

# **Buhler Mennonite Church: 1920 - 2020**

Lois Schroeder & Dave Schroeder

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## FORWARD

100 years of faithful ministry is cause for celebration. Throughout history God calls us to remember, to build memorials, and to engage in rituals of memory so that when in the future our children ask, "What does this all mean" (Joshua 4), we can tell them of God's help and faithfulness. This book is such a memorial. To God be the glory!

- Reverend Willmar T. Harder (2021)



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book of the first 100 years of the Buhler Mennonite Church is the result of many hours of research and collaboration. Every effort has been made to be as accurate as possible in the telling of our story. That said, any errors or omissions that are included in this book are purely accidental and are not the result of malice or ill will. Please accept our humble efforts in telling the ongoing story of Buhler Mennonite Church. Thank you for your indulgence.

- Lois Schroeder & Dave Schroeder







1920 - 2020  
Buhler Mennonite Church

## The First 100 years – 1920-2020

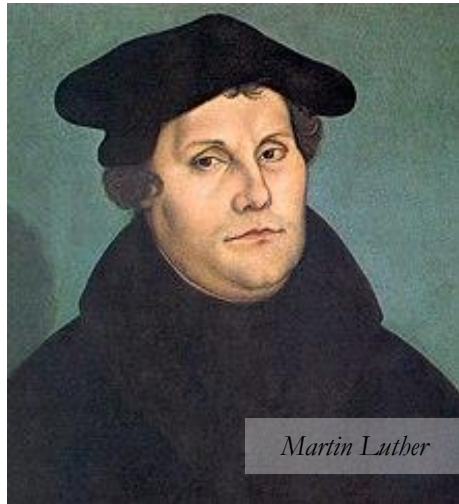
The Centennial Celebration of Buhler Mennonite Church is in recognition of the Church's success with the leadership and direction of God. The small congregation has survived and thrived over the last century, seeing change and growth over the years. The congregation is a product of its heritage, theology, and growth, making it the dynamic group that it is today. The congregation's guiding star was its Anabaptist theology which made it unique from other denominations, rooted in the teachings of Christ and the Word of God.

## Our Theological Roots

Three hammer blows and three words, *"Hier stehe ich!"* marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther was a Catholic priest who was upset with what he saw as improper behavior and corruption in the Catholic Church.

Luther was particularly offended by a practice by his local bishop, Bishop Tetzel. Bishop Tetzel offered a process known as "indulgences". As a member of the local congregation, individuals were allowed to purchase indulgences in advance of sinful activity and, in effect, were absolved of their sin before its commission.

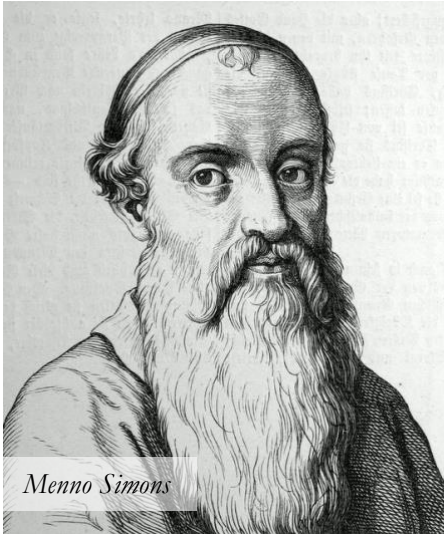
The cash "donation" to Bishop Tetzel was used to support his lavish lifestyle and was used to assist in building Tetzel's pet project, the cathedral in Wittenberg, Germany. Martin Luther created a list of grievances which he asked the Church leadership to address. Bishop Tetzel blocked Luther's complaints, so Luther and a small group of priests took the unprecedented step of taking their schism public. Early one morning, Martin



Luther led a small group of priests to the massive doors at the partially completed cathedral in Wittenberg. Luther signed the list of grievances (known as *The 95 Theses*) and then nailed the document to the cathedral doors. Martin Luther was the lone signee of the document, as the other priests were fearful of the repercussions of such an act of defiance.

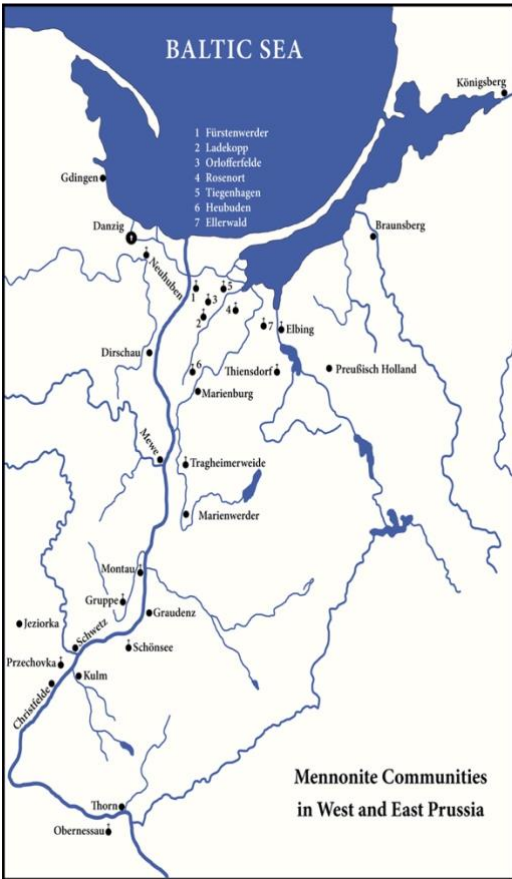
After a time of discussion, Pope Leo X declared Martin Luther a heretic, outside the protection of the Church, and shortly thereafter, Luther was forced to flee Wittenberg under the pain of death. Eventually, Martin Luther found sanctuary in the fortified castle of Fredrick the Wise. Luther's ideas for Church reform were not new or unique to him, but he was the first to use the newly invented printing press effectively to spread his ideas of reform throughout Europe. Out of the chaos of the Reformation, the Protestant movement was born.

Among the reformers, there was dissent as well as to the reforms necessary to “purify” the Church. Among the dissenting reformers was a former Catholic priest named Menno Simons. On January 12, 1536, Menno Simons rejected the Catholic Church and the priesthood, throwing his lot in with the Anabaptists. Simons was re-baptized in early 1536 and ordained in 1537 by Obbe Philips. The Philips brothers were members of the peaceful Anabaptists led by Melchior Hoffman. Hoffman rejected the violence of the Munster Rebellion, saying violence rejected the true nature of Christ. Menno Simons was part of the first self-sustaining Anabaptist congregation in the Netherlands (4)



## Our Heritage

In the early to mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, Mennonites began to flee to the Vistula delta region to avoid religious persecution in the Low Countries, especially Friesland and Flanders. Most fled seeking religious freedom and exemption from military service. The Dutch and Frisian languages were gradually replaced by the Low German language spoken in the area. Low

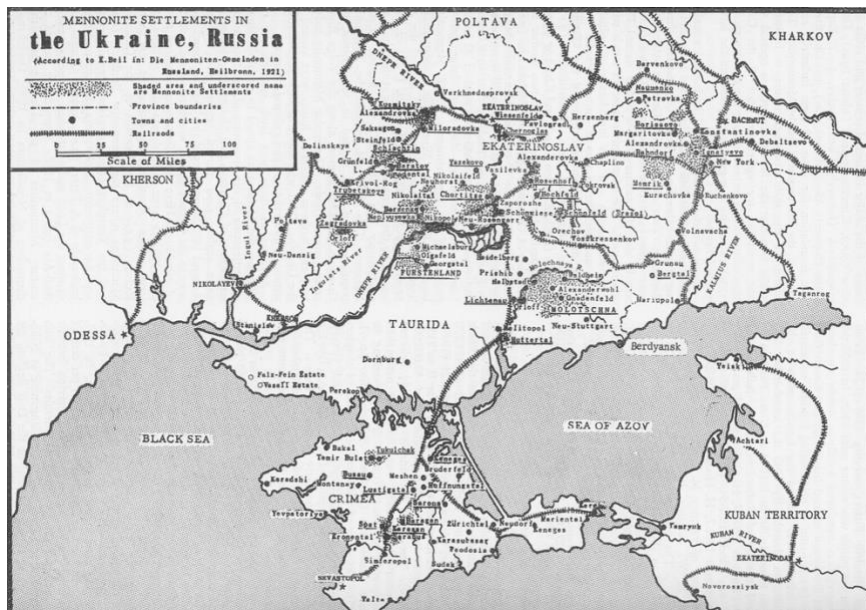


German further evolved into Plautdietsch over a period of 300 years in the Vistula delta region and southern Russia, becoming a uniquely Mennonite language. Dutch Mennonites followed the earlier emigrants to the region as well as some Poles who were assimilated into the Vistula delta Mennonite group (4).

With the first of the Partitions of Poland, most of the West Prussian land in the Vistula area became part of the Kingdom of Prussia in 1772. Frederick William II of Prussia ascended the throne in 1786 and taxed Mennonites brutally in return for exemption from military service (4).

In 1762, Catherine the Great gained leadership of Russia. The following year, she issued a manifesto inviting all Europeans to come and settle land in New Russia, particularly in the Volga region. This was not a magnanimous gesture on Catherine's part – the region was a large and sparsely populated steppe (prairie), inhabited by small groups of semi-nomadic people known as the Nogais. Catherine hoped for development of

the land to enrich Russia. In 1789, Mennonite from the Vistula delta region sent delegates to negotiate an arrangement with Crown Prince Paul (5).



