The Handshake

The Evangelical United Brethren Church was born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on November 16, 1946. This joining of the Evangelical and United Brethren denominations was the only major union in American church history that did not lose a single congregation of any of the participating bodies. The most enduring symbol and image of that union was the handshake of Evangelical Bishop John Stamm and United Brethren Bishop Arthur Clippinger.

The fiftieth anniversary celebration of the formation of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, since 1968 a part of the United Methodist Church, was held in Johnstown on November 14-17, 1996. Portraying Bishop Stamm was Rev. Donald Joiner, retired member of the Western Pennsylvania Conference now living in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Portraying Bishop Clippinger was Rev. Daniel Shearer, retired member of the Central Pennsylvania Conference now living near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. As part of the celebration, which included re-enactment of the famous handshake, the Reverends Joiner and Shearer researched and delivered brief first-person, in-character summaries of the lives and ministries of Bishops Stamm and Clippinger.

THE CHRONICLE is honored to present the stories of these two bishops, each of whom was significantly connected to central Pennsylvania, as delivered by Reverends Joiner and Shearer. We thank the authors for permission to reproduce their works in this format.

Bishop John Samuel Stamm
1878-1956
by Donald Joiner, 1996

Birth, Childhood, Youth

I, John Samuel Stamm, was born on Sunday morning, March 23, 1878, in Alida, Kansas.

My parents, Hanz and Mary, were devout Christians and charter members of the Evangelical Association church in Alida, some seven years before my birth. Because I was born on a Sunday morning, my parents rejoiced not only in my birth, but also in that my being born on Sunday was a sign that God had a special work for me to do.

I was taken to Sunday school and church every Sunday, as I didn't have much choice in the matter. I recall at the age of ten of being so disturbed one Sunday by a sermon that afterward I went outside on a hill to pray for forgiveness. I felt a sense of peace, release and trust in Jesus as my Savior.

A few Sundays later our pastor announced that he would soon be retiring. He asked, "Who will take my place?" Instinctively I said, "I will." Whether I said this in a whisper or audibly, I don't know. One thing I did know is that I had made the response. And while the shock of the experience

John S. Stamm
gradually died out, the fact that I had made the response lingered with me.

Then when I was eighteen, one night in church the preacher gave an invitation to come to the altar. I was sitting with some friends and said to them, "If I go, will you go?" They agreed. That night I really found Jesus as my personal Savior. It was an experience of great joy and meaning, and still is today. This built upon my earlier experience at age ten. For now I made a complete turn around. Instead of doubting God, I loved Him. I sought to serve Christ and the church. The call to Christian ministry came to me with clear and convincing urgency. I knew I had to prepare for Christian ministry, but I had only completed five grades.

Schooling and First Appointments

At age twenty, in 1898, I sold my horse and personal belongings and left for Naperville, Illinois, where the Evangelicals maintained a college named North Central and Evangelical Theological Seminary. I didn't qualify for seminary, and so the college graciously arranged sub-academy courses for me. It wasn't until 1910, twelve years later, that I finally graduated from seminary.

Meanwhile, I was a ministerial member of the Kansas Conference of the Evangelical Association. I was on probation and had a lot to learn. I give credit to a school teacher at Shelly Mission in Missouri, my first appointment, for making me aware of the need to preach with clarity. The teacher arose at the close of the service and said, "You preachers always tell us to have faith. Why don't you tell us what faith is?" This criticism led me to study more carefully the teaching content of my sermons. For what is the worth of words if they have no meaning? I thus began a habit of being in my study from 7:30 until noon throughout my ministry.

My second appointment in Missouri was at Glasgow Mission. Upon arriving I was met at the railroad station by the class leader. He greeted me quite formally and said, "I had better tell you right away that we don't want you." He said, "We had requested of Conference not to send an unmarried man to this mission. But they didn't listen." I said, "I feel sorry I was sent to the church, but I have been appointed for the year and will remain."

