

# Bethel Church

by  
Mrs. Margaret (Wolfinger) Kendall  
with verifications by Mrs. Winnie Kelley, James (Jim)  
Montgomery and Rev. Harold Lacey.



Bethel (Photo by Ortha Green)

Bethel Church located seven miles north-east of Corydon, in the north-east corner of Sec. 14-69-21, Corydon township, was of the United Brethren denomination.

The people living in the neighborhood had organized a Sunday School in the Cockle Burr school house, which was located north east of the present church site, in the early 1890's. The first Sunday School Supt. was Charles Burkman from Bollman Chapel.

In 1890 the Rev. Will Whitlock conducted a Tabernacle meeting in the school house. From this beginning a church was organized.

Plans were made to build in the North-east corner of the farm, but a low spot or draw ran through it. Some objected to this spot, so a site was secured upon the hill farther west and this is where the church was built.

Rev. Harold Lacey says "that his Grandparents John A. and Mary Lacey donated the land for the church, and the church was built late in 1891." The land was to revert to the farm when no services were held, the church moved or torn down. The people of this vicinity all helped to build the church.

Charter members were;

Mr. and Mrs. Will Lacey, Mr. and Mrs. Park Lacey, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Lacey, Mr. and Mrs. Monroe Wolfinger and family, Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Harpel Wolfinger, Mr. and Mrs. Aidren Wolfinger, Mr. and Mrs. Sumner Leach, Mr. and Mrs. John Samuelson, Mr. and Mrs. Gus. Samuelson with their children

Charles, Frank, Linda, Emma, Esther, Eddie. Then there were the James Fox's, Mr. and Mrs. Ollie Gibson, Dell, Ed, and Chas., Mr. and Mrs. Wilts Smalley, Mr. and Mrs. Swen, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Heskett, Sharp's, Joe Smith's, Mr. and Mrs. John Webber, the Kelley's and the Worden's.

The first pastor was Rev. Will Whitlock, and he preached the first sermon in the new church. Other ministers have been, Rev. Richard Swain, Rev. Berry, Rev. Adair, Rev. and Mrs. Grovier, Rev. Cordelia Maring, Rev. Gill, Rev. Will Lacey, Rev. Clark. Then other ministers from other churches came out and held Sunday afternoon services. Among them were Rev. Lilly, Rev. Morgan, Rev. Slothower, Rev. Osa Richardson and Rev. Alice Neudigate, and many others. Rev. Lee Hutchinson, 1953.

Mr. Will Lacey and Miss Esther Samuelson were early organists, Grace Parson about 1905 and Margaret Wolfinger, now Kendall, in 1911.

Large crowds gathered at this church for services and many "tent" meetings were held. The Baptismal services were held in the Jordan River and at large ponds near-by. The tent meetings would continue for four weeks sometimes for eight weeks. At times the tent meetings would be held in a wooded area along the river where plenty of shade would be available for the horses that had traveled a great many miles with the buggy, carriage or wagon loads of people who came to the all day meetings, bringing their "Basket" dinners.

One Christmas the neighbors had just put up the "tree", decorated it and had gone home for supper and to dress ready to give their program that night. When they returned the church door was padlocked. Church officials called the sheriff, who came out and helped unlock the door. The Christmas program went as scheduled.

The charter was lost to the United Brethren about 1900. Only occasional services were held. Some where around 1910 one evening two wagons with hayracks filled with people from the Seymour U.B. church arrived with the intent to take the pews and organ. Mrs. Winnie Kelley seeing them from her window called all of the neighbors, who came on the run and routed the city group thus saving their church.

Interest lagged from the fact that families had moved away, and on April 16, 1933 the American Sunday School Union was organized by H.L. VanDellen. Glen Latimer was elected Supt. Mrs. Flossie Blevens, Asst. Supt. Miss Mildred Latimer Secy. Mrs. J.H. Lacey, Treas. and Olen Dorsey, Librarian. The

teachers were; Harold Lacey, Mildred Latimer, and Bessie Brooks. Mrs. Jim Montgomery as pianist.

The object of this group was to study and teach the Holy Scripture by the blessing of God to lead youth and adults to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, -to promote growth of Christian life, - provide the children with pure and healthful literature.

On June 17, 1945 a meeting of all residents of the neighborhood was held at the church. It was resolved that the church be reorganized and that the name "Bethel" be retained. The officers elected at this meeting were; J.A. Lacey, James Montgomery and Lee Hutchinson.

The influence of this church is still carried on by the descendants of the Lacey family in the person of Rev. Harold Lacey, who is a Baptist minister, and a grandson of the pioneer John A. Lacey who gave the land for Bethel. He is a living example of the influence and teaching of the Gospel at Bethel. John Albert Montgomery also goes from this church into the Gospel service.