*Map of Ukraine, Russia, circa 1875*

Initially, Catherine promised permanent exemption from military service and complete freedom of religion (11). Jacob Hoepfner and Johann Bartsch led the Mennonite migration from Prussia. Three hundred forty six Mennonite families in Prussia moved to the region, establishing the colony of Chortiza on the Dnieper River as their first colony in 1789. A second, larger colony, Molotschna was founded in 1803 (4). Eventually, 7 colonies were established in South Russia.

Each farm was about 180 acres, but in accordance with the original agreement with Catherine's emissaries, the farms could not be subdivided by inheritance, a continuation of the European tradition of primogeniture. As only one child (typically the oldest son) could take over management of the farm after the patriarch retired or died, other family heirs were left landless. This led to a culture of constant expansion of the colonies land holdings. By 1807, there were 345 villages in the region. The expansion included 5 settlements in Ukraine, 4 in the Volga River region, 1 in the Caucasus, 1 in the Crimea, and 3 in Siberia. (10)

The Mennonite settlers lived and worked alongside the nomadic Nogais, hiring them for agricultural work and renting pasture from them. The relationship was contentious at times, as the Nogai frequently raided Mennonite cattle herds. In 1860, Nogai Tatars departed the region, freeing up land and removing some of the threat to cattle herds (4).

Two Mennonite settlements on the Vistula near Warsaw, Deutsch Kazun and Deutsch Wymysle came under Russian control with border adjustments at the Congress of Vienna. Some of these Mennonite families emigrated to the Molotschna settlement after it was established. Many families from this settlement moved to nearby Volhynia in 1802 (4).

When the Prussian government eliminated exemption from military service on the basis of religious grounds, the remaining Mennonites were eager to emigrate to Russia. They received land along the Volga River and military service exemption for twenty years, after which they would be taxed for the privilege (11).

By 1859, Mennonites had established four colonies in Russia and numbered 34,500 people (11). Through natural increase, the Mennonite population eventually numbered about 45,000, mostly in the Chortiza and Molotschna colonies. Forty daughter colonies were established by 1914, occupying 4,600 square miles of land and a total population of 100,000 (8).

In 1870, a pall was cast over South Russia. The imperial government announced new policy regarding German settlement. Rising waves of nationalism were washing across Europe and Czar Alexander II sought to assimilate the German speaking people of South Russia as soon as possible. “One Czar, one religion, one language” became official Czarist policy. Alexander no longer felt bound to the promises of long-dead Catherine the Great to the Mennonite settlers of long ago. The final blow came in 1871 with the passage of a universal military service act (8).

The South Russian Mennonites sent a delegation to St. Petersburg to request exemption from military service. Many members of the commission which drafted the new law had never heard of Anabaptists and pacifism and were skeptical of the group. One commissioner asked Elder Leonard Suderman, “And what would you do if your enemy came to fight you?” Suderman calmly replied, “I would approach him, extend my hand,

and embrace him, but would not kill him.” Suderman’s answer was met by derision by the commission (11).

The following year, another delegation went to St. Petersburg to further petition for relief from military service and religious freedom, but were again rebuffed. The Czar’s brother, Grand Duke Konstantin promised that a new law would provide a path allowing noncombatant military service to allay concerns of the Mennonite colonists. Most conscientious Mennonites could not accept any form of service in support of war, prompting community leaders to inquire globally of immigration options (5).

## **Our Past**

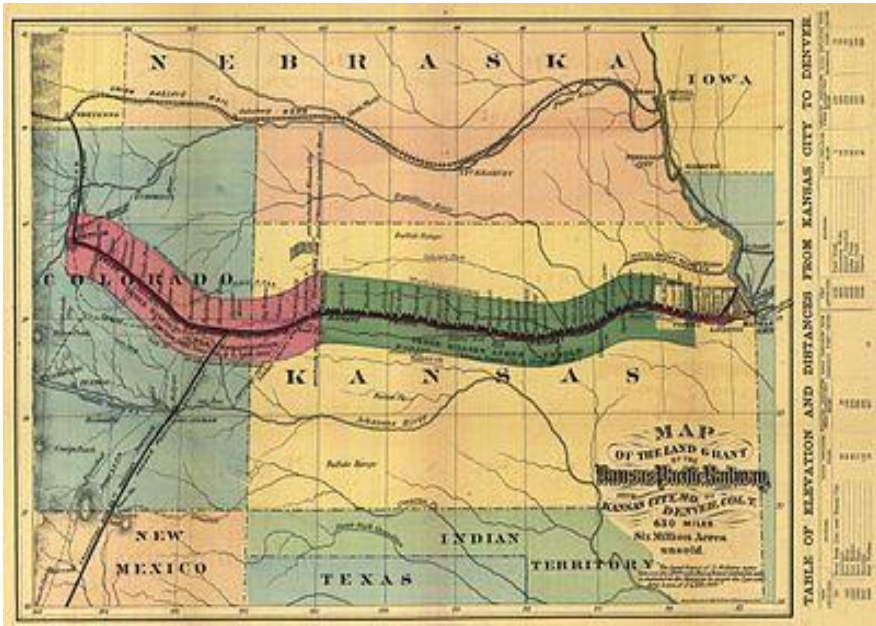
In 1873, 12 men travelled to North America to explore immigration options and searching for large tracts of fertile farmland. All of the major Mennonite colonies were represented. The group returned with favorable reports of good farmland available in Manitoba, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas (5).

The more conservative groups chose Canada which promised privileges equal to those held initially in Russia and the availability of large tracts of inexpensive land. The more liberal groups, mostly from the Molotschna colony, chose the United States. In some cases, entire congregations (Alexanderwohl and Bergthal) moved *en masse*, while many other individual family groups followed as well. Property was sold, but as the market was glutted, most suffered a loss in the sale. The Russian government threw up numerous bureaucratic barriers and charged exorbitant prices for passports (5).

With the realization that 40,000 of Russia’s productive farmers were planning to leave for North America, the Russian government sent Eduard Totlben to the colonies in 1874. He met with community leaders, telling inflated stories of the tribulations of North America. Additionally, the government of Russia offered an alternative national service that was in no way affiliated with the military. His arguments led to some of the more liberal Mennonites to stay in Russia (4).

From 1874 to 1880, ten thousand of the approximately forty-five thousand South Russian Mennonites immigrated to the United States and another eight thousand immigrated to Manitoba. Having recently completed the Transcontinental Railroad (1869), American railroad companies were glutted with land. Under the terms of the contract with the government, railroads were given 20 square miles of land for every mile of track laid in the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. As railroad companies had little interest in farming, they recruited settlers across Europe to immigrate to America. They sweetened the attraction with promises of temporary housing and inexpensive railroad land. The Mennonite immigrants proved eager customers for the railroad moguls (5)

*Railroad land map, circa 1875*



Leaving the South Russian colonies was filled with fear of the unknown as well as sorrow in leaving all that was familiar and loved. South Russia had, after all, been home for nearly a century. Many accounts describe final services for those leaving, filled with hymns and prayers and many tears with the realization that many friends and families would never be reunited on this earth. The final farewell would be said as families left the community



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by way of the graveyard to say one last goodbye to loved ones reunited with God. The excitement of new beginnings was strongly tempered by a feeling of loss (5).

Many of the immigrants travelled north through the German states to the North Sea, many departing from the port of Hamburg. The overland journey was arduous and tiring, only to be followed by two-to-three-week sea voyage on an unfamiliar rolling ship. On arrival to America, a long train trip half-way across the country to an unfamiliar place. On arrival, the uncertainty of an immigrant house, travelling to view available land, purchasing said land, and making a home in a sea of grass. Rolling plains as far as the eye could see, trees scattered here and there, thicker on the river bottoms, but monotonous rolling prairie in every direction. The sight must have been both exhilarating and daunting all in the same thought. In the case of Buhler, a small group of men stood on a small hilltop on what is now the north edge of the city and said words to the effect of “This is a hopeful view.” This was to be a new beginning, a new home, a new land, a new culture. Strangers in a strange land, indeed.



*Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, circa 1920*

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As we, the members of Buhler Mennonite Church are a daughter church, it is appropriate to say some words of our mother church. In 1875, a group of like-minded Mennonite settlers from Harvey, Reno, and McPherson counties organized a church called Hoffnungsau. Their first elder was the Reverend Dietrich Gaeddert. The group lived over a wide area geographically and, as a result, attendance for many was sporadic. Those living at distance inconvenient for attendance were first provided family group meetings in schools and private homes, with many services being held in the home of Elder Gaeddert. This proved unsatisfactory, however, so in 1911, a church building was built in Buhler and in 1913, a second was built in Inman (4).

The Buhler church was built on a lot purchased from Jacob M. and Lizzie Bartel for the consideration of \$200.00. Jacob Bartel served as head carpenter as well. Construction of the building did not proceed until the necessary funds were raised as was typical of the era with strong aversion to debt. Members raised the required funding and construction on the church building began with a combination of volunteer and paid help. The new building was small, 28 x 48 feet, totaling 1,344 square feet, and was named the “Buhler Hoffnungsau Church” (10). The building included a steeple with a bell tower.



1913 Buhler Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church – circa 1913

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The bell sets Buhler Mennonite Church apart from other churches in the community as it is the only active bell in the town. The bell is rung at 9:00 a.m. every Sunday and has been used to mark special moments such as weddings, funerals and the beginning of landmark services including the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary service on December 3, 1995. The Buhler group was active and began to develop an independent spirit (3).