But, in God's providence, a young lady member of the congregation, Priscilla Marie Wahl, attracted my attention. She taught in the primary department of the Sunday School. After meeting we began dating, and I began to understand why I was sent to a congregation that didn't want me. After a long courtship we were finally married in 1912. But upon leaving the Glasgow appointment, I asked to be transferred to the Illinois Conference, as this would be closer to my schooling.

Teacher and Bishop

I continued to be a pastor throughout the critical time of WWI, until the end of the war in 1918. To my surprise, just two days before Christmas, the call came for me to teach systematic theology at the Evangelical Seminary in Naperville. I accepted and remained in that position until I was again surprised to be elected bishop in 1926 and assigned to the Kansas Area, my home Conference. I would be privileged to serve there for eight years. While there I also served as General Secretary of Evangelism for the denomination. I believed that evangelism was the first priority of the church... to see souls saved and brought into the church... the make disciples for Jesus Christ.
In 1934 I was appointed bishop of the Harrisburg Area, here in this beloved state. It was quite an adjustment to move from the midwest so far east in those days. But it was a blessing for us to minister in the area where our beloved church was born. As a bishop I continued to express my passion for evangelism, but I was also committed to interdenominational cooperation and the ecumenical movement. Thus I was privileged to serve as President of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. After church union I was elected President of the Federal Council of Churches, known to you now as the National Council of Churches. And I was honored to be a member of the 1948 organizational assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, and served on its Central Committee until 1954. I also had a continuing interest in theological education and taught some at the Theological School in Reading.

I truly believed in the unique character and role that the church was commissioned to perform in society. In preaching at the 32nd General Conference of the Evangelical Church in 1938, I said:

It is the task of the church to teach, but the church is more than a school. It is the task of the church to evangelize, but the church is more than a recruiting agency. It is the task of the church to minister to the needy, but the church is more than a benevolent institution. It is the task of the church to promote good will, but the church is more than a fellowship group. It is the task of the church to create social idealism, but the church is more than a social agency. It is the task of the church to combat evil and establish good, but the church is more than a reform movement... the church is the body of Christ! She is the embodiment of His life, the expression of His mind, the agency for the realization of His purpose. Her task includes service, but also character. The church must do, but primarily she must be.

Priscilla

Laity were a powerful and important factor in the coming union. Committed men and women made special contributions, and the Women's Missionary Society in particular was a mighty force for God in the church and world. I hope you'll understand my referring to Priscilla -- for she was not only a wonderful woman and pastor's wife, but a church worker with a zeal for missions! She gave herself to the Women's Missionary Society across the whole church. In 1919 she was elected the Society's vice-president. When I was elected bishop in 1926, she became president of the Society until 1944, holding that office for eighteen years. During that time she was also active in raising $50,000 for a Chair of Missions at the Evangelical Seminary, and in helping to lay the Basis of Union for the Evangelical United Brethren Church Women's work.

Her comradeship with me in the service of Christian ministry was a constant source of inspiration and strength. Whatever achievements marked my ministry, a large part of the credit belongs to Priscilla.

Coming Union

From 1934 until union in 1946, both churches made their plans and proposals for union through the Commission on Union. Much prayer and planning had gone into the work, so that it seemed reasonable to proceed and make a united, stronger church. In 1942, the Evangelical Church overwhelmingly approved the Basis of Union. I had spoken to our Evangelical Conference and said upon their approving the union: "There is a law in the universe that through union new qualities and resources are revealed and released." Thus both churches were ready to become one in Christ and in mission. In 1945, the United Brethren General Conference approved the Basis Union.
And so I was excited about the coming union, for I believed a stronger church was needed to serve a nation and world that was caught in the throes of another World War. The devastation and loss of life was certainly an offense to God, and much grief had been wrought on the families of our nation through the loss of loved ones on the battlefields.

