

1871 - THROUGH THE YEARS - 1971

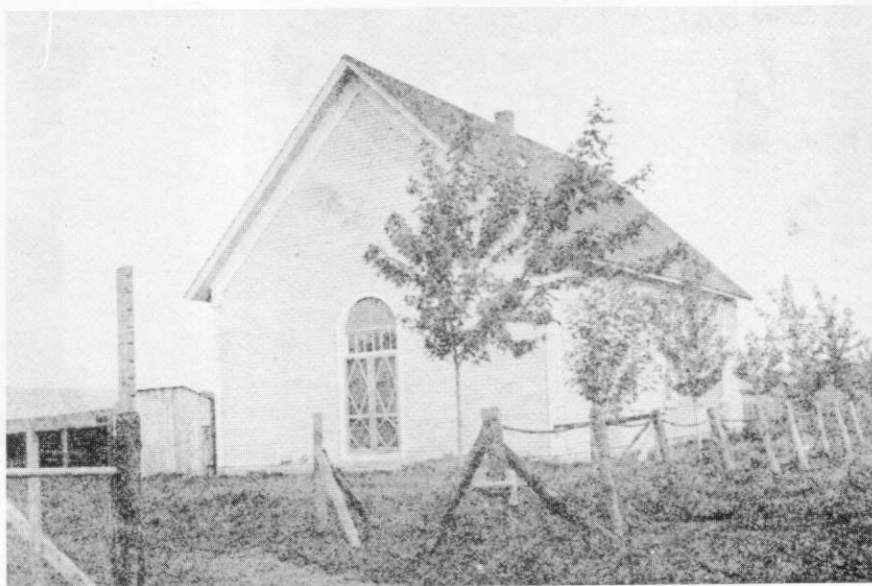
Sometime prior to 1870, Rev. A. G. Lansing, missionary from the Pella area, started a mission in the Otley area for the purpose of gathering children in Sunday School and the assembling of people to hear the preaching of the Word of God. This mission was known as the Otley Union Sunday School, of which Rev. Lansing was superintendent. These meetings were interdenominational and were the forerunners of the different churches later established in Otley. The first church built in Otley was a Methodist Church. It was built just south of the present school building on what is known as the "Coal Hollow Road." The next church built was a Baptist Church, known as the Mr. Moriah Baptist Church, located south of the present Myron Van Wyk property along Highway 163.

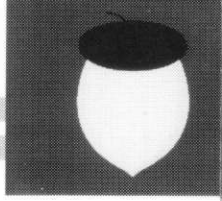
The Otley Reformed Church also had its beginning with the work of Rev. Lansing. According to the minutes of 1871 of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, a Reformed Mission had also been started at Otley. With the assistance of the Sunday School of the Reformed Churches of

Flatbush, Long Island, and North Newark, New Jersey, it was possible to erect a church building. We are told that the children of these two Sunday Schools contributed the noble amount of \$1,000 to complete the needed sanctuary.

The Otley Reformed Church is located on land purchased on March 31, 1848, from the United States government by Admiral B. Miller. In November, 1848, Admiral Miller sold this portion of land to William C. Ewing, who lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mary Josephine Ewing, daughter of William Ewing, married George W. Johnston and they lived in Otley for some time. She was one of the charter members of the Otley Reformed Church. The street that runs along the east side of the church grounds and parsonage is known as Johnston Street, because those lots were part of the G. W. Johnston addition of Otley, which was plotted in August, 1870 by O. H. S. Kenedy, Surveyor of Marion County, Iowa.

**The
First
Church
Building**





The Johnstons gave a warranty deed for the consideration of one dollar to the Board of Domestic Missions of the Reformed Church in America. It was filed on June 22, 1878. This is where the present church building stands. Another deed and consideration of one hundred dollars from Mary J. Ewing and G. W. Johnston to the Otley Reformed Church was dated August 13, 1894. This is where the parsonage was built.