At a special meeting on December 14, 1919, it was resolved: "That we wish to organize ourselves into an independent congregation." The Reverend P.R. Voth was asked to serve temporarily as pastor. On December 21, a committee of five were elected to petition the Hoffnungsau congregation assembled at its annual meeting the wish of the Buhler group to become an independent congregation. Several reasons were offered for the creation of the new group, the leading cause being the distance issues for attendance at Hoffnungsau. The assistance of the Hoffnungsau congregation was requested to assist in creating the group and provide peaceful resolution of the offspring church (3).

In January of 1920, five ministers worked together to create a constitution for the new church, based on the Hoffnungsau constitution. The committee was charged not only with writing a constitution, but also naming the new church. After the committee completed its work, special meetings were held to advocate for the adoption of the new constitution. Major changes in what would become the Buhler Mennonite Church congregation were the omission of the section dealing with the sacramental observance of foot washing, changes in the method of election and length of tenure of deacons, a more liberal attitude in regard to mixed religion marriages, and omission of the expectation that a minister preside at business meetings (3).

Also in January of 1920, agreements were reached regarding property settlement and necessary legal documents were signed and filed. Buhler Mennonite Church began with 144 charter members. Various committees were formed to handle the business and organization of the church. For support of the church, an assessment of \$2.00 per member and a 4% tax per \$100 property valuation was levied. Times were fixed for both School and Church worship and P.P. Schmidt was elected serve at baptisms and communions until deacons could be elected.

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In October, 1920, the Reverend P.R. Voth was called to serve as pastor for an annual salary of \$800. As a supplement to his pastoral income, Reverend Voth repaired pocket watches. Reverend Voth was born in February of 1870 In Gnadental, Wollast Taurien, South Russia. At the age of 4, his family emigrated to America as part of the Great Mennonite Migration of 1874. He was baptized by confession of faith in June, 1889 and was a member of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in Goessel. He married Anna Dirks in 1901 and their union was blessed with 4 children, 3 of whom grew to adulthood. Under his leadership, women were allowed voting privileges on church business. Because of the significant number of local teachers attending services, an English-speaking Sunday School was established. In the beginning, all services were preached in German, then one Sunday a month in English, then two, then three, and finally, all services were conducted in English. On the first Sunday in November, 2 deacons were elected. On December 27, 1920, church membership was officially 156 people (4). Also in 1920, the church became a member of the General Conference and Western District Conference. (19)

At the annual meeting in late December, 1922, the congregation had grown to 184 and a committee was formed to address the need for additional space in the church building. Initially, the committee recommended adding on the the existing church. \$6,000 in pledges were secured with the plan of beginning construction in 1926. With the prospect of a poor harvest in 1925, the plan was put on hold. In 1926, a church building fund was established with the plan of creating a new building (4). In March of 1927, construction of a new church was approved to measure 40 x 80 x 24 feet, costing no more than \$17,500. The old church building was torn down and the materials sold to Lily Dale School for \$1,000. The new church building was completed in the fall of 1927 and could accommodate 450 people on the main floor and 150 in the balcony. The floor space of the sanctuary was 4 ½ times that of the old building (5). The building was dedicated on November 20, 1927. 3,000 people attended the dedication. The building debt was retired in 1931.

Buhler Mennonite Church



*Buhler Mennonite Church Building on November. 20, 1927 on day of dedication. The overflow tent can be seen to the north (right).*

*Under the overflow tent at the Dedication Service for the new 1927 Buhler Mennonite Church on November 20, 1927.*



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After Reverend Voth resigned in 1933, several pastors served the church over the next 10 years. In July of 1942, Reverend Henry Fransen was ordained and called to minister Buhler Mennonite Church. The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church was celebrated in November of 1946. At the time, the church had a membership of 350 people. In December of 1947, the trustees were instructed to study the possibility of building a Christian Education Building. It took seven and one half years for the building plan to come to fruition. The addition was brick and stone 36 x 88 feet, three level addition at a cost of \$79,500. More than 16,121 hours of volunteer labor helped to keep costs down and included men, women and children from Buhler Mennonite Church as well as members of the surrounding community. The building was dedicated on June 19, 1955. The new wing boasted eighteen classrooms, a library, church office, Pastor's study, a kitchen, a kitchenette, restrooms, and a Fellowship Hall (10).



*1955 Christian Education Building – circa 1955*

In 1961, plans began for a new parsonage. The construction on the parsonage was completed on April 1, 1962, just in time to welcome our new pastor, Harold Thieszen and his family from Ohio. Reverend Thieszen and his family served our congregation for 8 ½ years, until 1970. During this era,

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the Annual MCC Relief Sales began in our community. Our congregation became involved in the sales early on and continue to support this ministry to the present (10).

On April 18, 1971, our congregation celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary under the leadership of Reverend Dr. D.C. Wedel. In late 1972, the church extended a call to Reverend John Braun to serve a three year term. During this period, the sanctuary was updated with air conditioning and carpet (9).

In August, 1976, Reverend Abe Krause was installed as pastor of the church. Reverend Krause and his family came from Henderson, Nebraska. During this time, the church constitution was amended to allow women to serve as Deacons with a favorable vote of the congregation. Leona Wall was elected the first woman Deacon in Buhler Mennonite Church in 1978 (9).

In 1978, the congregation voted to renovate the sanctuary and update the church basement. In the summer of that year, the Mennonite World Conference was held in Wichita, Kansas. Many member of our congregation attended this world wide celebration. In early 1979, work began on the church basement update. After work on the basement was completed, the sanctuary was remodeled. Both projects were completed in time for Easter services with a formal dedication on May 18, 1980 (9).

In 1980, Reverend Krause challenged the congregation to set clear goals for mission. Three goals came to the fore. 1) A strong youth program 2) emphasis on Bible study and memorization 3) Evangelism and Outreach. These goals were chosen to clarify the mission of the church and strengthen resolve in its mission (9). To this end, steps were taken to strengthen the Youth program. Youth group was started in the 1950's. Small numbers of youth in various local congregations led to combining Hoffnungsau, Hebron, Inman Mennonite, and Buhler Mennonite youth groups. Youth leaders were initially volunteers from the congregation. In the late 1980's, there was a move to hire a part-time youth leader. This was supplemented with congregational volunteers when paid leadership was not possible. Most recently, Sonja Good took over the Youth program and continues to the present. The Youth have participated in numerous mission trips, youth conferences, and storm cleanups in the region. The Youth also serve at the annual Noodle Soup Supper and used various projects including leaf raking, fund raising dinners, painting houses as fund raisers to support their

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activities. The Church's Bible study was widened with the addition of an adult class on Wednesday nights during the school year. To meet the third goal of Evangelism and Outreach, some members of the congregation took Western District Conference training and continue to work with various programs. Additionally, an evening meal was added to Wednesday night services, bringing in regular Sunday attenders as well as some individuals whose only contact with church is through the Wednesday night program.

The parsonage was sold to Reverend Krause and his family at his request. After Reverend Krause left our congregation in 1985, Reverend D.C. Wedel and Reverend Malcolm Wenger served our flock for 6 month terms each. In July of 1986, Reverend Robert (Bob) Dalke and his family was called to serve the congregation (9).

Ongoing maintenance continued on the church building during the 1980's. The building's exterior was aging and increasingly difficult to keep under paint, so it was decided by the congregation to have metal siding applied to the church's exterior to ease maintenance. Additionally, the trustees met to address the accessibility for those who were elderly, infirm, and as a means of allowing easier access to the sanctuary for funeral services by the installation of an elevator system. Work began on an addition to the Educational Wing in 1989 with the dedication of the new elevator system held in July of 1990. The elevator made the sanctuary accessible to people with disabilities and made it easier to access the sanctuary for funerals (16).

Over the years, several missionaries have served in foreign lands. Justina Schmidt Bogema and her husband served in Africa. Ruth Regier Ratzlaff and her husband served in India. Delton Franz served in as a representative of the Mennonite Central Committee, as well as Betty Schmidt Epp and her husband serving as missionaries in South America. Current pastor Willmar and Hannah Neufeld Harder and their family served with MCC Bolivia from 2010 - 2014. Former Buhler Mennonite Church deacon and present day Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church pastor Eric Buller also served with MCC Bolivia.

At one time, Buhler Mennonite Church had 4 Mission Women's Sewing Circles. The groups specialized in various projects – the older women producing quilts, middle age women stitched tea towels, and younger women embroidered the tea towels and rolled bandages for MCC. In the early years,



the church had bazaars at which their works were sold or sent on to MCC for distribution to needy individuals worldwide. With the advent of the Mid-Kansas MCC Relief sales, items were and continue to be donated to be sold to raise money for missions. With the congregation aging, sewing circles declined and were eventually were discontinued due to low attendance and interest.

In 2008, volunteers from the congregation prepared the parking area surrounding the church to allow for placing a cement parking lot to allow surer footing for elderly and infirm members of the church.

## **Alternative Service**

Difficulties with military service continued with arrival in America. The great Mennonite migration began 9 years after the American Civil War. In 1898, after 33 years of relative peace, the United States was again embroiled in a war with Spain. While there was no draft, the question was raised in many congregations – “Could we as Anabaptists express loyalty to the United States without violating our core belief in nonviolence?” Groups sought guidance from the American government as well as other local congregations. After a brief war, the issue simmered and festered in the background.

May 18, 1917, the Selective Service Act was passed in the United States. World War I had inflamed the world. The act technically made a distinction between military and noncombatant. Young men were drafted and reported for training. Treatment of conscientious objectors varied, but some were imprisoned and physically abused for their beliefs. As the war ended, things returned to more normal, but some things changed forever. This was the time when many congregations ended using German in services, as it was “the language of the enemy”. Some changed the spelling or pronunciation of their names to become more “American”.

