends.

The small white clapboard church held a rather stately spire with a large cast-iron bell, and if you were early enough you might get the opportunity to ring it with an adult’s help. As you entered the church vestibule a pair of oak doors swung freely, often at odd times for the latecomers. Once inside, as you looked to the center the altar area was raised slightly and the
large King James Bible rested on a simple but heavily-built pulpit. A small oak table below held the offering plates and a cross, and the communion rail formed a semicircle in front. Two aisles separated three areas of shiny oak seating. There was a large furnace register in the far east aisle. On one occasion I remember stumbling on it, and the offering plates and coins rattled everywhere including into the furnace. There was a large stained-glass window on the left side with smaller windows on the bottom that encapsulated the names of those who had contributed toward them.

Sunday school was a most special exercise; the adults occupied the center seats and children of different age levels were on either side of the aisles. The chatter was amazing, but we loved receiving the pictorial cards and folded sheets with Biblical stories printed on the back. Attendance was important because we wanted to collect the Sunday school literature as well to receive a gold pin at the end of the year. The superintendent called us to order with prayer, hymn singing, and announcements. The secretary, after collecting the monies from the classes and tallying the attendance, gave a full report at closing, then posted the attendance and collection amounts on the Psalter in the front.

Services as well as celebratory occasions, usually with a mission focus, centered around the liturgical calendar. Never was *Bringing in the Sheaves* sung with more gusto and commitment than on Harvest Home Sunday. The altar was filled with every homemaker’s best canned goods, not just canned, but artistically arranged, and while the hymn was being sung, young and old walked forth to add to the harvest. The bounty was given to a designated church home.

Christmas, Easter, Red Bird Mission—each had its particular emphasis. As a child these occasions left great impressions. The preparations at church and at home were enormous. A special dress, a new hat, rehearsing our lines, collecting pennies for the little red box for Red Bird Mission kept every child interested. The little box filled with candy along with a big orange at Christmas was indeed a special reward.

Festivals were a major summer occasion. Tables were brought to the front lawn; women cooked their best recipes; sandwiches and turtle- or chicken-corn soup had to be ready by early evening. Prayers were offered that a thunderstorm might not disrupt the event. The wooden slatback folding chairs and a few tables accommodated the adults. Children were unleashed to enjoy the fun. The vibratory music from the harmonica, banjo, guitar, fiddle, and a tub and string affair as the bass could be heard for several miles.

Partway through the evening a gentleman in a straw hat carrying a cane would call out lustily, “Time for the cakewalk!” Music would begin; everyone paid his dime or quarter and stepped into the circle. As the adults and children walked to the music, the gentleman would lower the cane between the participants. Should you be so lucky as to have the cane drop in front of you when the music stopped, yours was the prize cake. There was keen competition behind the scenes to get a certain lady’s special coconut or chocolate cake.

The evening over, tables folded, chairs returned, we journeymed home discussing all the local news and happenings. The following Sunday service was usually well attended as parishioners were eager to hear how much money was made from the event.

Revival service, usually held in the fall, brought special quartets and traveling evangelists. Homer Rodeheaver, hymn writer, dynamic speaker with lots of arm movements to emphasize his points, pounded the large pulpit Bible fiercely—immediately he was covered with a cloud of dust. It reminded me of the Elijah story, and my sister and I went into a convulsive laugh for which we were summarily disciplined on the way home. These occasions were times of renewal and commitment to discipleship and forgiveness as we knelt between the seats or at the altar rail.

Catechism classes nurtured our faith and understanding of the Evangelical Church; learning the basics of Christianity and ethical values while we learned to know ourselves gave us lasting standards by which to live. I have a clear recollection to this very day of sitting on the church steps and being challenged by the pastor about what we would do with our lives.

Music was an integral part of worship; the old upright piano on the far east side of the church was the almost singular possession of the one who could play the instrument. Harmony abounded when *The Old Rugged Cross* or *The Church in the Wildwood* was sung. No one seemed to be shy about his or her vocal quality; they were praising their maker. Children were encouraged to sing solo or in groups and were heartily congratulated. There were moments, however, when the competitive spirit did reign and some youngsters would feel hurt, leaving parental decisions to be made.

Perhaps because we were smaller in numbers, perhaps because our needs were similar—our sense of community was extremely strong. Our pastors, though meagerly paid, were a woven part of our daily living. They broke bread with us at our tables; they visited the farmer in the field; they knelt with the suffering; and they knew the children.

Such are the vivid memories of a life lived in a rural church of the mid-twentieth century.

*NOTICE* *NOTICE* *NOTICE*

If an asterisk (*) appears beside your name on the mailer on the last page of this issue, it is time to renew your Center membership. A form is enclosed for your convenience.
VALLECITOS CHURCH AND MISSION SCHOOL
by Nellwyn B. Trujillo

One of the major home mission areas of the United Brethren church was in northern New Mexico. Churches and schools were established in a number of smaller towns and villages. One of these was Vallecitos. Many of these smaller churches—La Madera, Ojo Caliente, Petaca, Canon de Vallecitos, and Vallecitos—are now closed because of declining population. Extensive work still goes on in Santa Cruz and a few smaller towns such as Alcalde and Velarde.

