

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, CENTRAL, MN (NEAR VERNDALE)

OSTLUND, REVEREND DOUGLAS and ARTHUR MILLER, INTERVIEWS

This tape covers the personal backgrounds of Douglas Ostlund, present pastor of the church, and Arthur Miller, a longtime member of the Central United Methodist Church. It also gives the early church history back to the beginnings of the church.

INTERVIEWERS: John LeDoux and Mark Stone

DATE: August 17, 1978

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 1 Side 1

009 PERSONAL BACKGROUND OF REV. DOUGLAS OSTLUND

- 009 Reverend Douglas Ostlund's parents were born in the United States; his father was born in Willmar, MN, and his mother was born in Iowa.
- 016 Ostlund is a Swedish name.
- 017 His grandfather migrated from the old country.
- 026 His grandfather was a railroad man with the Great Northern Railroad out of the Willmar area.
- 028 His grandfather was then transferred to Iowa when his father was in his teens.
- 033 He was born on the thirteenth day in 1925 during a blizzard.
- 038 He was born in Morris, Iowa.
- 041 He graduated from Morris High School and went to Junior College in Orange City and finished in Morningside College in Sioux City.
- 048 He joined the ministry out of emotion.
- 052 He was in the service for about three years in the Navy Air Corps during World War II.
- 056 He was in and out of the seminary because of eye difficulties for about five years.
- 061 He was ordained in 1957.
- 063 He was ordained in the old Congregational Church.
- 065 He was going to school at Butler University Seminary at Indianapolis.
- 066 He was ordained in Central Indiana Association of the old Congregational Church.

078 DENOMINATIONAL MATTERS:

- 078 He has combined an interdenominational parish with both the United Methodist and the United Church of Christ because they are geographically compatible.
- 086 The merger of the old Congregational Christian church and the German Evangelical Reform resulted in the United Church of Christ in 1958.
- 105 The United Church of Christ (UCC) is related to the Methodist Church by the structure, organization, and the government of the church.
- 110 The theologies are similar, too.
- 121 The Methodists, Presbyterians, and the Disciples of Christ are closely related to the UCC in theology and practices.
- 125 Before he came to Minnesota, he had a Presbyterian United Church of Christ in the Dakotas.

- 133 The UCC has been one of the leaders in the Ecumenical movement.
139 The ecclesiastical structure has an Episcopal government where the bishop appoints the parish pastors.
145 In the free church government the local church is autonomous and is on a call system.
152 The UCC is on a call system.
171 Salaries are paid through the local church, and insurance and pensions are paid through the denomination.
181 Minnesota has a conference that is subdivided into three associations.
184 This UCC church is in the Western Association.
212 He negotiates his salary with each church individually.
215 He is under the UCC pension plan.
218 The Methodist Annual Conference pays his pension payments quarterly.
230 The UCC plan also pays for his health insurance premium.
245 He preaches in all three of his churches every Sunday.
251 His church schedule is rotated quarterly.
276 He served in student charges in Iowa and one in Indiana while he was going to school.
281 He served in Iowa for six years before going to South Dakota where he put together a couple of cooperative parishes.

284 OPERATION OF THE THREE CHURCHES IN THE VERNDALE AREA:

- 284 Rev. Ostlund came to Verndale where he has been for eleven years.
296 He opened an interdenominational parish with Bertha, Verndale, and Central (a 3-point parish).
307 In Wadena there is a Crossroads Larger Parish composed of eleven churches and five pastors that hold confirmation and youth work for the youth.
342 They have a person who gives two years of his time to the church and organizes the youth program.
357 The staff members meet twice a month to plan their confirmation assignments.
371 The Oak Grove and Merand Township churches closed because of inflation and the younger people looking elsewhere when they left the open country churches to go to the city.
439 The people of his congregations are mostly farmers or retired farmers.
449 The ethnic backgrounds are homogeneously mixed.
485 The Central Church had its Diamond Jubilee (75th Anniversary) several years ago. (In 1968?)

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 1 Side 2

005 PERSONAL BACKGROUND OF ARTHUR MILLER:

- 005 Arthur Miller was born in Alders Township.
007 He was born on April 20, 1900.
009 His parents came from Denmark.
015 His father came over alone when he was sixteen years old and his mother came over with her parents when she was three.
017 They settled near Northfield, MN, at Hazelwood.

