

The 1980's Part Two

“A ‘part-time’ man seems to be what we need at this time due to the small congregation and financial strain.” (May 7, 1986 board meeting minutes)

The early months of 1986 found the Chapel small in size, short on funds, and saddled with much work still to be done on the expansion in the gym area as they began the search for a pastor. Jeff VanGoethem, a Norway native and well known by many at CBC, was pastoring the Felch Mountain Church. His goals and motivation seemed to line up with those of the Chapel, and, most importantly, he was willing to share his time between the Felch church and the Chapel.

This “yoking” with Felch in a shared pastor would last for nearly 10 years easing financial strain in paying only half of a pastor’s salary and affording the blessing of relationship with another body of Christ. We would attend hymn sings in Felch; they would attend our Sunday School picnic at Lake Lundgren. Our youth attended gatherings with their youth. Yet there were obvious drawbacks—the VanGoethem’s, Jeff, Karen and their two daughters Chaia and Leah, had a home at Norway Lake nearly an hour’s drive to Norway (which included many car/deer incidents). Jeff would be a pastor stretching his time and care to two flocks, working with two elder boards, preaching the same sermon two times each Sunday endeavoring to meet the needs of two distinct congregations. Yet this “sharing” did strengthen our own men to lead and teach.

Jeff came with gifts of administration, leadership, and deep Biblical teaching, and we grew stronger. He disciplined our men through a Saturday morning Bible study followed by a work-bee on the building. He and the elders and deacons met before the Sunday evening service to pray for the people of the church. During Jeff’s time, we saw another revision of our constitution in two fundamental areas. We changed our church government from congregational to elder rule in 1988 and strove to define membership in a more Biblical form. People who wished to be a part of the church filled an “admission to fellowship” form. It was a season of policy making for missionary support, facility use, payment for pulpit filling, and how to encourage attendance on Sunday evenings.

Stretched financially in the beginning of 1986, board meeting minutes from January state we were behind on bill paying and couldn’t even afford a new vacuum cleaner. This changed in the next few years as the unneeded parsonage sold (for around \$25,000), Barry Olson gave the Chapel a parcel of land on Pine Creek Rd. which we eventually sold, we were paying only half of the pastor’s salary, and the church was growing. Savings grew. We were able to triple the support of our missionaries. We could afford the finishing of the work in the back area.

It was a busy time with many changes and updates to the building: our first copy machine in '87 / our steeple in '90 given in memory of Guy Gustafson / installation of our first carpeting in '88 / the deep green/folding chairs replaced with used pews in '87 / an expanded foyer (a wall used to exist between the sound system and the auditorium doors) / a hallway and coat room created by eliminating one of the front bathrooms in '87 / our first sound system, used for \$2,000 in '88 / new tables and a storage barn in '89 / the exterior of the building painted by the youth under Mark Danielson / finally completing the back bathrooms, kitchen and lighting in '86. This is not to mention the headaches—the basement which leaked during heavy rains, roofing problems still, septic system woes, and the need for more storage.

It was a busy time in wonderful ways. These were the AWANA years which began in 1986 with Larry Thiel as commander. We could have as many as 90-100 kids on a Monday night. Wayne Funderburg came with the back of his pickup truck full of Quinnesec kids, the Nault's with a load from Kingsford, and Mark & Jodi Danielson with 8 or 9 in their small car from Norway. Beneath the carpeting in the gym there is still the painted AWANA games circle. Each spring there was an AWANA carnival with games and prizes. It was busy time with family nights planned by Chet Turner, Russ Nault, and Mark Danielson or the 50-Day Adventure led by Wayne Funderburg in Sunday School. The film series "Turn Your Heart Toward Home" was shown as a community outreach. There was a week of prayer set aside early in the year as we looked ahead. Our practice of Breaking of Bread before Sunday School began in '87. And another remnant of those days---the brown hymnals we still use in 2012 were purchased in 1987.

As the fall of 1990 arrived, Jeff Van Goethem received a call from a church in Illinois, and he felt God's directing to accept. He would say his farewell in late October, and Jim Danielson would be our interim pastor.