Shortly before World War II, the Civil Public Service (CPS) act was passed. 150 camps under civilian leadership was established. CPS projects included electrification of rural areas, wildfire fighting, and human medical research were a few of the projects initiated. There was no financial

reimbursement for the participants. Men from Buhler Mennonite Church served in various capacities.

With the end of the war, the I-W program was initiated for conscientious objectors in the early 1950's, The program continued CPS service, but was expanded to include hospital work as orderlies and custodial staff. The men who served were frequently questioned about their beliefs and were expected by the church to be positive emissaries for our Anabaptist beliefs. The labors of these young men were widely praised and they were paid minimum wage. Many young men from Buhler Mennonite Church served in I-W.

### **The Year of Jubilee - 1995**

In 1995, the church celebrated its 75 year anniversary, 1920-1995. Our Year of Jubilee service was celebrated on September 17, 1995. It was a service of celebration and joy and the contributions Buhler Mennonite Church has made for the glory of God, the community, and membership.

In May of 1995, a new Yamaha baby grand piano was donated by the family of Gary and Delores Siemens in honor of their parents, Curt and Agatha Siemens. Curt Siemens served as a lay minister as needed during various times throughout his life. Making a joyful noise through music has been an important part of worship since the church's beginning. Our congregation has been well served by talented musicians over the years. The church has an Adult Choir, Youth Choir, and Junior Choir at various times of the year. A Praise Team group also leads congregational singing as well as individual performances. This is in addition to various small groups and individuals who furnish special music throughout the year. With the passing years, music has changed during the services to now include traditional hymns as well as more modern praise music. While music has changed, the purpose – to praise God – remains the same. (19)

## Traditions of Buhler Mennonite Church

Buhler Mennonite Church has a long history of traditions, some of which have evolved and changed, some of which grew, and some of which ended with changing times. Here is a partial (and imperfect) list of some of the programs.

Programs include:

- Christian Endeavor – An early program, which was held one Sunday evening each month. Presentations by children and adults included readings, music, and short talks. The program ended as interest and attendance waned.
- Thanksgiving Mission Festival – Held in the fall each year. At times, a speaker was invited, and children were encouraged to bring special offerings. The service concludes with a fellowship meal.
- Fifth Sunday Potluck – We continue with a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday potluck dinner to encourage fellowship with fellow members.
- Noodle Soup Supper – On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday in February, the church and volunteers serve a community noodle soup supper. Proceeds go to missions and fellowship abounds.
- Christmas Eve Program – This is probably one of the best attended services of the year. In recent years, children participate in a pageant story, traditional hymns are sung, and the service ends with a candlelight service.
- Easter service is well attended as well. Weeks of anticipation lead up to a joyous celebration of the crucifixion of Christ and Jesus risen from the dead.
- Camp Mennoscah Weekend – Held in June each year, offering an opportunity to commune with God in Nature. An outdoor service is held and baptismal candidates are offered the option of baptism in the Ninnescah River. A meal served by the Sunday School Department caps off the service.
- Camp Mennonscah offers camp experiences to our young people each summer. In addition, several of our older young people have served as counselors.
- Vespers – prior to Advent and Lent each year, the choirs of the church present a musical service to bless the congregation and set the mood for the coming holy season.

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### Outreach Programs Include:

- Buhler Mennonite Church supports both the Pleasant View Home and the Sunshine Home. The church has active members on each board and offers weekly service streaming and monthly devotional services.
- The MCC Et Cetera Shop, Ten Thousand Villages, and Re-Use It Center in Hutchinson are supported on the boards as well as with volunteers from Buhler Mennonite Church.
- Outreach Meal Packaging is supported as well, processing meals for Food Banks and international distribution.
- Buhler Mennonite Church pledges support to Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, as our church affiliated school with member attendance and financial support.
- The church supports Victory Village, rural Hutchinson, a home and school for young women in need with a board representative and financial support.
- As a joint venture with other churches, Buhler opened the Omega House during the past year. This is a rehabilitation house for women with addictions. Aid has been give in furnishings, pantry supplies, volunteer labor, and financial support.
- Several of our membership are involved in Prison Ministries, working with inmates in correctional facilities, attempting to win them over to God and making it possible to become a productive member of society upon release from incarceration.
- Buhler Mennonite Church members offer mentorships with individuals to offer them support of the trials they face in life.
- We have members active in the Reno County Food Bank, offering assistance to those in need.
- Central Christian School is also part of the Buhler Mennonite Church mission, offering financial support for Christian Education.

## Hebron Mennonite Church

Hebron Mennonite Church was organized September 2, 1879 by a group who emigrated from Molotschna Colony of South Russia in 1874. Hebron Mennonite became known as “Buhler’s Church” and was the home church of the city of Buhler’s namesake Abraham B. Buhler whose father, Bernard Buhler, who served as Hebron's first elder. The original building was

## Buhler Mennonite Church

located 5 miles east of Buhler on Dutch Avenue. The site remains as a local cemetery under the care of Buhler Mennonite Church.

The Hebron congregation met in the early 1950's to discuss the building of a new structure in Buhler. The building was erected on the corner of Wall Street and Dutch Avenue on the north side of Buhler. The church flourished and was a vital part of the local community. With declining enrollment, the future of the church was in doubt. In 2000, the Hebron Mennonite Church requested a merger with Buhler Mennonite Church. Both churches worked harmoniously to make the merger smooth and mutually beneficial. The joining of the two congregations allowed Buhler Mennonite Church to grow in numbers and in spirit. The two cultures came together joyfully and on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a nearly seamless group.

Reverend Dalke and his family continued to serve Buhler Mennonite Church until 2013 at which time he retired from the full-time ministry. At that time, Reverend Lee Suderman served our congregation for one year as an interim pastor. In 2014, Reverend Willmar Harder and his family agreed to serve as pastor to the congregation and continue to do so in our 100<sup>th</sup> year.

An early emphasis of Reverend Harder's ministry included a focus on Mental health and wellbeing. This focus resulted in the hosting of the Mennonite acting troupe called "Ted and Company" held in the Buhler High School Auditorium. An estimated 600 people from all over central KS attended the event. A major ministry that came out of this focus was the gathering of concerned Buhler citizens wanting to address the issue of substance abuse and addiction. Reverend Harder was asked to chair this group of people from a variety of area organizations and churches. The gathering resulted in the opening of the Buhler Omega House, a faith based residential addiction recovery house.

## **Our Present**

At present, the current membership of Buhler Mennonite Church is 337 with average Sunday attendance of 140 persons. Reverend Willmar Harder leads the congregation with assistance from youth leader Sonja Good. Sunday School services are held for ages 2 years through 100 years of age.

## Buhler Mennonite Church

Sunday morning services are well attended and sermons are scripturally based and challenging. On Wednesday evenings during the school year, an evening meal is prepared by volunteers, followed by Biblical instruction for children and adults. Choir and Praise Team practice follows the instructional time.

2020 has been a time of great trial for Buhler Mennonite Church as well as the rest of the world. The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) arrived in the United States in early 2020 and our nation became part of the global pandemic in February. The church held remote services from March to June in 2020 and is currently operating at a reduced level requiring masks and social distancing. It is ironic that Buhler Mennonite Church was born in the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic and is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the COVID-19 pandemic. Adjustments continue to be made and our trust remains firmly in God.

***Addendum, Fall 2021*** – The COVID-19 pandemic offered special challenges to the Buhler Mennonite Church congregation. In March of 2020, the congregation stopped meeting in person. This occurred while Reverend Harder was on Sabbatical and Buhler Mennonite was under the leadership of Sabbatical Interim Pastor Kurt Horst. Lay leadership stepped up to assist, including invaluable help from Peter Buller. After Reverend Harder returned from Sabbatical, remote services were continued until the end of June. In person worship returned until an upswing in COVID-19 cases forced a return to remote worship in December, 2020.

During the suspension of in-person worship, digital services were offered on the internet. Surprisingly, the numbers of people participating in worship online surpassed the numbers seen in traditional services and financial support rose as well. Upon return to in-person worship, masks were initially required, every other pew was blocked off to allow social distancing, and singing was suspended to avoid the potential for spread due to projection from singing.

All told, 2020 was unique in that the congregation was only able to meet for in person worship 31 Sundays and was forced worship remotely (on YouTube) for 21 Sundays. During this time an investment of over \$18,000 upgraded the church's video/live-stream broadcasting capacities.

## Buhler Mennonite Church

Buhler Mennonite Church was unable to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary on schedule due to the pandemic, and as such was forced to postpone the celebration to Labor Day weekend of 2021. The service was well attended and many thanks were given to God for continued safety in the ongoing pandemic. Numbers in traditional worship continue to increase, but have not yet returned to what was “normal” for pre-pandemic levels. How to go forward in the future remains an ongoing challenge for the congregation and its leadership.



*Church pews were limited to seating every other row to allow for social distancing and hymnals were removed. Picture courtesy of Sara Janzen*

## **Our Future**

As with every generation, looking to the future is challenging. Technology has made news immediate and various factions use technology to shape public opinion sometimes for good, sometimes to meet individual agendas. Buhler Mennonite Church must continue to embrace change and technology. To remain relevant in the rapidly evolving world, Buhler Mennonite Church will need to remain responsive to need. Identifying need will be different, beginning at this point with a presence on social media and online processes. We need to remain responsive to changes in technology trends and movements to remain relevant to young people. We must also

## Buhler Mennonite Church

continue to serve families. A rapidly changing world and the accompanying stresses and strains will make the difficult task of keeping a family healthy physically, mentally, and spiritually even more difficult than it is now.

