

Reverend Robert Osell and Mrs. Harold Gillson discuss their personal backgrounds. This tape also covers the history of the First Baptist Church in Pillager, how the church is run, and its ethnic background. Also interviewed was Lucille Nelson.

INTERVIEWERS: John LeDoux and Mark Stone

DATE: August 9, 1978

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 1 Side 1

009 PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

- 010 Reverend Robert Osell's parents were born in the United States.
- 012 He doesn't know exactly where his grandparents were born, he never knew them.
- 016 He was brought up in the Swedish Baptist Churches all of his life.
- 018 In Duluth he went to the Bethany Baptist Church and went to college.
- 020 He graduated then from Bethal Seminary in St. Paul.
- 021 He took his first assignment at the Quamba Baptist Church in 1971.
- 023 He came to Pillager in January 1, 1978.
- 026 He went to Procter High School just outside of Duluth.
- 028 From there he went to the University Minnesota, Duluth.
- 030 He transferred and then graduated from the St. Paul Bible College in St. Paul.
- 032 Then he went on to Bethal.
- 036 He felt God was trying to show him a different direction in life.
- 044 Some pastors that he knows encouraged him toward making this decision of ministry.
- 046 He spent a year with a group called God's Invasion Army, which was a gospel traveling group.
- 049 This was when he decided to further himself for making the ministry for his future years.
- 055 His family went to Bethany Baptist Church in West Duluth.
- 061 Through that ministry, he had always been involved in the church and felt that was the place he should involve himself too, it was a strong influence on his life.

066 HISTORY OF THE CHURCH:

- 066 What used to be the Swedish Baptist Conference is now the Baptist General Conference.
- 073 When the change of speaking Swedish to speaking English came, they changed the name.
- 077 The differences between the different Baptist groups is also a cultural change.
- 087 The great differences between the Baptists' groups may be conservative or liberal.
- 090 There is some liberal approach to theology.
- 096 A strong identity would be lost with the Swedish background by joining with another group.
- 098 There has been talk to joining another group to combine our resources and do something more by joining another group.
- 101 There is some pride and deep roots that go back to some of these beginnings as to why we maintain an identity.
- 103 The bigger we get we seem to lose more identity.

- 107 While we are looking for growth and feel that we have the potential to increase, there are still ties to the past that have been maintained as an identity.
- 112 The differences between the conferences would be more based on, geography and ethnic background rather than doctrine.
- 116 There would be some differences such as, some would be ^{more} conservative than others.
- 118 Our conference considers itself quite conservative, yet there are Baptist groups around that would consider us liberal.
- 124 We maintain the membership of the church and still require baptism by immersion.
- 126 Most of the Baptist conferences or groups still hold to that, but maybe not as strictly as we do.
- 145 Basically we don't hold to a strict literal ^{translation,} ~~transition,~~ yet the bible is our guide book.
- 154 This is where we would clash more with other denominations, where they would go by a church handbook.
- 165 In the General Conference the churches are relatively independent as far as supporting the church.
- 169 There are really no pressures put upon us or told how much to give.
- 172 There are no records here to show who gave or how much each person gave.
- 174 They are encouraged to give in ^{various} ways and we support conferences.
- 181 As far as the giving we are able to do as we feel, as people here decide what they want to contribute.
- 188 The congregation pays for the Pastor.
- 190 The church and the members make the decisions as to what is done.
- 196 If people don't like what was said in the interpretation of scripture the pastor will hear about it.
- 205 Then the people will decide between themselves what they will do about it.
- 207 The Minnesota Baptist Conference would come here or we go there if there were any problems in the church.

214 PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

- 218 Mrs. Harold Gillson's parents were both born in Sweden.
- 222 Her parents were from a Lutheran background, but they really didn't attend church.
- 227 They came to the United States in the early 1900's.
- 232 They came because they wanted to see America, and there were all kinds of advantages there, that their country didn't have.
- 236 Her father was a Machinist and came to work on a ship in Superior.
- 239 They came directly to middle America and had some friends here too.
- 250 The State Church had no influence on them as to why they came over to the United States.
- 256 She was born November 5, 1918.
- 260 She grew up in West Duluth and went to Bethany Baptist Church.
- 266 She went to a ^{Central} ~~Dental~~ High School.
- 268 She graduated from high school and took up nursing to ~~discuss~~ pursue a career.
- 274 Her brother was pastor and she came to visit it ^(his church) and stayed.
- 283 Her maiden name was ~~Lindland~~ Linman.
- 285 Her brother was pastor here from 1938 to 1953 and 1958 to 1968.
- 297 She's lived here close to 34 years.
- 300 She has been a member of the church for 47 years.

