

## Bethel and Her Pastors

Thirteen ministers have served Bethel either as installed or supply pastors. There have been in addition to these many who have ministered for several months at a time but not in official relationship. The fact that there have been so many changes and such short pastorates in the past fifty years does not necessarily reflect either upon the ministers or the people. The charge is small and the field could be easily worked in a short time and many of the ministers have left, due to the fact that they felt that they could accomplish more elsewhere in a locality where there was a greater unchristian population with which to labor.

After much effort the photographs of all the pastors were obtained and while they may not look out from these pages and some think they should, let it be remembered that we are dealing with generations a century removed, and are fortunate to have any picture at all from some of them. The photograph of the first minister was not obtainable, and it is more than likely that he never had one taken.

Before Bethel had her first minister she knew Rev. Mungo Dick, who must have been a character worth knowing judging from the stories that attach to his name. In those early days the ministers went about from place to place preaching for several days at the same place and would then move on to the next church. It is said that on one of these trips of Mr. Dick's with his companion that they stopped one sultry fall day at a farm where the people were making cider. They were thirsty and getting a cup each, sat down under the shade of the trees to drink it when the companion suggested that it might be proper to express their thanks first. To this Mr. Dick agree and the companion suggested that he word the prayer which he did. When he picked up his glass it was empty and looking accusingly at his friend he was reminded that a "mon ought to watch as well pre." Nothing more was said at the time but that night the two men slept together in an old house or cabin, due to the crowded condition of their host's home. In the night, since it was still warm and sultry, they were not sleeping well and Mr. Dick suggested that they go to the cellar and get a drink of new cider which they knew was there. They went, Mr. Dick holding the candle and being master of ceremonies. After Mr. Dick had satisfied his thirst and while the other man was holding his finger over the spigot hole, the candle was suddenly knocked over. Mr. Dick said he would go for a match with which to find the spigot, but he went to his cabin and went to bed. The man in the cellar called Mr. Dick by name very lightly at first but increasingly insistent until Mr. Dick awakened the farmer and told him there must be a thief in the cellar. They going to the cellar the minister in his scanty nightclothes holding his finger over the hole in the cider barrel.

Another phase of the man's nature is seen in his courtship. He road up one night to the home of Gen. Murray, one of the most influential families of Murraysville, which was of his congregation, stayed for supper, sat talking until all had retired but the father, and then gently broke the news to him that he had decided to get married. Now Rev. Dick was an old bachelor and many of the church people were concerning themselves about Brother Dick's single blessedness so General Murray told the preacher that some such arrangement would be most welcome to the people and ask who the fortunate young

lady was. Rev. Dick replied, "Well, I would like to marry one of your daughters." The General was rather surprised and asked which one. "Well, if it's all the same to you, I will take the youngest," said Mr. Dick. Mr. Murray told him he would have to consult the girl about that, but Mr. Dick told him to make the necessary arrangements as he could not afford to waste any time in such minor affairs. The General tried to explain our method of courting but the next morning Rev. Dick left without saying more on the subject.

After several weeks had passed and the 'lover' did not put in an appearance, the General wondered if this man were joking with him as sometimes did about other matters, so he asked his wife if Mr. Dick had approached her on the subject. Mrs. Murray was dumbfounded at the news and called the girl in the hoax that there could be some explanation from that quarter. The girl unhearing of the proposition was quite indignant that she had not been consulted, thinking that perhaps she was being bartered. Gen. Murray, in no very gracious frame of mind, rode over to see the preacher and ask him what he meant by such conduct. To Mr. Murray's surprise the preacher was sore too, but for a different reason. Mr. Dick said, "I left this matter with you to be arranged several weeks ago and here I have never heard a word from you. Why didn't you give me some answer before this?"

The General saw at last that Rev. Dick was in earnest and so riding home made satisfactory explanations to his bewildered family, who were not at all opposed to the marriage but only to the methods of the courtship. The young lady assented to the marriage and the day and hour were set for the ceremony, but at the time appointed, no groom arrived. Gen. Murray sent a man on his fastest horse to learn what was wrong and the rider found the groom in his oldest clothes (and that would mean sadly dilapidated wearing apparel for a bachelor) out of his barnyard in his bare-feet working away forgetful of the rest of world and especially his wedding day. He was hurried back to the wedding party only a few hours late, the ceremony was performed and they lived happily ever afterward, thereby providing that Shakespeare was right, "all's well that ends well."

Bethel's first pastor, Rev. Hugh McRodden, had many characteristics of Rev. Dick, but all these were much hampered by the one fault--his addiction to drink. Mr. McRodden was born at Donegal, Donegal County, Ireland, and came to this country in 1819. He was received as a probationer from the United Associate Synod of Ireland, by the Presbytery of Monongahela, November 17, 1819. He was called by Bethel congregation and was there ordained and installed November 15, 1823.