Originally this article did not contain any personal information about the author. I asked her to provide some autobiographical information so readers could get to know her.

I was born in 1921 in Adams County near Decatur, Indiana. My parents were Joseph P. Brookhart and Bertha Ferguson Brookhart. My elementary schooling was in rural schools in Indiana and my first two years of high school were across the Ohio state line in Willshire. My junior and senior years were at Monroe Township School in Monroe, Indiana. I graduated with a scholarship to Ball State Teachers College (now Ball State University) in Muncie, Indiana, and I attended there from 1939-42. During World War II, because of a teacher shortage I began teaching at the Willshire (Ohio) Elementary School. I taught there for three years, then I was called into missionary service. During the 1945-46 year I was the only teacher at the Mission School in Vallecitos.

During the 1942-46 years I entered the pre-ministerial program of the Ohio Sandusky Conference, was licensed, and on September 2, 1956, was ordained as an elder and full-time Home Missionary. I graduated from Otterbein College in June, 1947 with a Bachelor of Science in Education. The fall of 1948 I was sent back to Velarde, New Mexico, to teach the primary room (pre-first through second grade), coached basketball, taught Sunday school, gave piano lessons, and directed the Children’s Choir. Teachers in the Mission Schools had to do our own schoolroom and schoolwide janitorial service as well. We took turns as janitors of the church.

In the fall of 1951 I was sent to Vallecitos again to teach the primary grades. Max Trujillo was a native of Vallecitos. He was a cowboy, a rancher, and a language interpreter. He was a self-educated gentleman who assisted the teachers and pastors, translating from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish. He also interpreted for bishops, public school officials, national forest officials, lawyers, doctors, nurses, and anyone else who needed his services.

Max and I were married on June 5, 1955, in the McCurdy Chapel. He had a heart condition for almost a decade before he died on May 30, 1982.

The United Brethren work at Vallecitos began in the summer of 1930. Prior to this date some of the workers from the McCurdy School in Santa Cruz had held services in homes in Vallecitos. On April 3, 1932, Dr. Maurice Nichols with the help of Dr. Russell Showers organized a church with forty-three members. Services were held in the Mission House in the old room along the street.

The present church building was started in July, 1936, by the members who made the adobes. The director and architect was a Mr. Olsen from Colorado. On April 11, 1937, this church building was dedicated by Bishop A.B. Stratton assisted by Dr. Maurice Nichols. Three hundred people attended that service. Later Miss Lula Clippinger served at Vallecitos for sixteen years as social worker and pastor of the Vallecitos Church.

As mentioned earlier, I arrived in Vallecitos for the first time in August of 1945. I lived in the Vallecitos community for thirty-eight years and taught there for sixteen years. Besides teaching in the Mission School I worked in the church and the community. I assisted the assigned minister, conducted catechism classes, tutored students in piano and homework, supervised summer recreation and Daily Vacation Bible School, and helped with a Girl Scout troop.

I tutored a Cuban neighbor, Francisco “Pacho” Henderson. His wife Rosa was a first-generation student, and their three daughters (Michelle, Fancine, Nadine) had been my kindergarten students while I was teaching at Ojo Caliente [a nearby mission school]. Rosa went through two programs of study at El Rito Technical Vocational Institute and was an honor student. It gave me great joy to send a “congratulations card” to the family as they were all on the Honor Roll. In May of 1994 I was honored to have a part in Michelle’s wedding in Rio Ranco, New Mexico.

Many of our students from Vallecitos furthered their education at McCurdy School [the United Brethren high school in Santa Cruz], other high schools, colleges, universities, and professional schools. Some went on to EUB colleges including members of the Martinez family. Henry E. Martinez graduated from Indiana Central College [University of Indianapolis] in 1951 and became a well-known thoracic surgeon in Amarillo, Texas; he died in September 1999 of Lou Gehrig’s disease. John A. (Tacho) Martinez graduated from Indiana Central in 1954 and is an environmental scientist with the State of New Mexico. Carlota (Carla) Martinez graduated from Indiana Central in 1956 and became a teacher and biochemist. She married Lewis Thompson from Indiana and they live in California. I receive greetings from former students frequently and find that they are working in all parts of the southwest and northwest.
The Mission School was an integral part of the Vallecitos Church. Rev. A. W. Pringle served two years as resident-pastor and twenty-one years as itinerant minister, coming from Santa Cruz to preach and to conduct the adult Sunday school class.

I continued teaching in the Vallecitos Mission School until it was closed in 1970. Then I started a kindergarten for the Ojo Caliente Public School and taught there until 1985. I retired in 1988 to Santa Cruz where I am still living and am active in the Santa Cruz United Methodist Church and the community.