Although change is inevitable, we must remember our Anabaptist roots. Central principles must include: 1) All persons, upon the age of understanding, must make a conscious decision to follow Christ and make the choice to be baptized with a personal confession of faith. 2) The Church must be a group of believers, united as family. 3) The Bible must be the highest and only authority for faith and daily living. 4) Government must be obeyed, but only if it does not interfere with Biblical teachings. 5) The Church will regulate the affairs of the Church community with a commitment to non-violence. 6) Advocate a simple lifestyle so as not to waste God's resources. 7) Each member of the church should strive to be humble and live a life of service to others. Buhler Mennonite Church must change and adapt to the times while remaining a rock upon which the unchanging truth is anchored.

Likewise, we must not forget our commitment to our aging members. As an aging congregational group, we must remember those who nurtured us and are now in the trials of advanced age. Compassion and care must be a significant part of our continuing mission.

In short, Buhler Mennonite Church must change with the changing times, yet keep the powerful message of Christ. We must love one another in contentious times and offer a beacon of hope to those who struggle. We will remain the people that outsiders see as "odd" or different, for the difference is what makes us the Children of God. We must continue to be "strangers in a strange land" and keep struggling toward the Heavenly prize.<sup>(2)</sup> Struggle against evil and keep the faith for all to see!



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*Church and community leaders at the dedication of the 1913 Buhler Hoffnungsau building.*

- 1) Steve Belknap; 2) Seth Gould; 3) Wes Ens; 4) Jerry Schwabauer; 5) Randy Sawatzky;  
6) Ethan Gould; 7) Larry Siemens; 8) Grady Danner; 9) Stan Janzen; 10) Willmar Harder



## Appendix 1 – Ministerial Letters

*Reverend Bob Dalke served Buhler Mennonite Church as Pastor from 1986 to 2013. He and his wife Flauretta send their greetings in this letter.*

100 Years – Wow!

What a fantastic miracle of God, Buhler Mennonite Church, God's presence in Central Kansas community, an ongoing witness to Jesus Christ to all who are looking and listening, celebrating 100 years of this ministry. CONGRATULATIONS AND GOD'S CONTINUED BLESSINGS BE WITH YOU! As one of your former pastors, and one who was so blessed to be able to be with you just over one fourth of those years, I am pleased to be a part of your celebration.

For me, the existence of the Church is one of the most powerful miracles God has given us. It is continual witness to the world that GOD IS WITH US as he has promised in Jesus Christ our lord and savior, and always will be. My time with you also seems to be a miracle of God to me. Beginning with you calling me to be your pastor, God was working. I remember when Harlo Schmidt, chairperson of the Search Committee, called to visit with me about the opening at Buhler Mennonite Church. Harlo told me that the congregation had heard I was looking for a church and informed me that Buhler Mennonite Church was in search of a new pastor. I told him I was excited at the prospect of serving at Buhler Mennonite Church, but that our family was leaving for a two week vacation. Harlo told me that his family was preparing for vacation as well, and that he would call again after we both returned from your trip. While on vacation at a time share in Colorado, with my parents, Flauretta and I talked about this prospect. While we had almost no knowledge of Buhler, we liked the prospect of being closer to our families in Newton, Burrton, and Hutchinson. We know this was truly a miracle because of continuing events on vacation. Dad and Mom showed us around the central complex of the time-share and Flauretta and I were lingering in the gift store. When we walked out to the car, Dad was visiting with a man and introduced me, explaining the man had noticed our Kansas tags and said that, he too was from Kansas. When he introduced himself to my Dad and found out his name was Herman Dalke, he stopped short. He said, "That is interesting. I am talking to a Bob Dalke from Turpin, Oklahoma. Do you know him?" My father responded, "That is my son!" On that day, I met Harlo

## Buhler Mennonite Church

Schmidt. I am convinced to this day, that God was in control of this incredible coincidence, no MIRACLE! When I did candidate, I learned that Abe Krause had been at Buhler for 8 years, and I was very concerned about our different styles and personalities. I was also told that D.C. Wedel and Malcolm Wenger served you for the year between Abe and I. This again seemed to be a miracle of God preparing Buhler Mennonite Church and myself for a new relationship.

In my now 45+ years of ministry, I have served as Pastor in 4 churches. I have had great experiences, relationships, joy, and fellowship. It has been a miracle of love, community, acceptance, forgiveness, and faith. It is this experience in Buhler that overwhelmed myself and my family. I had the opportunity and blessing of being with you as a church through so much of my life. The first year of my ministry with you included standing with 13 families in the loss of a loved one. At first, I had the thought that God was trying to tell me, “Hey buddy, you don’t belong here!” In the tough times and the joyful, weddings, births, graduations, soup suppers, workdays, ministry opportunities, disappointments, and others, we stood together in faith and community.

When Flauretta and I were going through some very difficult times, we decided to come to you, our family in Jesus, and share. For me, the miracle of God’s love, grace, and mercy flooded over us through you! I can only try to tell you how much this meant to us then and still. We were amazed by your continuing love and support.

How to share our feelings, experiences, and ministry of 27 years in a short letter is best expressed in the word MIRACLE. We were blessed by our time with you and were impressed by your faith, community, and service of love to those around you.

We pray that as you begin a new 100 years, you continue to live in the miracle of God with us in Jesus Christ, His love filling and flowing in you and through you, the miracle of BEING the CHURCH to a hurting world: you are good at it!

We love you and thank you for such a miraculous 27 years!

- Bob and Flauretta Dalke

Buhler Mennonite Church

*Reverend Jon Braun served Buhler Mennonite Church as Pastor from 1972 to 1976.  
He sends his greetings in this letter.*

**A letter to Buhler Mennonite Church, as you celebrate 100 years of God's blessings.**

Greetings at this wonderful moment of recollection, thanksgiving to God, honoring people from your midst and projecting your unique giftedness into the future. I am so grateful for the privilege of having been your pastor from summer, 1972, to summer, 1976. It was too short a time when family circumstances led us to part ways in 1976. Still, it was a time of being showered with loving support and of an abiding realization: "I really love these people."

Our initial meeting involved extra discernment on both sides. At the time, Rev. D. C. Wedel was commuting from Newton, to fill in as interim pastor. I was completing 15 months of clinical pastoral training at Prairie View Mental Health Clinic in Newton. Previously, during a break in my seminary education, I served 4 years in university campus ministry. But a divorce in my background represented a barrier for many churches. That had to be faced head-on in Buhler. Out of the blue, I received a call to serve as a pastor in the United Church of Canada. "If you come, we'll have you," I was told. Now what? Should I trust the deliberations at BMC or go to Leamington, Ontario?

You took a risk and I love you for it. God already had taken that risk and I have a deep and profound love for God. It wasn't always so clear to me. I came to you with a more formal respect of God. June Voth, serving as church secretary, commented after a year of working together, that she finally understood the core theme of my sermons. "You're always talking about God's love." Whoa! It is at the heart of every message: not talking about God as much as opening a window for people to experience God's love more fully.

Upon reflection, you blessed us so richly when Tali was born and then, two years later, when Ben was born. I still tell them how special it was to be welcomed and treated with so much kindness in Buhler. But that's how you treated every child born into the church family. Pat and I had lost a child after 6 months of pregnancy, just a year before coming to BMC. How you

## Buhler Mennonite Church

celebrated Tali's and Ben's births with us was truly healing for us. Can you follow the tracks and understand why I chose the theme of my doctoral dissertation: *a biblical study to understand the heart of God toward children and youth, and why they are the priority in the kingdom of God?*

My memories are filled with appreciation for the BMC children and youth, along with their teachers and mentors; for the young adults who pulled us in; for great leadership in the church; for the women's circles and those mission chicken noodle soup suppers; for the wisdom of seniors who would share deeply and often pray the most beautiful prayers in German; for the deacons who were so in tune with the Spirit of Christ. In 1974, we had fun celebrating 100 years since Mennonites from Russia/Ukraine came to the area and brought with them the Turkey red hard winter wheat. I served on the PRIDE committee at the time. We also established the senior center and initiated the process toward an eventual swimming pool and park, under Marlo Oltman's leadership. So much more has transpired in the life of Buhler and BMC in the years following. May God bless your faithfulness in the challenges of this time and into the future!

Since leaving Buhler, I have served Mennonite, Quaker and Church of the Brethren congregations and led short term Africa mission trips to Malawi, Nigeria and Burundi. I have also owned a couple small businesses and given leadership to non-profit organizations. The most intense and long-lasting ministry, however, has been as a professional pastoral counselor, individual and marriage therapist and coach. More than 36 years ago I was blessed to become part of the Otto and Linda Schmidt family, through marriage to Velda. So, with relatives at BMC, I am part of your story in more ways than one.

God be with you to bless and prosper you and to empower your outreach to others in Christ's name!

- John Braun

## Buhler Mennonite Church

*Reverend Harold Thieszen served Buhler Mennonite Church as Pastor from 1962 to 1970. He and his wife Esther send their greetings in this letter.*

### **Our Sojourn with the Congregation of the Buhler Mennonite Church**

It was Thanksgiving weekend, November 23-26, 1961, when Esther and daughter Barbara and I came to the Buhler Mennonite Church as a pastoral candidate. The pastoral search committee planned an extensive and meaningful schedule to meet the members of the congregation, visit the Buhler Elementary and High School and the Buhler community. The visit included lunch in the High School cafeteria. The pastoral search community also planned meetings with the church groups. There were meetings with the pastoral search committee to discuss details of pastoral responsibilities and benefits. Since a new parsonage was being built, John W. Zielke, the trustee representative, commented, "We want you to see our new dugout." It became a very comfortable home for our family, especially after the air conditioning was added.

