

Rural Norwalk church has rich history

Norwalk

In a valley south of Norwalk sits a small cream-colored brick church built in 1875.

And, except for minor changes, the Salem United Methodist Church appears much as it did when it first opened its doors more than a century ago.

Today, services are held only on the first Sunday of the month from May through October, according to lifelong member Virginia Hubbard.

With just 22 members, keeping the church open is difficult, but the building houses special memories for many.

"I was married there, my husband (Edwin Hubbard) is buried there and all three of our kids — Dennis, Dean and Paul — went to church there," Mrs. Hubbard said.

Most of the early members of the Salem Methodist Church were German farm families who settled in the areas known as Moore's Creek Valley and Metzgar's Valley.

"Among the group who bought land in 1855 was Jacob Menn. Coming with the Menn family was their daughter, Mathilda, and her husband, the Rev. Henry Esch. Rev. Esch had been a minister in the Illinois Conference of the Evangelical

(Methodist) Church," reads a church history.

Because of failing health, the Rev. Esch did not take an appointment, but bought 280 acres in the valley. But the Rev. Esch occasionally participated in services held by missionaries visiting the Menn home.

The first conference was held in 1856, marking the beginning of the Salem church. Services were held in homes or schools until a small log church was built in 1863.

In 1875, Jacob Menn donated 1-1/2 acres of land for the site of a new church and pastor's house.

"Each family helped in the work so that they might have a beautiful house for worship. The bell was drawn to its place in the steeple by a horse. Since then its tones have announced each worship service, weddings, and in time of sorrow the tolling for some loved one gone to their eternal rest," the church history reads.

There have been changes to the interior of the church over the years. In 1915, new pews and pulpit were bought. Stained glass windows were also added.

"We had the windows re-leaded a few years ago by a man from Winona (Minn.). He said you don't see windows like ours any more," Mrs. Hubbard said.

In 1925, electric lights replaced the kerosene lamps used to light the church.

The church cemetery, located near the church, occupies land also donated by Jacob Menn.

The Salem church celebrated its centennial in 1956. Among the family names listed on the membership roll were: Biering, Falke, Flaig, Haldeman, Harer, Hoffman, Hubbard, Manly, Megee, Menn, Noth, Pfuhl, Short, Vieregge, Vieth and Walz.

The remaining members of the church are helping maintain the building. Mrs. Hubbard paid to have the church interior painted a few years ago, as a memorial to her husband. Member Suzanne Zietlow donated her

labor for the project.

Mrs. Hubbard and her sister-in-law, Wilma (Mrs. Glen) Hubbard, also purchased new hymnals. The gift was made in memory of Wilma's and Virginia's mother- and father-in-law, Elva and William Hubbard, and Virginia's parents, Harvey and Lillian Pfuhl.

New front doors were installed on the church in memory of Vera and Irl Walz by their family.

The Salem church is on county Highway T, about 2 miles south of Norwalk, across the road from the Harvey and Jackie Menn farm.

—Lorry Erickson

USDA announces final 1995 crop deficiency payments

Washington D.C.

The USDA announced Oct. 10 that corn and sorghum producers who used the 0-85/92 provisions of the 1995 commodity acreage reduction program (ARP) will receive approximately \$27 million in final 1995-crop deficiency payments.

For 1995, 0-85/92-participating corn and sorghum producers are guaranteed minimum payment rates of 40 cents per bushel and 39 cents per bushel, respec-

tively. Because the 12-month average farm prices for both crops exceeded their respective established "target" prices, these rates are the estimated final deficiency payment rates announced when producers signed up for the program.

Corn producers were advanced about \$41 million following program sign-up, and another \$20 million in March 1996, following announcement of 5-month farm prices. Corn producers will now receive