I shall always remember that historic service of union held at the First United Brethren Church on Vine Street, here in downtown Johnstown. The church was filled to capacity and overflowing with delegates from fifty-two Conferences of both denominations, along with visitors and guests. Nine active bishops and two superannuated (retired) bishops were on the platform. It was an historic moment and a very moving experience as Bishop Clippinger read the Words of Union symbolizing the coming together of two vital movements into one mighty force for God. As he and I clasped hands symbolizing our newly-formed Union, I felt something of Jesus’ prayer being answered, “that they all may be one.”

I was then privileged to preach the first Holy Communion service celebrating our oneness in Christ. Proclaiming the foundation of our faith, I said

"The basic affirmation of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins according to Scripture. This is the source of Christian experience, the foundation of the Christian faith, and the distinctiveness of the Christian message. Without this there is no gospel of redemption. As a church in whatever form, by whatever name, we exist for the express purpose of making Jesus Christ known to the world... our call... our task... His Great Commission."

Union and Beyond

Thus a new church was born and I was privileged to serve another quadrennium beyond union, or a total of twenty-four years, as an Episcopal leader in the former Evangelical Church and now in the Evangelical United Brethren Church. I requested retirement in 1950 at the General Conference and said publicly

"Through the goodness of God, I have been able to serve in the Christian ministry for more than 51½ years. From the hour I yielded to God in response to the call to the Christian ministry, until this very day, I have been under a commanding sense of stewardship which impelled me to make this ministry central in my life and thought: to give Christ the pre-eminence in all things, and to give myself wholly to this work. I'm not tired of the Christian ministry... the years ahead will be in God's hands. I would be on the sidelines, and cheer for our leaders. But I will do more. I will pray."

Following our retirement, Priscilla and I continued to live in Harrisburg another four years. We were kept busy responding to calls for our service. But in 1954 we moved back to Kansas City, Missouri, the conference area where I first served as a pastor and bishop. Thus, life had come full circle. But we felt blessed to have lived and served twenty wonderful years in this area, and the larger church, while residing in Harrisburg.

My last sermon was on February 12, 1956, at Trinity Evangelical United Brethren Church, which I had dedicated twenty-five years earlier. Just five days later I was injured in a fall at home, and then went to my eternal home on March 5, 1956.
Conclusion

I'm honored and grateful for the invitation to share my life and memories with you, especially the experience of Union which brought together two great churches. And today, half a century later, you have come together to affirm your roots and spiritual heritage, your hope and commitment to an even greater and larger witness in the United Methodist Church. For now you are one family in the kingdom of God among many. It is very important to remember the heritage that gave birth to our faith and shaped our lives. But it is far more important to remember to whom we belong... Jesus, Lord of the Church. We are His, and it is in His grace that we are all called and privileged to participate. For the world remains ever broken and bleeding, in need of His reconciling grace and love.

And what of tomorrow? On the faithfulness of the church's witness, He will continue to unite and build His church. With St. Paul, let us rejoice and affirm... "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift... Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen."

Arthur Raymond Clippinger
1878-1958
by Daniel L. Shearer, 1996

Birth, Childhood and Youth

My name is Arthur Raymond Clippinger. I was born September 3, 1878, on a farm near the small rural village of Lurgan, about halfway between Shippensburg and Roxbury in Franklin County, central Pennsylvania.

I was the third child of five children born into the devout United Brethren home of Harry R. and Rebecca Gillan Clippinger. Every drop of my blood is United Brethren blood. My mother, of Scotch-Irish descent, was a good mother. She died in 1917, my father in 1918, when I was in my late thirties.

Growing up in the late 1800's on a farm located near a small rural village also had a positive influence on my life. I have fond memories of exploring the meadowland and finding all sorts of flowers and chasing elusive butterflies. Meadow larks and red-winged blackbirds with their well-hidden nests created another world of sights and sounds. The cycles and seasons of plowing, sowing, cultivating, and harvesting, plus family butchering and apple butter events, provided celebrative childhood memories.