- 019 His parents both worked in Northfield until they were married, and then they moved to Verndale in 1876 and bought a farm.
- 024 Arthur Miller was born on this farm.
- 026 He had five brothers and two sisters.
- 032 His father came over from Denmark because he had relatives in Northfield. His father's brother came over later.
- 039 Arthur Miller bought his uncle's farm in 1937.
- 044 His father and his uncle came from Southern Jutland, Denmark.
- 057 His father's grandfather ran a grist or flour mill and that is how the name Miller originated.
- 068 Arthur Miller was married in 1925 and started farming his farm, but he did not buy it until 1937.
- 073 He was elected as County Commissioner from 1956-1976.
- 098 His duties were to meet with the County Assessor and the Highway Engineer to try to straighten things out about bridges and roads.
- 109 He hired deputies and probation officers.
- 118 The commissioners alternated as Chairman of the Committee.
- 120 He was a member of the Welfare, Nursing, and Mental Health Boards.
- 142 He was the Township Clerk for eleven years.
- 144 He was on the Creamery Board for twenty years or so.
- 153 He lived in the Verndale area all of his life.
- 163 He walked a mile to the country school everyday.
- 169 The classes in the country school were taught in English, but he could speak Danish.
- 201 The Scandinavian people went first to the Congregational Church two miles west of his farm.
- 205 His parents were Lutheran, but he was brought up in the Congregational Church in Oak Grove.

208 HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH:

- 208 Arthur Miller's wife was Methodist and belonged to the Central United Methodist Church.
- 225 At one time there were many people of English descent in the Central church. His wife's maiden name was Baker, and she was born in 1900; she was of English descent.
- 271 Before the Central United Methodist Church was built, the members did not meet in homes, but the Lutherans met in homes.
- 293 The old Central United Methodist Church was built before 1893, and it burned down.
- 295 The new Central United Methodist Church was built in 1917 and is still standing.
- 306 The old church was located 1/2 mile N. and 1 mile E. on the corner with a grove of jackpines.
- 329 The Central United Methodist Church was started independently of the Verndale church.
- 334 However, they had the same pastor, Rev. Leon S. Koch, as the Verndale Methodist Church in 1895.
- 356 In 1880 the northern most Methodist Sunday school was organized by Mrs. Charles Crocker.
- 360 In 1884 The United Brethren built a church on the Southwest corner of the Lambert Bartz farm owned by Charles Crocker.

- 381 The old church was all frame; it was built about 1880.
 393 The stain glass in the new church was dedicated to certain people who bought the glass and donated it to the church.
 409 He started going to the Central United Methodist Church in the 1920's.
 414 He has two daughters who went to Sunday School at Central.
 437 The services at Central and Oak Grove were in English in the 1920's when he started going to Central.
 457 The Central church has had steady membership throughout the years.
 462 There are about 100 members at Central, 135 members at Verndale, and 80 members at Bertha while the Oak Grove Church is closed.

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 2 Side 1

015 HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH:

- 015 Mr. Miller belongs to the Senior Citizens in Verndale.
 020 Most of the congregation in Central are farmers or teachers that commute back and forth. There are some of the people who work in town.
 035 The Central congregation started out as a 2-point parish. Later, Bertha was added to the setup.
 044 The Oak Grove Church was sold to be used for a township hall after the church ceased operations.
 058 The township officials with whom he served held their meetings in an old school house.⁰⁸⁶
 086 The Oak Grove Church closed because of families retiring and moving away.
 101 It also closed because some of the families were joining the Congregational Church in Wadena. Some joined the Methodist church in Verndale.
 107 They couldn't support the pastor was another reason for the closing.
 112 The Central United Methodist Church has members from as far away as five miles.
 115 There is a covenant church about 2 or 3 miles east of Central United Methodist Church, which was first called the Swedish Lutheran Church, and then was named Thomastown Covenant. It is located in rural Staples.
 124 Hay Creek Lutheran which is now Bethany Lutheran is located in Blue Grass.
 139 The social gatherings include a Sunday school picnic once a year.

158 HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE OF CENTRAL:

- 158 Central used to have a cheese factory, but the village has disappeared.
 164 After the cheese factory burned, the owners, Scofields, used the land to farm.
 167 The Scofields came from Newport, MN.
 197 Central had a store and a cheese factory at one time. Those were the only business places there.
 213 Central was used just to serve the farmers around the area.

- 222 Harry Thomson ran the store. Frank Topp was Harry Thomson's brother-in-law.
- 224 Tom Keil and Frank Topp were the first cheesemakers.
- 245 Mr. Miller worked for Godfrey Meyers as a cheese packer when he was young.
- 254 The cheese was packed in wooden boxes.
- 267 The cheese was kept cold by ice.
- 277 Mr. Meyers bought the Scofield factory.
- 287 The population of Verndale dwindled when Wadena became the county seat.
- 301 The northern part of Verndale is old.
- 304 The southern part of Verndale is new.
- 317 During the Depression, the membership of the Central United Methodist Church held up, but it was hard to pay the pastor.
- 323 When he was treasurer, the donations became smaller; he was treasurer from 1933-1940.
- 333 The people helped out the pastor as much as they could with food, etc.
- 353 He was on the Parsonage Committee for a few years.
- 372 Women's groups have been active in the church.