

7. ON TO A NEW CHALLENGE

All communication with Ogden was by letter. After I accepted the call, the Ogden secretary wrote to request that when we moved we should allow the preceding parsonage family, since the pastor had entered the Military chaplaincy and his family remained in town, to leave their furniture in the parsonage and we should store ours in the garage which had only a dirt floor. My response was a request to move their furniture into storage and to prepare the home for the new occupants. Upon our arrival we saw how wise that request was since the home still needed plenty of cleaning after we moved in to meet our standard of cleanliness.

We left Amherst in the week before Thanksgiving. On the 600 mile trip to Ogden we ran into a snowstorm at Rock Springs, Wyo. to make travel hazardous. So we stopped to spend the night in a motel. The next day we could complete our trip. From Rock Springs it was almost continuously down hill until we got into the valley near Ogden.

The installation was scheduled for the first Sunday in Advent. After the evening service Edna and I were making our way to the small church basement for the reception. Near the last pew Edna was surprised to hear a lady call her by her first name. There she was surprised to see one of the girls of the family in whose home she had worked in Oshkosh, Wis. before our marriage. Unfortunately, soon after this she left because her husband, who was in the military, was transferred out of the area.

Ogden was surrounded by military installations at the time. 15 miles to the south was Hill Field, which is today called Hill Air Force Base. A little more to the southwest was the Clearfield Naval Supply Depot. A few miles closer to the city was an Army Ordnance Depot, which is still there. At the north edge of the city was a large Army Supply Depot. About 10 miles north of that was a military hospital at Brigham City. The latter was closed about a year or so after our arrival but some of the

barracks for personnel are still there and were converted into housing.

With this number of military installations in the area it is understandable that at least half of our members were either in the military service or civilians employed at one of the installations. This resulted in much moving in and out. I recall that during my first year I lost 4 congregational officers during one month. They were the chairman, the SS Supt., the chairman of the Board of Elders and the treasurer. Since many of the members who were willing enough to serve had no previous experience in congregational leadership, this meant that time had to be spent at patient training and sometimes some difference of opinion regarding procedure.

We had one member who owned a business, who felt that because he was the largest contributor and a tither, his vote on any issue ought to be especially respected and ought to carry extra weight. This attitude at times created tensions among the body as a whole.

There were continual opportunities to instruct adults for membership. However, because of the frequent transfers in and out, you either had to hurry the process or leave the task half finished when they had to be on their way. I recall one case where I had begun such instruction for a young man who had not been baptized. On short notice he was required to report for induction into the Army. So we hurriedly completed at least the basic instruction so that he could intelligently confess his faith before Baptism and his departure for induction

Since I was responsible for service to the area much travel was involved. For this I was reimbursed by the District Mission Board at a specified mileage rate. This travel increased after the Brigham City Hospital was closed. At first a candidate, C. Harms, was assigned to serve the hospital and the mission in Logan, 30 miles north of there. But after its closing about

18 months later he was sent to another field and I was asked to serve Logan too. There we had a 15-minute period on the local radio station every Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. As a result the weekly service for the small group there, which began with 4 and later grew to 35 or 40, was held on Tuesday evening. The time between the radio program and the service in the Episcopal church was used to make calls. Much of the time faithful members invited me to have dinner with them. This weekly commitment called for a rigid schedule of radio program preparation and other time tables.

One of the reasons for the larger attendance at Logan was the increase in students from the more Lutheran Midwest and East, who were enrolled in the excellent forestry course at Utah State. However, it was quite time-consuming to try to call on the students who were referred to you by their home pastor, since they had their own schedules.

Logan is situated in the Cache Valley which is surrounded by mountains. When the early Mormons settled there they established their homes in villages, where their farmyards were clustered together. From there they drove out to their farmland in the surrounding fertile valley. In some villages you even found homesteads, where the barn was attached to the house as in parts of Europe.