On March 2, 1871, the church was organized by the Classis of Illinois of the Reformed Church in America. According to the minutes of that meeting of organization, we have the following information: "The committee appointed by the Classis of Illinois to organize a Reformed Church at Otley, Iowa, met in the Reformed Mission Church at Otley, March 2, 1871. There were present of the committee: Rev. A. G. Lansing, Rev. E. Winter, Rev. A. Thompson, Elders I. Overkamp, and W. L. Compton. The following persons were received on certificate: Sara M. Hedricks, wife of Rev. A. G. Lansing, received from the Reformed Church of Saratoga, New York; Mary J. Ewing, wife of G. W. Johnston, received from the Presbyterian Church of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; Emma C. Neff, wife of D. G. Rhoads, received from the First Reformed Church of Reading, Pennsylvania; Francis Brain, Ann Garden, wife of Francis Brain; John De Wild; Marie Stomphorst, wife of John De Wild; Catherine De Wild, all received from the Second Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa. The following persons were received on confession of faith: D. G. Rhoads, George W. Barret, Peter Brain, Henry De Wild, Emma Barret, wife of Henry M. Smith; John Voss, Gertrude Van Olst, wife of John Voss; Burke R. Schatamus, Ymkje De Vries, wife of Burke R. Schatamus. The following persons were then elected as officers of the Reformed Church of Otley: for elder, D. G. Rhoads; for deacon, Francis Brain. There was no other business. The meeting was adjourned with prayer.

Abm. G. Lansing
Chairman of Committee

Attest
D. G. Rhoads, Clk."

Thus we observe that the church began with 17 members. The first minutes of the new organization indicate very clearly that the constituency of this church was composed of Americans and a few people of Dutch background. This condition caused some dissension which depressed the Rev. A. G. Lansing, and he soon left for another field of service in 1872.

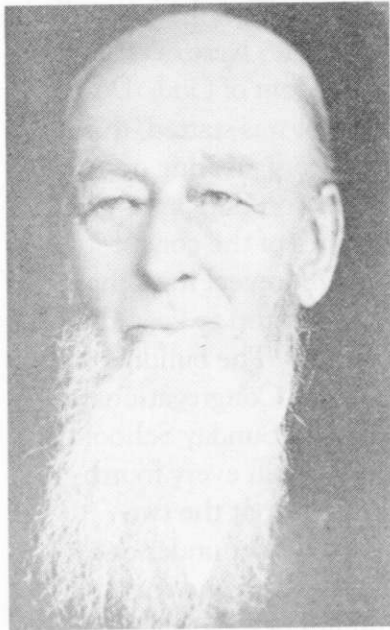
In the years 1874 - 1875 the congregation was served by Evangelist A. G. Ziegler, and then by theological student Samuel Streng in 1876. As has been indicated before, these were dark days and some were ready to give up and allow the organization to dissolve.

In 1877, a call was extended to theological student Josias Meulendyk. He accepted the call and was ordained to the ministry and apparently served as Stated Supply for this congregation. At his arrival the small group made a firm resolution during these discouraging days to go forward. They had dwindled down to twelve members, but they were determined to do great things for the Kingdom of God. During his work here, a Sunday School was started, this action being taken at a consistory meeting of June 26, 1878. The Sunday School met on Sunday afternoon from 3:30 to 4:30. The minutes of the consistory meeting of September 23, 1878, reveal to us that Herman Markus was hired as sexton to keep the building in order for 40c a week. The building was also used by a small group of the Congregational Church and by the Otley Union Sunday School. The Rev. Meulendyk had to preach every fourth Sunday at Sandridge, indicating that the two congregations were working together under one pastor. He labored here for one year and then departed in 1878. The minutes of October 1, 1878, show the following names as constituting the organization: Francis Brain (Breen), C. Verrips, N. Witzenburg, D. Van Zante, L. Plette, C. Van Genderen, D. Stravers, W. Sille, and A. B. Colyn.

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The next servant of the Lord, listed as State Supply, was Rev. A. C. Kuyper. During his short stay of only a few months, the first Communion Service was held. After serving here a short time, he went to his eternal reward. After the death of Rev. Kuyper, the church was served by Rev. H. G. Klyn. There is no record as to how long he served, but after his departure there was a period of vacancy.