We discussed the three year term, pastoral responsibilities and opportunities, salary, vacation, benefits, continuing education and mileage allowance. The continuing education benefit included three two week Rural Pastor Seminars at Michigan State University, a six week Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Bryan Memorial Hospital in Lincoln, Nebraska and several others. These opportunities were approved in a timely manner. After the acquaintance visitation, the church council recommended to the congregation a call to extend the invitation for me to become the pastor for a three year term. We accepted the call and moving arrangements were made.

John D. Schmidt, the chair of the congregation, took us to the Newton, Kansas train depot. We met Albert Gaeddert, pastor of the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church. As he looked at our group, he said in Low German, "Daut kunn go'ne." It loosely translated to mean that Buhler Mennonite Church and I would work well together. My experience affirmed his observation.

The Saturday evening of our farewell at the First Mennonite Church at Sugarcreek, Ohio, I conducted the wedding ceremony for a widower and a widow. Sunday was the worship and farewell service. Monday forenoon, I conducted a funeral service. On Tuesday, our belongings had been loaded by

## Buhler Mennonite Church

United Van Lines and we were on our way to Buhler, Kansas. My pastoral responsibilities as the pastor of the First Mennonite Church, Sugarcreek, Ohio concluded on May 31, 1962.

The Buhler Mennonite Church arranged our moving by United Van Lines. Arnold Esau, a member of Buhler Mennonite Church, was an employee of United Van Lines. It was arranged that they would do the packing and loading. The continuing word of the movers was “You don’t have time to do it right, but you have time to do it over.” The Thieszen family, Esther and I (Harold), Jon, Kathryn, and Barbara came to Buhler and moved into the new dugout, the parsonage. That was how we came to Buhler, Kansas.

My pastoral ministry began on Friday, June 15, 1962. Eldon Froese, song leader and choir director, died that day. On Sunday, June 17, 1962, Interim Pastor Reverend P.K. Regier held the installation service. The great cooks of Buhler Mennonite Church followed the service with a pot luck meal. Monday, June 18, 1962 was the memorial service for Eldon Froese. The Reverend P.K. Regier and I shared the memorial service. That service also marked my introduction to the Buhler community.

While the sanctuary was being built in 1927, Henry and Anna (Balzer) Buller were living across the street from the church. He looked at the structure under construction, walls, but no rafters, and saw a ladder leaning on the top of the sill. Rudy Voth, teenage son of Peter R. Voth, the pastor, climbed the ladder and walked the perimeter of the building on the top sill of the wall, descended the ladder, and walked home.

Albert Regier shared that one Sunday, his family came to church by buggy. The mare was in foal. When the family left the church service, they were quite surprised to find a new colt next to its mother, hitched to the rail. The family was quite pleased with the surprise new addition.

The constitution and by-laws of the Buhler Mennonite Church were well organized and written, approved, and followed. This document becoming acquainted with the process and procedure of the congregational structure. The executive committee, deacons, trustees, education committee, women’s mission society, youth fellowship, and all other organizations of the congregation fit into the church’s structure and operation.



## Buhler Mennonite Church

Pete Voth was the custodian. A particular person, Pete made sure the church was immaculate. The pews and floors were cleaned and polished on schedule. His grandson, Tom Froese, called the church “Grandpa’s Church.” The church was locked and unlocked on a dependable, precise schedule.

John Siemens, the Central Treasurer was well organized. Promptly on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., he came to church to write checks on the basis of the vouchers placed in his box. John was always accurate, prompt, and on time in writing the checks required by voucher.

The first two secretaries, Sharelle Ediger and Sondra Epp, typed and printed the Sunday bulletins. June Voth was the next church secretary, followed by Lois Schroeder. Lois had the useful ability to take dictation using shorthand. All secretaries were greatly appreciated.

For Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), I would leave on Mondays and return on Fridays. A helpful evaluation and response by the supervisor was, “Harold, your intuition is right on and you need to act on it.” This provided confidence and affirmation to follow with the intuitive observations and insights in administrative and pastoral care opportunities and responsibilities.

How many sermons were preached, baptisms, weddings officiated, and funerals conducted during my ministry with Buhler Mennonite Church? 384 sermons, 57 baptisms, 40 weddings officiated, and 41 funerals conducted.

Sermons were timed by some people. One person commented: “Last Sunday, the sermon was only 17 minutes, this Sunday, it was at least 19 minutes.” I sometimes wondered whether people listened to what was preached or merely timed the length. My goal was always 20 minutes.

The Executive Committee decided to celebrate my ministry at six years. It was to be a surprise celebration. However, from time to time, I would take walks through the Education Wing to get a feel of what was happening in the class rooms. I noticed a piece of paper on the lectern of one classroom. I looked at it and read it. It was the announcement of a surprise celebration of six years of ministry. It was a surprise when I read it and even more surprising was the event.

## Buhler Mennonite Church

Youth Fellowship was another exciting experience. The youth organized their officers and elected their own sponsors. The youth decided to rake leaves for the older members of the congregation and their neighbors. The youth sponsors were Keith and Della Dirks, James and Marilyn Lohrentz, and Milford and Lola Jo Lohrentz. The custom harvesting grain trucks were filled with leaves. It was leaf raking, but the youth called it “Reaf Laking.” The youth were creative, energetic, and loyal.

The youth also invited Harold and Ruth Regier-Ratzlaff, retired missionaries to India to prepare and serve a traditional meal of curry and rice. Ruth grew up in Buhler Mennonite Church. The Ratzlaffs were reluctant as they had been invited by another church group to prepare a similar meal and it had been poorly received. As it was Ruth’s home church, they agreed. The Ratzlaffs and the youth sponsors prepared the meal. In keeping with Indian tradition, seating was on the floor of the Fellowship Hall and the food was consumed without utensils, using only the fingers of the right hand. The evidence of the color of curry remained on the participants’ hands for days afterward.

Blessings to Pastor Willmar and Hannah Neufeld Harder and their family. It was my privilege to visit Willmar in the hospital in Mountain Lake, Minnesota the day after he was born. We appreciate and enjoy each other in our thoughts and prayers. May the Lord bless and keep you and be gracious to you in your ministry, now and always.

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of pastoral participation and the centennial celebration and history of the Buhler Mennonite Church.

The Priestly Benediction (Numbers 6:24-26)

*The LORD bless you and keep you;*

*The LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you;*

*The LORD lift his countenance upon you, and give you peace.*

- Harold D. and Esther M. Thieszen  
Pastor: June 15, 1962 to December 31, 1969

**Appendix 2 – A Pastoral List for Buhler Mennonite Church:  
The First 100 years**

Reverend P.R Voth	1920-1933
Reverend A.J. Dyck (Interim)	1924
Reverend J.M Suderman	1933-1938
Reverend Augustus Ewert (Interim)	1938-1939
Reverend John F. Schmidt	1939-1941
Reverend A.E. Kreider (Interim)	1941-1942
Reverend Henry Franzen	1942-1953
Reverend P.K. Regier (Interim)	1953-1954
Reverend Irvin Richert	1954-1961
Reverend P.K. Regier (Interim)	1961-1962
Reverend Harold Thieszen	1962-1970
Doctor D.C. Wedel (Interim)	1970-1972
Reverend John Braun	1972-1976
Reverend Abe Krause	1976-1985
Doctor D.C. Wedel (Interim)	1985
Reverend Malcolm Wenger (Interim)	1986
Reverend Bob Dalke	1986-2013
Reverend Lee Suderman (Interim)	2013-2014
Reverend Kurt Horst (Sabbatical Fill)	Spring, 2020
Reverend Willmar T. Harder	2014-Present

Appendix 3 – Church Property Deed

STATE OF KANSAS, Reno County,

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on this 1st day of June, A.D. 1920

before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for the

The Trustees of the Hoffnungs Mennonite Church

County and State aforesaid, came (a corporation) by P.G. Heidebrecht, John Buller,

J.F. Schmiat, J.D. Gaeddert, K.L. Wiens, Trustees.

who are personally known to me to be the same person s who

executed the within instrument of writing and such person duly acknowl-

edged the execution o the same.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed

my Notarial seal the day and year last above written.

*H. P. Oberband* Notary Public.

Term expires March 6th 1923. 19

47 (24)

DEED

GENERAL WARRANTY.

FROM

The Trustees of The Hoffnungs Mennonite Church (a Corporation)

TO

The Trustees of The Buhler Mennonite Church (a Corporation).

Entered in Transfer Record in my office

this 30 day of June A.D. 1924

*F. R. Jolly*

Notary Clerk

State of Kansas, Reno County, ss.

This instrument was filed for record on

this 30 day of June A.D. 1924

at 10<sup>00</sup> o'clock A.M. and duly recorded

in book 159 page 61

*James M. Bremer*

Recorder of Deeds.

Hickman Office Supply & Printing Co.—4118

*H. P. Oberband*

*Notary*

STATE OF KANSAS, Reno COUNTY, SS.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on this 9th day of July A. D. 1915

before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for the County and State aforesaid, came Jacob M. Bartel & Lizzie Bartel, his wife.



who are personally known to me to be the same person who executed the within instrument of writing and such person duly acknowledged the execution of the same.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal, the day and year last above written.

