

History of Early Churches

Continuing the history of early Gypsum churches. Information taken from the 75th anniversary bulletin of October 8, 1961 furnished by Elsie Thiel.

The Temple Society came into existence in Germany in the 19th century as a protesting body within the Lutheran faith. Feeling that too much emphasis was placed upon rituals and the administering of sacraments rather than the preaching of the Word, the leaders, Christoph Hoffmann and Christoph Paulus, organized their followers into a worshiping body known as the Temple Society. Headquarters for this group continued in Germany for a time, but later moved to Palestine. In their efforts to find a national home other groups came to the United States and established small churches.

In the early 1800's Casper Melbert, the evangelist, came to Salina, Kansas, hoping to find a suitable location to gather those of this faith together. In March of 1885 four men, H.C. Pfalzgraf of New York City, William Schwarz, Wurttemberg, Germany, Joseph Graf, Jersey City and George Muench of Baden, Germany, who was living in Ohio, came to Salina, Kansas. Together with Mr. Melbert they came to Gypsum and decided to locate their colony in the community southeast of Gypsum.

These men, with the exception of Mr. Graf, who returned to New Jersey, brought their families here and established homes. Soon others joined them and a German community with similar religious beliefs was formed. These families held their services in the Pfalzgraf home, which is now the Crist Buchenau farm, and the Hobbs Creek School House until they could organize and build a place of worship.

By March of 1886 the church, which is still in use today, was completed. On Pentecost Sunday the church was dedicated. At this first meeting in their new house of worship the members chose the name of Tempelfeld for their church and their first four elders were appointed. At this time they also decided that a musical program was essential to their religious growth. They voted to ask Rev. Fred Fink of Schenectady, New York, who was a graduate student of the Hoffmann Temple School in Palestine, to come and take charge of this phase of the work. \$170.00 was contributed for the purchase of 12 band instruments. This money was sent to Rev. Fink with the request that he buy the instruments and bring them with him from the East.

Rev. Fink arrived in the summer of 1886. He organized a choir and a band and assisted Mr. Melbert with the preaching services. He also taught school at the Hobbs Creek School nearby. The following year he assumed the responsibility of pastor. The band which Rev. Fink first organized was composed of 13 members, one of who, August Schwarz, is still living. This band soon grew and was an inspiration and an instrument of joy which premeated the entire community for many years. Rev. Fink's faithful labors helped to establish and root the colony in their new home. In January of 1889 he was called back to Schenectady to serve as pastor of the Temple Society Church there.

Tempelfeld continued to grow as more families of German descent and religious faith came and established their homes in the surrounding com-

munity. In June of 1887, an additional elder to the church, C.L. Stein, was appointed and it was to be his duty to work among the people of the community 12 miles north of the Hobbs Creek district.

On Good Friday of the spring of 1887 the cemetery for the church was laid out. Special worship services were held in the morning. In the afternoon the men measured off the plot adjoining the church yard for the cemetery and planted trees on the grounds. Until this time a small plot of ground on the hill one-half mile east of the church was used as a burial ground.

For a period of years after Rev. Fink left, the church was served by Thomas Knoechel and the older members of the congregation. In 1906, through the efforts of Rev. Fink in Schenectady, Rev. J.G. Schanz was sent from Brooklyn, New York to serve as pastor. On Pentecost Sunday of that year he preached his first sermon to the Tempelfeld congregation. God blessed his ministry and he served for 20 years. He then retired and went to make his home with the Temple Colony in Palestine.

It was under the direction of Rev. Schanz that the choir of the church served as a spiritual force among the young people of the community. They sang hymns in both the German and English language.

Until the year of 1922 all of the worship services of the church were conducted in the German language. Realizing that the young people of the church had adopted the English language and that his ministry would be much more effective, Rev. Schanz started using both German and English hymns in the regular worship service. After his sermon he would read a short sermonette in the English language. At this time a Christian Endeavor group was organized for the young people. This group met every other Sunday evening. All of the programs were planned and conducted by the young people themselves and the spiritual effect of this organization extended to all of the young people of the community as well as those of the church.

It was also through the efforts of Rev. and Mrs. Schanz that the women of the church were organized into a missionary group. This organization, "The Frauen Verein" was begun in January, 1908. It has been a vital factor in the missionary program of the church to this day.

Between the years of 1926-1950 the church had no full time pastor, but through the determination of the members that the Word should continue to be preached the church held worship services regularly. During this period the faithful labors of Mr. George Ade, Mr. and Mrs. August Schwarz, Mr. Christ Reiff, Mr. Bern Ade and Mr. Thomas Lauxman, were a source of encouragement to the hearts of a devoted people.

In later years the church was assisted with their services by pastors from the surrounding communities. Since 1953 it has had a full time pastor and it is known now by the name of Temple Church.

The Word is still preached, willingly heard and joyfully received. Our prayer is that the determined spirit of the Forefathers might continue under God. May we give thanks unto the Lord for His loving kindness and faithfulness through these 75 years.