In 1882, the church asked the classis for permission to call a minister with the Bethel Reformed Church, which was located a few miles east of Otley. This call was extended to the Rev. E. Westing. The partnership of the two churches apparently was not satisfactory, for later we find he was serving only the Otley Reformed Church. The minutes indicate that the Bethel and Sandridge churches decided to be served by one minister. During Rev. Westing's time, the church started catechism classes and began the practice of home visitation.

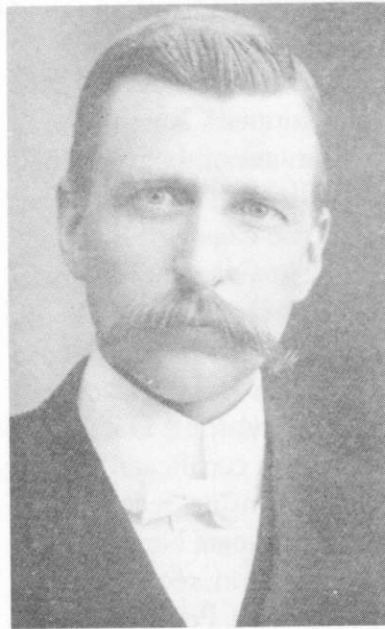


Rev. A. G. Ziegler
1874 - 1875
1887 - 1892

On August 9, 1887, a call was extended to Rev. A. G. Ziegler who had formerly worked for the congregation. He was called to serve both the Otley and Bethel churches for a salary of \$700. The Otley church paid \$300, the Bethel church paid \$200, and the Board of Domestic Missions paid \$200. During his time of service, the janitor, Herman Markus, asked for 10¢ more per week to

keep the building clean. The request was granted, and he would now receive 50¢ a week for his services. The Rev. Ziegler left in 1892.

On September 11, 1893, the Otley Reformed Church and the Bethel Church extended a call to the Rev. C. Heines. He was an evangelist and his work seemed to be greatly blessed by God. At a consistory meeting held on May 3, 1895, action was taken to file articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State in Des Moines, Iowa.



Rev. C. Heines
1893 - 1897

The Dorcas Society was organized in the fall of 1895 with Mrs. Heines, the minister's wife, as the leader of the group. This society continues to the present day and has played a large part in the history of the church.

Rev. Heines completed his work and left on April 19, 1897. Student S. Van De Berg and

Student H. J. Veldman worked in the Otley and Bethel churches in the summer of 1897. Candidate D. De Groot came in 1897 and ministered to the congregation for about two years.

On March 3, 1899, a call was extended to Rev. George Niemeyer. During his ministry the church became self-supporting and did not need additional funds from the Board of Domestic Missions to maintain her pastor. We read the following statistics concerning the religious condition of the church in the year 1900: There were 52 families with a total of 63 communicant members. In that year eight had been received by confession of faith and four by certificate. Seven infants and four adults were baptized. Forty persons were enrolled in the catechism classes. One hundred and thirty were enrolled in Sunday School. A healthy condition



Rev. George Niemeyer
1899 - 1901

seemed to prevail in the congregation during these days. The consistory decided, with the financial help of the Dorcas Society, to build stalls in which the horses could be kept during the hour of services on Sunday. Rev. George Niemeyer left Otley for another field of service in November, 1901.

On March 11, 1902, a call was extended to Rev. H. K. Boer. The call emphasized that the church was self-supporting, and the congregation expressed their gratitude to God for helping them to achieve this goal. Rev. H. K. Boer, together with his able wife, served the congregation until November 2, 1905, when he left to accept a call to the Reformed Church at Portage, Michigan. After the departure of Rev. Boer, calls were extended to the following ministers: Rev. Henry P. Schuurman, Rev. R. Douwstra, Rev. H. Dykhuizen, and Rev. J. Luxen. All of these declined the calls.