- 303 Her husband farms.
- 305 Lucille Nelson was born October 27, 1918.
- 310 Her parents were born in Iowa.
- 312 They farmed there, then went to Idaho and farmed , then came here.
- 315 Her greatgrandparents came from Holland.
- 320 Her grandparents were born in Missouri.
- 324 She grew up and went to school in Pillager.
- 330 Her parents came to live here in approximately 1913.
- 337 Went to high school here and never furthered her education.
- 340 She was married in 1939 in a home.
- 345 Her husband's name is Carrol Nelson.
- 346 Her maiden name was Lucille Concull.
- 347 She's been a member of this church since September 1929.
- 350 When she was baptized she was 9 or 11.

370 CHURCH HISTORY:

- 370 Before the actual building was built the church was organized and meeting in homes.
- 424 A lot of the records burned in a fire and that is why the church doesn't have a great number of documents.
- 429 Apparently the church was a daughter church with Brainard.
- 434 The Pillager Church had always had student pastors.
- 450 Some were here over a period number of years, while others were here just for the summer months.
- 473 The fire was at the church clerk's home in 1948.
- 485 The records were all lost and they are now only for memory.
- 498 It was very common for students taking their time during their education to become pastors.
- 505 It was practice for them during their education.
- 515 They were paid very poorly, but they were at least paid.
- 529 There is no one in town who can speak Swedish fluently today.
- 547 There are a lot of people who can translate and understand the language but cannot speak it.

SUBJECTS COVERED: Tape 1 Side 2

- 004 A percentage were in the church that were Swedish.
- 008 At one time there were a lot of Dutchmen who came to the church.
- 011 There were no problems joining the church for the Dutch people.
- 025 There were no Swedish services at the time, but people conversed a lot in Swedish.
- 032 By 1929, the services were entirely in English.
- 040 There were no complaints about switching to English from Swedish.
- 057 The Country School were of 8 grades.
- 060 The teachers there were, Grace Johnson, Mary Adams, and many others in the 8 grades.
- 065 The teachers that came to teach were from Foley, one from the cities, and ~~among~~ other places.
- 073 The structure of the church now is not the ~~original~~ ^{originals}, it was moved in from some place.
- 095 The church was originally a school house.
- 099 It is still standing, and people live in it now.

- 103 They outgrew that church and built a new one.
- 106 The new church was dedicated in June of 1960.
- 112 The old church had a congregation that stayed at a stable level for many years.
- 117 They started outgrowing it when Pastor Linman was here and he brought more people to the church.
- 127 It is quite unusual for a pastor to stay long in a Baptist Church.
- 131 It depends a lot on the community, otherwise it's probably 4 to 5 years.
- 143 There are lots of factors to determine how long the pastor stays; it depends on the community and if he feels that God wants him some other place.
- 164 After Pastor Linman was gone there wasn't any great drop in the congregation.
- 170 There wasn't any worry about the young people going away because they were expected to.
- 184 There aren't very many college or post high school children around.
- 197 In 1951 there were 250 children in Sunday School.
- 213 The women's group has been active ever since they can remember.
- 225 Before they used to make bandages and things like that for missionaries; ^{now} they'd rather give money because it's cheaper in purchasing things.
- 237 Some of the purposes have changed for these missionaries in the past.
- 250 The original group is more local than away.
- 273 The socials were more of a family social, as today it's more in groups of people.
- 317 During the depression they had \$1.25 in the collection.
- 323 This would go to the pastor and sometimes he hasn't been able to get paid.
- 329 The church managed to keep most of its membership in the area.
- 332 The economic pressures didn't hurt them and ^{they} tended to get closer.
- 336 People in the rural areas wasn't hit as hard at the depression as people in the cities because they could raise their own food.
- 341 They were basically farm people in the church.
- 367 The original name of the church was the Swedish Baptist Church.
- 371 It's hard to say when the name was changed because it was also called Pillager Baptist, then to First Baptist, back to Pillager and now First Baptist Church.
- 377 It did start off as Swedish Baptist Church.
- 396 The change was to leave the Swedish name off because there aren't many Swedes in the community.
- 429 This change was gradual as new people moved in.
- 446 The closest Swedish Church near by that is in the conference is 12 miles.
- 454 It is not Swedish now but at one time it could ^{have} been because of the area.
- 469 Today, there are few farmers; some are part time and do something else to make a living.
- 498 There are a few people who go to Brainard to work.
- 507 Pillager's population hasn't changed but the school district is growing.