Rev. McRodden was a large framed Irishman, who had evidently come into contact with the blarney stone before leaving his native country. Being a bachelor throughout life, he was a slouchy and unattractive in personal appearance. He was a good man, and though he had very decided brogue he could command the largest audiences of any minister in the country. While his preaching was of high type yet it was his prayers that gripped his audience and some say that they have never heard his equal in intercession. It is not hard to explain this fact. He was weak and knew it. He struggled

as perhaps few men have against his appetite and thus this sense of personal sin made him know and feel the need others have.

Mr. McRodden was formally charged with drunkenness April 21, 1824, and suspended June 23d, but promised not to preach till his case was passed upon, so the next day his suspension was rescinded. At the next meeting of the Presbytery, September 8<sup>th</sup>, the charge was found to be true; he was deposed and the congregation was declared vacant the third Sabbath of October, 1824. Rev. McRodden had been ordained by Rev. Dick and Rev. Walker, and was convicted upon the testimony of Cornelius Hutchinson, David Reid, Andrew Fay, Robert Sutton, J. Dunn, Tom Dick, James Clark and John Dick. McRodden continued to preach, after being silenced by the Presbytery, in school houses and was complemented by having larger crowds than the official pastors. He lived many years after this but was always very humble and felt keenly his great weakness.

For the next nine years, Bethel had no regular preacher but was supplied by Rev. McConnelly, Rev. Brown and others. In 1830 Rev. Stark was called but did not accept. Rev. Weede was supply at Bethel January 4, 1833 and was later called and was ordained and installed pastor of Bethel, Blairsville and Union; (now Mechanicsburg) congregation, November 13, 1833. Rev. Weede did not accept as a preacher but yet fitted into his environment nicely and did most acceptable constructive work in his charge. Rev. Weede was born June 23, 1808, on the place where his great-grandfather had first settled in this country, at Cedar Springs, South Carolina, but moved to Preble County, Ohio in 1816. He graduated from Miami University in 1829, studied theology under Rev. Mungo Dick and Dr. Pressly at Allegheny; was licensed by First Ohio A.R.P. presbytery, July 5, 1832 and was received into the Monongahela the next winter, he served as pastor of the above charge until relieved at Blairsville May 10, 1841 and of the other two on October 11, 1848. Leaving Bethel, he went to Marshall County, Illinois, where he was appointed S. S. to La Prairie in 1849 and in 1850 he organized the congregation of Elmira and the following year became pastor of the united charge. He resigned the latter in 1857 and the former in 1861. Due to injuries received from falling from a horse he did little preaching in his latter years. He was married to Jane Campbell on December 27, 1830 Rev. Mungo Dick officiating. His death occurred October 5, 1887, at St. Charles, Iowa. Nathaniel Cooper Weede held the second longest pastorate that Bethel has known.

The third pastor was Samuel McClarty Coon, who was born at New Texas, Allegheny County, Pa., January 3, 1816, where he received private tutoring for college preparation. Graduated from Franklin in 1838, attended Presbyterian Seminary in Allegheny; licensed by Ohio Presbytery of Presbyterian Church October 18, 1844, and ordained April 1, 1845, by the same. During 1845-1847 was a missionary to Indians of Oklahoma territory; his health failing he went to Canada as a Missionary under Canadian Free church 1847-1848. In 1849 joined A.R.P. church and became pastor of Bethel, Mechanicsburg and Union congregations January 4, 1850, till April 8, 1855. Returned west (on account of health) as pastor of Lisbon and Vernon, Wis. 1855-1862 was missionary to Freedom, Natchez, Miss., 1864-1865: S. S. period at Savannah, Ohio, 1866-1871, and pastor of Salineville and Mechanicstown, Ohio, 1871-1882. His health

gave way then entirely and he died October 1, 1886. He was author of several tracts published by the U. P. board.

This review takes Rev. Coon from the cradle to the grave but it does not begin to estimate the value of his life. He was a good man, carrying with him throughout his ministry such a devotion to the Lord's service that his life was very helpful to all who knew him. Some would say that his weak body hampered him, whereas others would say that it only served to enrich his life and that he, too, was "made perfect through suffering."

The fourth pastor was Henry Quigley Graham, son of Dr. John Graham; born at Washington, Pa., July 20, 1824. Graduated at Washington, 1849, and attended Oxford Seminary. Licensed April 18, 1852, by Chillicothe Presbytery of A. R. church and was ordained by same September 20, 1854. Was a missionary to Milwaukee July 1853, till July 1855. Was pastor of Bethel and West Fairfield September 20, 1856 till December 10, 1873. Also of Homer City and Crete December 9, 1874. Relieved from former December 11, 1889, and the latter December 13, 1892. He then retired to Indiana, Penna., where he died.