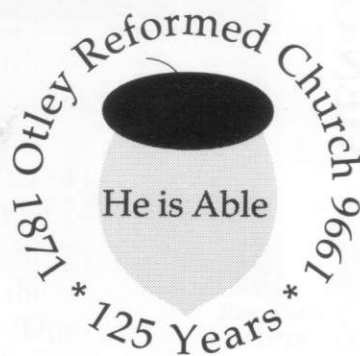
On February 4, 1907, a call was extended to Student J. G. Brouwer. This call was accepted. The conditions of the call were that the Sunday School would meet in the morning, a service in the Holland language would be held in the afternoon, and an English service would be held in the evening of each Sabbath Day. A month after the meeting to call their new pastor, the congregation decided to build a new church edifice. The building was to cost \$4,000 at the most. Rev. Brouwer was ordained and installed on May 28, 1907, and preached his first sermon from Romans 1:16 and 17, on June 2, 1907. This was the last service held in the old church building. For the remainder of the summer, the congregation

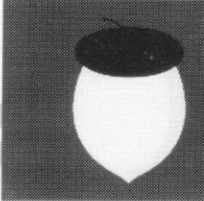
worshipped in a large tent. On one occasion when they were assembled in the tent, a storm came up and most of the congregation left before the "dominie" was half through his sermon.

On October 23, 1907, the new church building was dedicated to the service of the Lord. The following ministers were present to take part in that service: Rev. A. G. Ziegler, a former pastor; Rev. K. J. Dykema, pastor of the Leighton Reformed Church; Rev. H. J. Pietenpol of the Third Reformed Church in Pella; Rev. William J. Van Kersen of the Second Reformed Church in Pella; Rev. Seth Vander Werf of the First Reformed Church in Pella; Rev. F. B. Mansen of the Bethany Reformed Church near Sully; and the pastor, Rev. Brouwer.



Rev. J. G. Brouwer
1907 - 1910





THE NEW CHURCH BUILDING - 1907

At this time, an English service was started in the mornings. It was a 15-minute service and followed the Sunday School in the mornings. In spite of many hardships in the succeeding years, it became the service having the largest attendance.

During the pastorate of Rev. Brouwer, 58 persons were received on confession of faith. Mr. A. T. Van Houweling was superintendent of the Sunday School. His work was greatly blessed among the young people and brought many to a decision for Christ. The Rev. Brouwer left in 1910. Calls were extended to and declined by the following ministers:

Rev. H. Vander Naald, Rev. A. Vander Werf, Rev. J. De Haan and Rev. Peter Grooters.



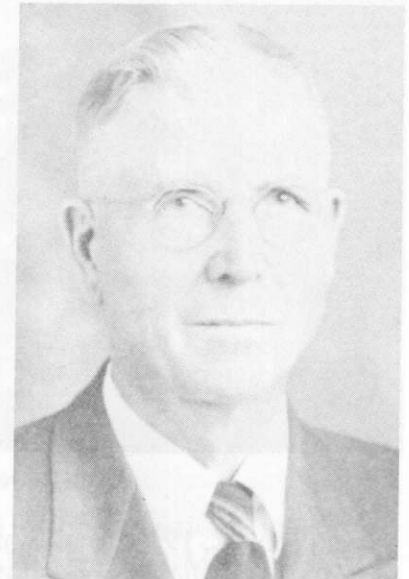
Rev. Martin C. Ruisard
1910 - 1915

Bearers Society was organized and proved to be a very successful organization.

On August 23, 1910, a call was extended to Rev. Martin C. Ruisard. He accepted the call and arrived in October, 1910. During these years, the Dorcas Society sponsored an annual picnic and bazaar, which was well attended by large crowds of people from near and far. It was a very happy occasion held on the Baptist church grounds. How the good ladies worked! Everybody enjoyed this event.

About a year before the departure of Rev. Ruisard, a girls' society called the Banner

On September 27, 1915, Rev. Ruisard accepted a call to Hope Reformed Church, Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Calls were extended to and declined by Rev. J. H. Straks and Rev. A. J. Te Paske. At a congregational meeting on January 25, 1916, the Rev. Peter Grooters of Greenleaf, Minnesota was called. He accepted the call. In that same year a tract of ground 42 feet by 120 feet was purchased for the price of \$117. This was purchased to take care of the need for additional space. The Dorcas Society donated the funds for additional horse stables on the church grounds.



Rev. Peter Grooters
1916 - 1920