[Signature] Notary Public

Term expires June 16th, 1919 19

5  
Pl. Rec.  
O. M.

(25)

**DEED**  
General Warranty.

FROM  
*J. M. Bartel*  
*L. Buhler, Kansas*

TO  
*Trustees of the Mennonite Church*

Entered by Transfer Record in my office this 21<sup>st</sup> day of August A. D. 1915  
*[Signature]*  
County Clerk

STATE OF KANSAS, Reno COUNTY, SS.  
This instrument was filed for record on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of August A. D. 1915 at 200 o'clock P. M. and duly recorded in Book 121 page 464  
No. 8105  
*[Signature]*  
Register of Deeds

The Hutchinson Trg. Co., Hutchinson, Kans.

Buhler Mennonite Church

Kept in stock and for sale by the Hutchinson Printing Co., Hutchinson, Kan.

DEED—General Warranty.

419-2

THIS INDENTURE, Made this 9th day of July A.D. 1915 between Jacob M Bartel & Lizzie Bartel, his wife.

of Reno County, in the State of Kansas of the first part, and The Trustee, of the Hoffmungsau Mennonite Church (A Corporation)

of Reno County, in the State of Kansas of the second part;

WITNESSETH, That the said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of Two Hundred (\$200.00) Dollars, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, do by these presents Grant, Bargain, Sell and Convey, unto said part y of the second part, It's heirs and assigns, all the following described real estate, situated in the County of Reno, and State of Kansas to wit:

The West Forty (40) feet of Lot No. One (1) in Block No. Three (3) in the Martens addition to the City of Buhler as per the recorded plat of said City.



TO HAVE AND TO HOLD THE SAME, Together with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining forerer.

And said Grantors for themselves & their heirs, executors or administrators, do hereby covenant, promise and agree, to and with said part y of the second part, that at the delivery of these presents they are lawfully seized, in their own right, of an absolute and indefeasible estate of inheritance, in fee simple, of and in all and singular the above granted and described premises, with the appurtenances; that the same are free, clear, discharged and unincumbered of and from all former and other grants, titles, charges, estates, judgements, taxes, assessments and incumbrances, of what nature or kind soever:

and that they will warrant and forever defend the same unto said part y of the second part, It's heirs and assigns, against said parties of the first part, their heirs and all and every person or persons whomsoever, lawfully claiming or to claim the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The said parties of the first part have hereunto set their hands the day and year first above written.

Jacob M. Bartel
Lizzie Bartel

Buhler Mennonite Church

THIS INDENTURE, Made this 1st day of June, A. D. 19 20 between The Trustees of the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church (a corporation) by P.G. Heidebrecht, John Buller, J.F. Schmitt, J.D. Gaeddert, K.L. Wiens, Trustees,

of McPherson County, in the State of Kansas, of the first part, and The Trustees of The Buhler Mennonite Church (a Corporation)

of Reno County, in the State of Kansas of the second part

WITNESSETH, That said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of One Dollar----- and no/oc-- Dollars

the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, do by these presents Grant, Bargain, Sell and Convey unto said party of the second part, it's heirs and assigns, all the following described real estate, situated in the County of Reno and State of Kansas to-wit:

The West Forty (40) feet of Lot One(1) and all of Lot Two (2) Block Three (3) in the Martens addition to the City of Buhler as per the recorded plat of said City.

{ Deed given to perfect title }

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD THE SAME, Together with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances thereto belonging or in anywise appertaining forever.

And said Grantors heirs, executors or administrators, do hereby covenant promise and agree, to and with said party of the second part, that at the delivery of these presents they are lawfully seized, in their own right, of an absolute and indefeasible estate of inheritance, in fee simple, of and in all and singular the above granted and described premises, with the appurtenances; that the same are free, clear, discharged and unincumbered of and from all former and other grants, titles, charges, estates, judgments, taxes, assessments and incumbrances, of what nature or kind soever:

none

and that they will warrant and forever defend the same unto said party of the second part, it's heirs and assigns, against said parties of the first part, their heirs and all and every person or persons whomsoever, lawfully claiming or to claim the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The said parties of the first part have hereunto set their hands the day and year first above written.

P. G. Heidebrecht
John Buller
J. F. Schmitt
J. D. Gaeddert
K. L. Wiens

Appendix 4 – Total Cost for 1927 Church Building

Final statement of the cost of the Church built in 1927,  
 rendered to the annual meeting of the Church in  
 December, 1932, by the Building Committee, upon  
 liquidation of all its indebtedness.

TOTAL COST:

Interest on money borrowed	\$ 435.55
Crushed Rock	349.43
Sand Account	29 0.42
Furniture-Benches	1979.64
Insurance - \$5000 for 5 years	198.00
Well	70.60
Basement account	411.52
Architect	10.00
Carpenters Wages	3096.07
Sewage account	89.25
Painting account	687.08
Mill Work	763.95
Building Material-Lindas	6779.27
Plastering account	436.90
Wiring account	363.10
Furnace	1664.91
Gutter & Steepel	380.00
Miscellaneous	594.30

\$18,599.99

CREDITS:

Old Church Building	\$1000.00
Miscellaneous Income	271.10
Interest on Canadian	
Loans	80.47
Sunday School	
Collections	1785.89
Personal gifts	15462.53

\$18,599.99

With Interest \$435.55, Insurance \$198.00, and Misc. Income \$271.10  
 out of the above statement would make the net cost of the Church  
 \$17,695.34, not including approximately \$1000.00 in donated labor.

Unpaid pledges charged off \$626.00.

Above Statement Audited and Approved by

A.B.Wall,  
 J.A.Reimer,  
 N.B.Martens  
 Audit Committee.



# Appendix 5 – Program For Education Wing Dedication

## Morning Worship Service

10:30 a.m.

PRELUDE ..... ORGANIST  
 CALL TO WORSHIP ..... PASTOR  
 HYMN NO. 8 "Come, Thou Almighty King" ..... CONGREGATION  
 ANNOUNCEMENTS ..... PASTOR  
 SCRIPTURE READING—Ephesians 4:1-2, 11-16  
 HYMN NO. 514 "Now Thank We All Our God" ..... CONGREGATION  
 MESSAGE FOR THE CHILDREN ..... PASTOR  
 OFFERING—OFFERTORY ..... ORGANIST  
 ANTHEM "Bless Us O Lord"—Hamblen ..... GIRLS' CHOIR  
 MESSAGE—"A Building Firmly Framed Together"  
 HYMN NO. 296 "Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak"  
 ..... PASTOR  
 BENEDICTION ..... CONGREGATION  
 DOXOLOGY ..... CONGREGATION  
 POSTLUDE ..... ORGANIST

## Dedication Service

2:00 p.m.

**(Door Opening Service)**  
 MUSIC "Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty"—Neander ..... SENIOR CHOIR  
 MEDITATION ..... PASTOR  
 PRAYERS OF DOORS ..... JOHN ZIELKE  
 TRANSLATION OF KEYS TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
 PROCESSION INTO NEW BUILDING  
**(In the Sanctuary)**  
 PRELUDE ..... ORGANIST  
 INVOCATION ..... REV. ALBERT GAEDDERT  
 CHORAL RESPONSE ..... CONGREGATION  
 HYMN NO. 515 "Praise to the Lord"  
 WORDS OF WELCOME ..... PASTOR  
 SCRIPTURE ..... REV. A. J. DYCK  
 PRAYER ..... REV. JOHN F. SCHMIDT  
 ANTHEM "Hear My Prayer"—James ..... SENIOR CHOIR  
**THE BUILDING PROGRAM:**  
 "In the Beginning" ..... HAROLD REGIER  
 "Construction Days" ..... CURT REGHER  
 "An Educational Building—A Tool" ..... ELMER SCHROEDER  
**DEDICATORY SERMON—**  
 "The Mission and Challenge of Christian Education" ..... REV. E. J. MILLER  
 ANTHEM "Holy Lord of All"—Welsh-Williams ..... SENIOR CHOIR  
 DEDICATORY SERVICE ..... PASTOR  
 Litany of Dedication and Prayer  
 HYMN NO. 274 "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken"  
 ..... CONGREGATION  
 BENEDICTION ..... REV. O RAY GRABER  
 POSTLUDE ..... ORGANIST

Our visitors are invited to inspect the new educational building following the afternoon service. Guides will be in the different rooms to answer your questions.

## Litany of Dedication

**MINISTER:** To the glory of God our Father, by whose grace we have built this building to the honor of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, our Lord and Savior, to the praise of the Holy Spirit, Source of life and light;

**CONGREGATION:** We dedicate this building.

**MINISTER:** For worship in prayer and song; for the teaching ministry of the Word;

**CONGREGATION:** We dedicate this building.

**MINISTER:** For the salvation of immortal souls; for the bringing of light into darkness; for the giving of hope, courage, and spiritual health to all human hearts;

**CONGREGATION:** We dedicate this building.

**MINISTER:** For the guidance of our youth; for the building of Christian homes; and for Christian fellowship;

**CONGREGATION:** We dedicate this building.

**MINISTER:** For the outreach of the full Christian ministry; for the expansion of missions;

**CONGREGATION:** We dedicate this building.

**MINISTER:** For the help of the needy; for the promotion of brotherhood; for building the Kingdom of God;

**CONGREGATION:** We dedicate this building.

**CONGREGATION:** We the members and friends of this congregation, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ, now consecrating ourselves anew, dedicate this entire building for its intended purposes in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Musical Program

8:00 p.m.