I was present at the closing worship service of the Vallecitos United Methodist Church on June 29, 1997. During the service I gave a brief history of the church [incorporated into this article]. I was also present on May 21, 2000, when the deed to the property of the Vallecitos United Methodist Mission was turned over to the Madera Forest Products Association for community development. The sanctuary of the church is being maintained as a non-denominational chapel for people of all faiths.

Ministers who served Vallecitos, in addition to those mentioned above, include: Reverends Maurice Bonecutter, Cheryl Jordan, Hugh Roberts, Gaynell Ardell, Isaac Willems, A.J. Larson, Gregorio Gonzales, Edgar Fredrick, Ralph Miller, Ola Murphey, and William Young. Many teachers served the Vallecitos Mission School including: Miss Hanmacher, Delia Herrick, Elva Hardy, Jane Norris, Kathleen Tomlinson, Pauline Guild, Gweneth Pringle, Dorothy Holman, Lutheria Eveland, Evelyn J. Gabel, Joan Klingler, Marie Mahood, Ruth Feigel, Ralph Miller, and Jessie Bouquin.

Last fall a group of us visited the old mission property in Vallecitos. We wanted to know what was happening. As conversation progressed, we were happy to learn that when the deed was signed over to the Madera Forest Products Association, it contained this clause: “The Association expects to include among the uses of the property: as a place of community gathering, as a venue for mediation and resolution of conflicts where possible and requested, [and] as a non-denominational chapel for use for weddings, baptisms, and other spiritual events for people of all faiths.” Mr. Manuel Gurule, a graduate of McCurdy School, is the president of this organization. Members of our group were impressed with the desire of the Association to maintain the church for “spiritual events for people of all faiths.” However, we observed that the floor needed to be refinished, the basement needed to be cleaned out, and the cemeteries needed to be cleared of overgrowth. The man in our group said very innocently, “Why don’t we get a work team together and come to help with these projects?” That started the wheels turning. Why not, indeed?

The result is a planned work team sponsored by the West Ohio Conference. Members of the team plan to fly to Albuquerque, rent vehicles, stay at McCurdy School, and commute to Vallecitos to work on the property. The team will also spend some time tearing up the floor in the fellowship hall of the El Rito church as it also needs replacing. The dates for the work team are September 25-October 4, 2001 [about the time of the publication of the Fall issue of the Telescope-Messenger].

Editor’s note: The next issue of TM will report on this work team’s efforts.

**AUTHORS OF THIS ISSUE**

Fred L. Dennis (1890-1958) was a well-known pastor, conference superintendent, and bishop (1941-58) of the United Brethren and EUB churches.

Robert L. Frey is editor of the Telescope-Messenger.

Marguerite Zarfos Howard following her retirement from a career of service in the Red Bird Mission now resides in nearby Bledsoe, KY.

Virginia Kilgore Telfer, a retired public school teacher and lay preacher in West Ohio Conference (UMC), lives with her husband Dr. John D. Telfer in Marion, OH. She is mother to twin sons and grandmother of two.

Nellwyn B. Trujillo lives in retirement in Santa Cruz, NM.

Ruth Stambach, a native of York, PA, is retired at Otterbein Home in Lebanon, OH after thirty-seven years as a missionary in McCurdy School, NM. An elder in West Ohio Conference she serves on the Advisory Board of the Center for the EUB Heritage.
HEROES IN THE FAITH: REV. MARY ELLEN HAIR REISINGER

Information for the following story was sent to the editor by Dr. Calvin Reber. The story was compiled from The Link (April 2001), the newspaper of the Central Pennsylvania Conference, United Methodist Church, and that story was written by Joyce Mixter (daughter of Rev. Reisinger) and Rev. Peter F. Geschwindner, Director of Pastoral Care at RiverWoods Nursing Care Center.

September 17, 2000 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rev. Mary Ellen Hair Reisinger, a resident of the RiverWoods Nursing Care Center in Lewisburg, PA. Several recognitions were accorded Rev. Reisinger on the occasion of her birthday. She received special recognition from the Commission on Archives and History of the Western Pennsylvania Conference, and Bishop Hae Jong Kim and other members of the Conference visited her and presented her with a gift on the occasion.

Mary received her first license for quarterly-conference preacher on August 6, 1922 at Shermansdale United Brethren Church. She received her annual conference license in 1924. In 1926 she graduated from Lebanon Valley College, and about a year later she married Rev. D. Kenneth Reisinger. Mary was ordained an elder at the conference session held in Frederick, Maryland on October 3, 1933.

Together Mary and her husband served pastorates in Pennsylvania and Maryland. For several years Mary was Director of Child Evangelism Fellowship for Maryland. Upon retirement in 1970, Mary and Kenneth (now deceased) moved to the former EUB home in Lewisburg where she continues to remain active in weekly worship services, Sunday school, and Bible studies.

Rev. Geschwindner says: “We at RiverWoods are proclaiming her the oldest living clergywoman in the denomination. (We welcome hearing from any challengers!)”

Well, are there any challengers?

United Theological Seminary
Center for the Evangelical United Brethren Heritage
1810 Harvard Boulevard
Dayton, OH 45406-4599