It was my good fortune to be born into an environment where belief, reverence, and trust in God were as natural and normal as eating, drinking, sleeping, playing and working. My pre-school years were lived in a family filled with a sense of God's presence, love and care. I was confident that I was
loved, that the relatives and neighbors were interested in me and cared for me.

I was very young when I joined the Hopewell United Brethren Church on the Newburg Charge. Erected in 1880 and dedicated debt-free on October 3 of that same year, it was here that our family was welcomed and nurtured in the Lord. It was in this fellowship that we were cheered on our journey, and where family events were celebrated. It was here as a small lad that I was taught to believe in Jesus and learned to love and trust him, that whether I lived or died, I was all right. In 1885, at the age of seven, I knelt at the altar of the Hopewell United Brethren log house church and dedicated my life to God. At age sixteen I was teaching a Sunday School class, and at age eighteen I was elected superintendent.

Our United Brethren farm home was always a welcome haven to circuit-riding preachers. One such man of God was James Weidler. The impact of that man of God left its impression on my life as did no other man. He planted a dream of ministry in my heart that possesses me to this day. All honor to James Weidler and all other faithful pastors whose lives still impact the message of the gospel all across the world.

I completed my elementary education in the public schools of Franklin County and attended summer classes at Orrstown for a teaching certificate. I taught public school for four years in one-room buildings. It was during those four years that my dream of becoming a minister in the United Brethren Church continued to burn brightly. Funds were limited for a liberal arts education and degree. A door opened, and I was able to negotiate a loan from the father of one of my pupils to enter the academy of Lebanon Valley College in the fall of 1900. During the summer months, I sold Chautauqua drawing boards and writing desks in order to pay college costs. I graduated from Lebanon Valley College in 1905 with a degree of Bachelor of Arts. I was especially interested in the academic areas of psychology and Christian education. In fact, my graduation thesis was entitled "The Psychology of Conversion."

Schooling and First Appointments

While a student at Lebanon Valley College, I was granted probationary membership by the Pennsylvania Conference on October 18, 1903. Before beginning my senior year, I served six months as pastor of the Greencastle United Brethren Church. Before the completion of my senior year, I was appointed to Trinity United Brethren Church in New Cumberland. I served Trinity Church from April 1, 1905, through 1907 -- or for two and one-half years. The erection of a new building occupied a great deal of my energy and time.

On October 16, 1907, a new chapter began in my life. I was united in holy marriage to Ellen Weinland Mills, with her father Bishop J.S. Mills officiating at the ceremony, at the beautiful Mills home in Annville, Pennsylvania. Ours was a campus romance filled with years of a beautiful and meaningful friendship that prepared the way for a deep and abiding love, which in turn formed the basis for a lasting marriage. We were in the same graduating class of 1905. Through all these years she has been one of God's splendid grace gifts to me, my inspiration, my partner, an able and faithful mother to our three children.

Immediately following our marriage in 1907, we made our home in New Haven, Connecticut, where I enrolled in the Divinity School of Yale University. While there, I served as pastor of the Trumbull Congregational Church, 1907-1909, and North Haven Congregational Church, 1909-1910. It was here that pastoral/administrative skills were tested and tried in concert with academic pursuit.
I graduated in the spring of 1910 from Yale Divinity School with a Bachelor of Divinity degree. Around the same time, the Miami Conference appointed me pastor of the Summit Street United Brethren Church in Dayton, Ohio. I preached my first sermon on September 18, 1910, and was ordained by Bishop Weekly at the regular Sunday morning hour of worship in the Summit Street Church on January 1, 1911. Almost immediately I was catapulted into a relocation and new church building program at the corner of West Third Street and Euclid Avenue to be known as the Euclid Avenue United Brethren in Christ Church. Here I served eight years.

In 1918 Dr. C.W. Kurtz, superintendent of the Miami Conference, died just a few weeks before the annual conference session. It was then I was elected superintendent of the Conference. It was also my privilege to serve as a delegate to the 1917 General Conference which met in Wichita, Kansas. During my three year tenure as superintendent, I was privileged to serve on various denominational and interdenominational committees, especially the United Enlistment Movement.