**THEME:** "Sing Unto the Lord a New Song." Psalm 96:1.  
 "Sing Unto the Lord with Thanksgiving." Psalm 147:7.

**CHAIRMAN:** HERBERT W. BULLER

PRELUDE ..... ORGANIST  
 GENERAL SINGING ..... MRS. WILLIAM BULLER  
 DEVOTIONS ..... BETHEL MENNONITE  
 MEN'S CHORUS ..... BUHLER MENNONITE BRETHREN  
 DOUBLE SEXTET ..... JUNIOR CHOIR  
 JUNIOR CHOIR ..... HEBRON  
 MEN'S CHORUS ..... FIRST MENNONITE, HUTCHINSON  
 MIXED QUARTET ..... INMAN MENNONITE  
 DOUBLE OCTET ..... BURRTON MENNONITE  
 ..... HOFFENUNGSAU  
 ..... CONGREGATION  
 PRAYERS AND BENEDICTION ..... ORGANIST  
 POSTLUDE .....

# Buhler Mennonite Church

## BUHLER MENNONITE CHURCH TREASURER'S REPORT

11/195-9/30/95

Balance on hand	\$ 5,504.95
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>	
Offerings	\$79,660.14
Interest	238.40
Deacons Tith Fund	321.08
Sunday School receipts	1,329.30
Special Projects (S.S.)	2,157.19
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<u>\$ 83,706.11</u>
	\$ 89,211.06
Less Retaining Funds	<u>5,030.96</u>
Available for disbursement	\$ 84,180.10

**DISBURSEMENTS:**

**MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE:**

Minister's Salary	\$ 19,679.00
Minister's Study All.	402.89
Minister's Car & Trav.	2,421.00
Minister's Medical Allow	4,202.30
Minister's Conf.	<u>400.00</u>
<b>Total Min. Com.</b>	<b>\$ 27,105.19</b>

**TRUSTEES:**

Secretary Expense	\$ 2,162.38
Custodian Expense	5,194.71
Yard Man Expense	46.17
Social Security Expense	862.12
Insurance	1,924.82
Office Supplies	1,358.05
Repairs & Maintenance	2,919.42
Bulletins	394.88
Janitorial Supplies	427.46
Misc.	567.01
Utilities	<u>6,153.59</u>
<b>Total Trustees Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 22,010.61</b>

### DID YOU KNOW

- 500 sacks of nuts and candy were made for Christmas in December, 1945. Adults and children received a sack.
- That Rev. P.R. Voth built his own house which was later the first Sunshine Home. He was also a watch repairman and sold engagement and wedding rings.
- Jacob Wiens rings the church bell each Sunday morning at 9 o'clock.
- H.B. Buller moved to name the east room on the main floor - Fellowship Hall. Hilda Buller seconded it at the fall meeting, 1956.
- June 27, 1976, first baptism by immersion at Camp Mennooscah.
- That Glennis Siemens Schmidt was given \$10 as a Christmas gift for printing bulletins for free in 1952.
- Simon Reimer was our first janitor.
- Church dues were \$2 a member in 1920.
- They paid Alvin Schmidt \$22.42 for communion trays in 1948.
- The original plans were to build the education wing of wood.
- John Zielke unlocked the doors for the dedication of the education wing.
- The land our church was built on was purchased from Jacob Bartel; he was the head carpenter. He was Allen Bartel's uncle.
- Abraham Dirks was on the board and said the first one getting married in the church he would give \$5. Mr & Mrs Henry Schroeder were the first ones married. They were Martha Wiens' and Ray Schroeder's parents.
- In 1949 we had 19 Sunday School classes.
- In 1974 we had a father and son banquet--Adults \$2--18 and under \$1
- When the sanctuary was remodeled in 1979 we had our Christmas Eve program in the high school.

Buhler Mennonite Church

**DO YOU REMEMBER**

1. When you took catechism a full year and had to memorize large portions of scripture.
2. When you had Sunday School opening in the sanctuary and Sunday School closing before worship service.
3. When the pump organ was used.
4. When clapping in church was not done.
5. When we didn't have bulletins.
6. When no women were allowed at church business meetings.
7. When curtains separated the Sunday School classes.
8. Practicing long and hard for Children's Day programs.
9. When everyone could bring flowers on Sunday morning.
10. When men sat on the west side and the women on the east side and children in the front.
11. When we had Bible School in the Grade School.
12. When a rail was in the center of the steps leading to the entrance 1937-40. Later 2 rails were put up, one on each side of the steps.
13. When we had Loyalty Sunday with a noon meal followed by a musical program.
14. When we did not have children's church.
15. When the children used to sing together before Sunday School.
16. When the children sat up front and would sing together every Sunday after Sunday School.
17. When the Mission Circle ladies had an auction and supper in fall every year.
18. When funeral services for the family were held at the homes before going to church. Family members all wore black and carried white handkerchiefs with a black border. There would be a black ribbon on the door of the deceased.
19. When they used wooden plates for the collection.

<b>EDUCATION BOARD:</b>	
Church Papers	\$ 1,656.07
Education Committee	3,815.85
Student Services	698.00
<b>Total Education Bd</b>	<b>\$ 6,169.92</b>
<b>MUSIC COMMITTEE</b>	<b>\$ 364.89</b>
<b>SOCIAL COMMITTEE</b>	<b>\$ 223.32</b>
<b>DECORATING COMMITTEE</b>	<b>\$ 7.79</b>
<b>PEACE &amp; SOCIAL CONCERNS COM.</b>	<b>\$ 2,000.00</b>
<b>OTHER DISBURSEMENTS:</b>	
Special Projects	\$ 1,170.12
Cards/Mission Helpers	554.40
Activity Fund	125.00
Bibles Bought	478.48
Conference Delegates	210.00
Deacons Emergency Aid	143.71
Youth Group	200.00
<b>Total Other Disb.</b>	<b>\$ 2,881.71</b>
<b>Total Disbursements before Benevolence.</b>	<b>\$60,763.43</b>
<b>BENEVOLENT GIVING:</b>	
<b>DEACONS BENEVOLENCE GOALS:</b>	
General Conference	\$ 5,205.00
Western Dist. Conf.	2,523.64
Bethel College	480.00
Pleasant View Home	107.00
<b>Total Deacons Ben</b>	<b>\$ 8,315.64</b>
<b>MCC COMMITTEE GOALS:</b>	
MCC Beef Walk	\$ 55.00
MCC Relief Sale	1,952.00
<b>Total MCC Com.</b>	<b>\$ 2,007.00</b>
<b>OTHER BENEVOLENT GIVING:</b>	
BEAF	\$ 1,452.74
Eldercare	604.24
HCC Campus Ministry	604.24
Simonstuck Seminary	1,604.00
<b>Total Other Benev.</b>	<b>\$ 4,265.22</b>
<b>Total Benevolent Giving</b>	<b>\$14,587.86</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS</b>	<b>\$75,351.29</b>

Appendix 6: 100th Celebration Photos - September 5, 2021



*Former pastors Rev. Bob Dalke and Rev. Harold Thieszen sharing memories from their time serving at Buhler Mennonite Church.*

*Buhler Mennonite Church Treasurer Daryl Regier presenting associate Western District Conference minister Kathy Neufeld Dunn with a check for \$4,000 designated for church planting.*

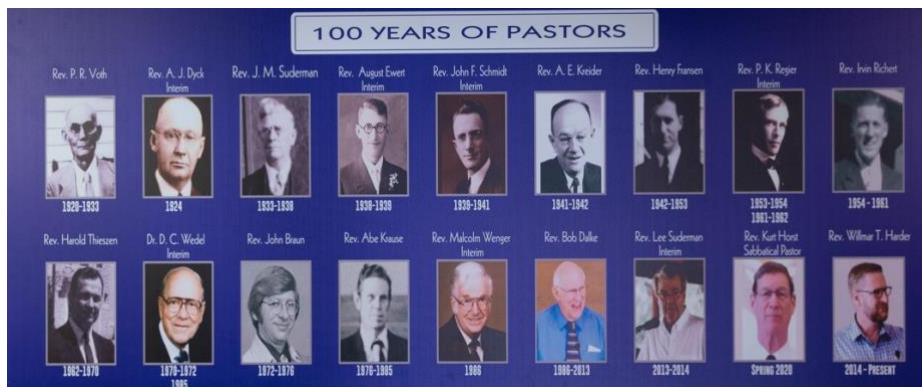


Buhler Mennonite Church



*Buhler Mennonite Youth Group members reading the poem "An Immigration Song (1974)" with the Chancel Choir in the background. (LtoR: Micah Ballard, Jackson Gebring, Jesse Ballard, Brynn Boggs, Amos Harder, Marlee Ballard, Drew Ballard, Josiah Buller, and Makenna Siemens.)*

*"100 Years of Pastors" display produced by Marsba Fennick and Mary Clark*



Buhler Mennonite Church



*Dave Balzer lining up the congregation for a 100th photo.*

*The 100th Celebration Worship Service photo by Dave Balzer*



## Buhler Mennonite Church

*After the Celebration Service the bell was rung 100 times by Josh Ediger as people walked outside and gathered in the front lawn to raise an "Ebenezer" (1 Samuel 7) and a pile of stones (Joshua 4). Pastor Willmar Harder provided a reflection and directions before each household member came forward, took a stone and placed it on a pile.*



Buhler Mennonite Church



*BMC Youth Jackson Gebring, Reuben Harder, and Andrew Harder handing out stones.*

*Deacons Randy Sawatzky and Bob Friesen helping people pile their stones.  
Micah Ballard piling her family's stone.*