Rev. Graham was a large well built man with a superabundance of good nature which he always kept on hand. While not a great preacher he had his strong points which were said to be buckwheat cakes and honey. With his jolly good nature and pleasing personality he made a fine chaplain during the war. He was really the kind of a man demanded by the times for it was then that the union of the two churches took place. Under his pastorate more reforms took place than in any like period in the history of the Church. Among other reforms might be mentioned the passing of the Token and the 'lining out' of the Psalms. The Tokens were small pieces of lead or a like substances about three fourths of an inch long, one-four wide and one-eighth thick with the letters A. R. stamped upon the side. These were given out Saturday afternoon in connection with the preparation service for Communion and the next day before one could pass to the long tables to partake of the Lord's Supper, he must produce his token. They were only given to the members known to be in good standing and present on Saturday and no one commune without one.

The "lining out" of the Psalms involves a story, some of the younger of the congregation had for some time felt that they were competent to sing without such ceremony but the custom was established and nothing long established, in our Church, can be changed save by a revolution. Well, Bethel had a few of those radicals among her "hoi polli," and it is not certain but that their pastor was one of the arch-conspirators. At any rate on a certain Sabbath when Cornelius Hutchinson was at his official position on the right of the pulpit and the other precenter was at the left and the first lines had been read, the choristers started the tune, but the congregation, led by several young spirits continued singing. While the Psalm sung throughout the the two leaders or precenters were dumbfounded, but presently took their seats never again to officiate. The pastor's humorous spot was sorely touched and he kept running his hand through his long beard but that was not sufficient to hide his merriment. As the Psalm was concluded, one of the

good Irish brethren arose to his feet and shaking his finger at the parson said, "You take heed to your ways, Sir. Ye are no more than flesh and blood like the rest of us." At just about this point an old maid was sitting behind the man reached for the coattails of the offended member and forcibly brought him into touch with his seat. Thus ended the war without a single fatality.

The next pastor was Rev. David Humphrey Blair, who was born near Bellefontaine, Ohio, April 21, 1841. He graduated from Monmouth in 1871 and studied theology at Monmouth. Was licensed April 2, 1873, by Monmouth Presbytery and ordained by Conemaugh June 28, 1876, as pastor of Bethel, Mechanicsburg, Greenville and East Union which he served till August 1, 1877. Other pastorates were, Mahoning, Smyrna, and Beracha, at Elkins, Pa., October 2, 1877, till January 16, 1883. S. S. of Benkleman, Neb., 1885-1889. Pleasant Ridge and Cuba, Mo., July 15, 1892-September 12, 1893. He then retired to Clarinda, Iowa, where he died.

Mr. Blair was not long at Bethel and little is known about him beyond the fact that he married Hugh Mack on May 10, 1877, and this day was not only distinguished by Uncle's Hugh's marriage but also by the fact that there was a copious fall of snow.

The sixth pastor, Thomas Proudfit Patterson, was born at New Concord, Ohio, April 1, 1832. Graduated from Madison College, Antrim, Ohio, 1859 and studied theology at Allegheny; was licensed April 15, 1862, by Muskingum Presbytery. Was ordained October 28, 1864, by Monmouth Presbytery and was the same day installed as pastor of Spring Grove. Was released 1867, and was pastor of Laurel Hill, Pa., 1870-1877. Of Bethel, Mechanicsburg and Greenville, June 15, 1879. In June, 1888, he was relieved of the last two and of Bethel December 11, 1889. He retired to Monmouth where after several years ill health he died February 21, 1897.

Many remember Rev. Patterson at Bethel. He was a good sermonizer, a devout student and careful pastor. It was hard for some to understand him at first, thinking him stern and cool but this was, as they later learned, due to his constant meditation on his sermonic work. He would meet one on the road, even having to turn aside to pass but would never see him. Perhaps his practical habit and system of life left the most lasting impression among his people at Bethel. It is said that on the Sabbath trips via horseback, from church to church, he had to eat his lunch as he was riding along. The joke goes that so methodical was his life that he started eating at the same spot each day and threw the wrapping about his lunch in the same fence corner every time.

