

New Providence Baptist Church

by
Altha E. and Ortha Green



New Providence Baptist Church, Confidence, Ia. built in 1907 at Cemetery April 23-1923 struck by lightning and burned at 7:30 a.m.

As early as 1855, religious services were held in the Confidence vicinity. In 1856 from an Association report there were fourteen baptisms and a membership of forty-four, from the New Providence Baptist Church. It is most likely that Rev. Daniel Winters was one of the pastors serving this church from the Home Missionary Society, during this period before organization.

From Wayne and Appanoose History we find that Mahala (Mrs. Joel) Douglass, (mother of Nathan Douglas) who resided in South Fork township was one of seven persons who established the first Baptist Churches in this part of Wayne county.

These meetings led to the organization of the New Providence Baptist in the year of 1865. It took its name from the Providence Baptist Church, which was old time Primitive. Rev. J. Christie was the pastor at this time.

As the old records were lost we do not know all of the Charter members and can only list a few; Mr. and Mrs. Sarah Kieffer Westlake, Epperson and Sarah Holder, Elsey and Mary Stone, and Mr. and Mrs. Rachel Greenbury Owen. Some other early members were; John and Cynthia Raikes, Humphrey and Julia May and Mr. and Mrs. Minerva Owen Owen.

From the time of organization services were held in the Confidence School house which was located at the cross roads west of the village, on land owned by Elsey and Mary Stone. A new building was erected in 1870 and dedicated as a Church. A deed of record dated June 18, 1881 reads, "E.J. Stone and Mary Stone to the Confidence Grave Yard, except the New Providence

Regular Baptist Church to occupy small part of said lot. To revert to grave yard when vacated by church for church purposes." in the N.W., Corner of S.W., Sec. 14-70-20, Wright township.

The building of 1870 was torn down and a new one built on this original location at the cemetery, and it was rededicated in 1907. (This church had a vestibule and bell). On April 23, 1923 the church was struck by lightning at 7:30 a.m. and destroyed. Much of the contents were saved.

The attendance of the church dropped to five families. They had no pastor, but they held services in the Odd Fellows Hall in Confidence. The winter was severe and there was no funds with which to buy fuel to heat the large hall building, so these families held Sunday School in their homes every two weeks with a cooperative dinner after services. These faithful families were; Roy Coates, Will Elams, Elijah Walthalls, Clive and Jane Greens.

In checking the record of a Roll Call meeting of July 1923 we find the names of the following members; Mrs. Lillie Frame, Mrs. Margaret Jane Green and Mrs. Cannie Ruark, all joined in June 1886. Mrs. Eva Clark who was a member of the Bethlehem Baptist church twenty-eight before transferring her membership in 1923. Will and Jessie Elam, Miss Vada Morlan and Mrs. Mae Robertson in 1896, Mrs. Gertie Coates, in 1889, Ortha Green in 1906, Altha E. Green and Charles Brown in 1909, Clive H. Green and Roy Coates in 1915, Blanche Coates in 1919, and many others.

On March 24, 1925, the New Providence Baptist

Church bought of Dr. Henry and Lizzie Sulser, for the sum of \$400.00 Block 3, original town of Confidence, which once belonged to the Seventh Day Adventist. The witnesses to this deed were, J.L. Frame and Will Elam.

The old church was torn down and a new building erected at a cost of \$5000.00. The church was planned by the state missionary Rev. Arvid G. Lagerquist of Des Moines, Iowa. He remained on the field and supervised the building.

On July 10, 1927 the church was dedicated to the Lord's service. Rev. Lagerquist preached the first sermon in this new church and his text was Psalms 105:18. Rev. L.W. Verts preached the dedicatory sermon.

The *first* pastor was Rev. A.G. Gumm, and the first members were Rev. Andrew Gumm and wife Clara Gumm. The *first* funeral was that of Mrs. Martha Ann Brown on July 29, 1927, just nineteen days after the dedication of the church. The *first* wedding was for Gwendoline Frame and Robert Driggs, on August 10, 1947. The *first* Daily Vacation Bible School in the township was held by the New Providence Baptist Church for a period of two weeks in June 1929, with an enrollment of 100. The teachers were; Altha E. Green, adult division, Miss Joyce King of Bethlehem, junior class, Ortha Green, primary class, with twenty-five pupils, Mrs. Jussie Elam, pianist, Pastor Rev. Ezra Temple, overseer, and Miss Nell H. Malen, advisor and sponsor.

The *first* Easter Sunrise Service was held April 1954, and was expressed thus by Ortha Green;

A sweet spiritual silence hung over the Easter sunrise service of the New Providence Baptist Church held Sunday April 10, 1955 in a wooded area north east of Confidence, and truly emphasized the scriptural passage of Hab. 2:20, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him." The chill of early morning struck mortal frailty, but the warm inner glow of sanctification was evident as the group of Christian people sang, "He Lives" and "Christ Arose." The prayer by the pastor Philip Shear reminded all who heed the Word of God, and take unto themselves the Faith and Belief in Him, would enjoy Eternal Life. As the song "Old Rugged Cross" came floating across the valley to the listeners, a pale wraith of grey fog, lifted and swirled upward around the vacant white cross on

the hillside, as if it would envelope and shield those who have dedicated themselves to the "Master."

The Baptist Young Peoples Union was organized in 1912 under the leadership of Stephen L. Morlan, and in 1915 they won the State banner for having the best organization, accomplishing the most work and having the largest membership.

The Ladies Aid, helped the church by holding suppers, serving lunch at sales, and in 1911 they husked corn for Will Clark for five cents per bushel and made money.

A fine church Orchestra furnished music for all services for several years.

Two men have been ordained by the church into the ministry. They are; Purley Jennison around 1800 and Fred Dietderich on May 2, 1950, the ordaining board was Rev. Chasteen, Rev. Fleck, Rev. Blunt, Rev. Peters, and Dr. Halbert of the state board.

Two women have been licensed by the church to preach the Gospel, being Miss Altha E. Green, April 8, 1945 and Mrs. Harriet Latham, Oct. 1950.

A few of the earliest ministers were; Rev. Daniel Winters, Rev. J. Christie, Rev. Eaton, Rev. Stark, Rev. Smith, Rev. Packard, Rev. Hopton, Rev. J.W. Jones, Rev. Ira Blakeley, T. Davis and Daniel Given.

Other pastors are; J.W. Stone 1912-15, J.S. Raigan 1915-16, Isaac Cochran, 1917, LeGrande, 1918-19, A.J. Gumm, 1927-29, Ezra Temple, 1929-30, George Swan Jr., 1923, Wm. Cleeton, 1936-48, Fred Dietderich, 1949-51, W.D. Kirts, 1951, Roy Johnson, 1952-53, Harriet Latham, as supply in 1954, J.C. Curts, Wayne Cain and Philip Shear, three months each, 1954-55, A.J. Ragain, Frank Appalloni, 1958, Hergic York, 1959, Vernon Link 1960, Clarence Lauth, 1960, George Serson, 1961-62-63-4-5, Raymond T. Ritzhaupt, 66-7-8, Harold Galbreath, 1971-2.

In 1875 the church entertained the Southern Baptist Association, and on several different times through the years. They are still active in the Lord's work and worthy of His blessings.

Colossians 1:20. Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

New Providence Baptist Church celebrated its Centennial July 11, 1965. Rev. Roy Johnson preached the sermon.



(Photo by John W. Green)