Bishop

On April 3, 1921, Bishop Mathews died and left the Central District without an episcopal leader. The General Conference met in Indianapolis, Indiana, a month later and on May 14, 1921, I was elected bishop and assigned to the Central District to assume my duties there on June 1. Needless to say, I was deeply moved by my election as bishop and requested that Dr. A.R. Ayres, who signed my first license to preach, and Bishop Washinger, who appointed me to my first charge, to stand beside me and pray for me at my consecration. I wished that my pious parents were there in person to share in some of the honor given me that day. Indeed, I did pay tribute to Rev. James Weidler, that faithful circuit rider and preacher who inspired my own call to the ministry.

After Bishop Fout retired in 1941, I became the senior bishop of the United Brethren Church. During my tenure from 1921 through 1946, I served on all the General Boards and agencies of the church except that of Otterbein press. I was a member of the board of Otterbein College, Bonebrake Theological Seminary, and the Otterbein Home. I was privileged to represent our church on the Federal Council of Churches of Christ and served one term as chair of the Commission on Evangelism and as a member of the Commission on Chaplains of World War II. I was also one of three representatives of the Evangelical United Brethren Church to the charter meeting of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, Holland, in 1948.

One of my most challenging and satisfying experiences as bishop was to visit overseas mission stations in Japan, China, and the Philippines in 1926. In 1928 I did the same in Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo. On those trips I gave forty-two addresses to over six thousand people.

Church Union

From the very beginning of negotiations with the Evangelical Church, I was a member of the Commission on Union. Having been raised so near the geographical area where both denominations began, I could readily understand the opportunities and reasons for united efforts, in things both temporal and spiritual. For twelve years, fifty God-fearing and consecrated churchmen, leaders in their respective denominations, met repeatedly in prayer and consultation to bring about the union called the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Cheering us on in our task were familiar saintly figures from the Evangelical family such as Jacob Albright, John Walter, George Miller, Samuel Becker, Bishop Seybert, Bishop Breyfogle, Bishop Spreng, and Bishop Maze. From the United Brethren family were such familiar figures as
Philip William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, Adam Geeting, Christian Newcomer, Bishop Weaver, Doctors Davis, Funkhouser, Landis, Drury, and Faust. All of these, plus scores of others whose holy passion and Christian zeal adorn our pages of history, were our source of inspiration and determination to be faithful in our endeavor to merge our churches into one connectional church to be known as the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

It was one of the highlights of my life to be chosen to read the Episcopal Address at the merger ceremony on November 16, 1946, at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Of equal importance and joy was the privilege to read the Declaration of Union and to seal the same with a handclasp from my brother in Christ, Bishop John S. Stamm. In a very real sense it was the highwater experience of my life as a minister of the Church of Christ.

Conclusion

I retired in 1950 after almost a half-century of exciting, joyous, and rewarding ministry. God's love and presence have been with me throughout the journey with Christ my Lord. I am grateful for all who shared the journey with me, especially my wife Ellen who went to be with the Lord on June 3, 1955. Our three sons, Conrad, a practicing physician, John Arthur, a college professor, and Malcolm Mills, a YMCA secretary, and their families have been the joy of our lives. I have already paid tribute to my parents. Also sharing my journey have been my siblings. My oldest brother Walter was a professor at Bonebrake Theological Seminary and for years has been president of Otterbein College. Smith E. was a merchant in Waynesboro. Charles F. was a business man in Atlanta. My sister Florence E. served for years in Dayton as a staff person of the Women's Missionary Association of the church.

I bring this story to a close with Kipling's Recessional -- as I did the Episcopal Address on November 16, 1946:

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\text{God of our Fathers, known of old,}
\text{Lord of our far flung battle line,}
\text{Beneath whose awful hand we hold}
\text{Dominion over palm and pine --}
\text{Lord of Hosts, be with us yet,}
\text{Lest we forget -- lest we forget!}
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