The next minister, John Anderson McGill, was born at McAlveys Fort, Penna., August 28, 1825, and was educated at Jefferson College and at Franklin College. Attended Canonsburg Seminary; was licensed by Chartiers Presbytery, October 30, 1850 and was ordained by Ohio Presbytery (A) as pastor of Four Mile congregation, 1851. He continued in this charge till November 6, 1853. He was principal of Beaver Academy and S. S. of Beaver 1854-1860. Pastor of 11<sup>th</sup> St church, New York, 1861 till 1864. Tuscarora and Concord, Pa., 1865-1885. Resided at Dalton, Ga., 1886-1890 and then was S. S. for Bethel, Mechanicsburg, Heshbon and East Union, 1891-1895, after which

he retired to New Wilmington. In 1912 moved to Pittsburgh, Pa., then to Petersburg, Pa., where he died February 7, 1915.

Rev. McGill was a conscientious student and ministered in the same spirit. AS he was known in his latter years at Bethel, he is remembered as an exceptionally spiritual man who knew his Bible thoroughly and expected you to know it nearly as well as he did. He almost lived in another world and would often go into heights which his audience could not fathom.

Father McGill's sermons were long and some of the people got in the habit of going to sleep regularly. One day he announced a Psalm in the middle of his sermon and the sleeping ones arose with the first notes of the song, thinking that the sermon was over and began reaching for wraps but were sadly disappointed by the fact that the preacher had only gotten a good start. He would return to this device often thereafter with telling effect on his hearers.

Rev. McGill when visiting would always ask his host to ask the blessing and then he would return thanks after the meal. On one occasion he asked his host to ask the blessing but the man not being a Christian would not do it but had a ready answer for him saying, "I provided this food and I think that it is little enough that you should ask the blessing." This did not bother Mr. McGill in the least and perhaps he thought no more of it than if the man had done as he requested. Father McGill was a grand old man of God. He has two sons in the ministry in this country, and one a missionary in Egypt. His daughter Carrie is married to John G McCrory before mentioned.

The last of our ministers, who have passed on, is Samuel M. Black. He was born at Paris, Pa., January 21, 1846, graduated at Westminster, 1868, ordained by Lake Presbytery, 1873, and ministered to Watsons Run and Evansburg till July, 1874; Summit, 1875-1877; Johnstown, 1878-1881; West Fairfield and New Florence 1881-1889; Tarentum, 1890-1893; Westfield and New Florence, 1898, but was relieved of New Florence in 1900, and made S. S. of Bethel and Heshbon until 1902. He died about 1906. He was a most kind and considerate pastor and faithfully served the people over whom he had charge. His jolly nature, coupled with his zeal for his calling, made his work of high constructive value and of lasting effect.

The rest of the men who have served Bethel are all living and are known to most of my readers so only a few items of interest will be noted in each of their pastorates.

David Singleton Tinker is the oldest ex-pastor of our Church living. He received his education at Grove City College, graduating in 1893, attended Allegheny Seminary and received his degree of Ph.D. from his Alma Mater in 1899 and S.T.D. from American Temperance University of Tenn., in 1901. He was ordained and licensed as Bethel's pastor, September 10, 1895, and was a S. S. for Heshbon and Bolivar which he organized in 1899. Was relieved of Bethel in April, 1900 and of Heshbon in 1901. He has the distinction of being the only pastor that Bethel has ever supported by herself. He has

since ministered to Bolivar and Second Altoona and is now teaching in Grove City College.

C. F. Campbell followed Rev. Black and served as pastor from April, 1906, till November 1909. Rev. Campbell went to school at Westminster and Pittsburgh Seminary. He has ministered in the West and at Ambridge after leaving Bethel and has now accepted a call to Johnstown.

H. W. Logan was pastor from June, 1912, till June 1914. Rev. Logan received his education at Grove City and our Pittsburgh Seminary. After leaving Bethel he was called to Crete and is now at Universal, Penna.

W. R. Thompson preceded the writer as pastor and served from December, 1915 until January, 1917. Dr. Thompson has served as pastor or supply at the following places: Roneys Point, Gladden, Eleventh Pittsburgh, Frankfort Springs, Rix Mills, Bolivar, Heshbon, Bethel and is now at Monongahela. Dr. Thompson received his college training in Hopedale College and his theological education at Pittsburgh Seminary. His degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Scio College. He has written several lyrics some of which have been set to music, the best know of which are, "The Ode to the Flag," "Our Red Cross Patriots" and "The Golden Service Star," the last one being dedicated to the young men patriots, members of the Y. P. C. Union, who have served in the recent war.

The present pastor, W. B. McCrory, was appointed S. S. for Bethel, East Union, Heshbon and Mechanicsburg, in May, 1917, when a first year man in the Pittsburgh Seminary and has held the charge during his Seminary course. He was licensed in October, and ordained in December, 1917. He graduated from Cooper College in 1909, and will complete his Seminary course in May, 1919.