To reach Logan one had to travel over a mountain pass with its winding road and no guard rails along the side where you could see down cliffs and into valleys for quite a distance below. One gradually became accustomed to this and didn't mind. I recall one trip during the winter. A good amount of snow had fallen. If one could make it to the top of the pass out of Brigham City, you had it made the rest of the way. In this case I was following a snowplow. But before reaching the top, the driver decided to quit. So I had to turn around and head back home. On the way down I was traveling around 30 miles per hour when I rounded a curve where the rock ledge limited your view ahead. Rounding the curve I saw that a car attempting to climb the hill had stalled crosswise in the roadway. I had to make a quick decision. The choice was to turn my front wheels into the

hillside to stop my momentum and avoid a collision or hope I could somehow squeeze by. It chose the first course and it worked. When my front wheel caught the snowbank to the right, the rear of my car spun around and pulled the front around once more so that when I stopped I was headed downhill in the same direction from which I had begun my maneuver. But I avoided the possible collision. From that point I could slowly move around the stalled car and finish my trip back home. Obviously, I had to stop to make a phone call to cancel the radio program and the service for that day. However, most of the time the highway over the pass was kept open.

At Logan there was a lady, named Florence Herring, who often needed a ride to church. A few times she invited me to have dinner there before services. She had come from London, England about 25 years earlier to keep house for her brother-in-law Rasmus Kaye, after her sister, his wife, died and to help him rear his two children. She still had a pronounced British accent and had difficulty saying "Harms" or "ham and eggs." Somewhere she lost the "h". She was a friendly and generous person but her housekeeping left something to be desired. Rasmus Kaye was also a member of the church but often couldn't attend the service because of his late and indefinite hours working as a garbage collector.

I recall one couple that amazed me with their generosity. Altho they had been married only a few months the young bride gave me a standing invitation to have dinner with them if I had no other invitation. Having been reared on a farm in Idaho as had been her husband, a student at Utah State, she never failed to provide a delicious meal and without any apparent anxiety. Unfortunately, I cannot recall their name.

One common experience associated with serving the Logan group was the frequency of picking up hitchhikers after the evening service. It seems that students of Utah State from Ogden who commuted daily had to give up their ride back home if they wanted to stay for some activity after the day's classes and hope for a ride via hitchhiking. Being aware of this I

never hesitated to give them a ride. Besides, it seemed to shorten the 50-mile drive at night. When the rider entered my car, I invariably introduced myself. This usually resulted in some kind of religious discussion or a question resulting from the rider's personal problem. In most instances it had some relationship to the Mormon religion. Regardless of what the topic was, I always confronted them with the question, "What does Jesus Christ mean to you?" In most cases their answer was a weak one. This gave me an opportunity to share my faith and what the Savior means to me and what He could mean to them.

At Logan we were privileged to use the Episcopal church free for our weekly service. Since their parsonage or rectory was attached to the church, occasionally the side door leading to the hallway was left open. At one service the vicar's cat began to explore the chancel during the sermon. We did not allow it to disturb us. But after the sermon it decided to jump on the arm rest of the pulpit and relax there until the close of the service.

The area I served also reached about 20 miles to the south, encompassing Layton, Clearfield and Hill Field (now Hill Air Force Base.) Near the Air Base there was housing for Air Force personnel and nearby some housing for married personnel. At Layton there was also a housing development to serve especially employees of the Naval Supply Depot at Clearfield nearby. It was rather time-consuming to try to make home visits in those communities because many wives also were employed outside the home.

At St. Paul's in Ogden it soon became apparent that the children of the congregation needed a strong Christian indoctrination. Therefore, with the aid of the District Mission support, we were able to open a Christian day school in the church basement less than a year after arriving there, in the fall of 1945. The first year we had just one room. But by the second year we had to add a second room. This really cramped our limited space. But we managed somehow. Since our membership was scattered, we even provided a limited bus service with the pastor's car providing transportation for some of the pupils.

After two years our principal (Kirch) accepted a call to California. They had lived in a home the church rented for them. When his successor (Suelter) and his family planned to move to Ogden, the congregation resolved to build a parsonage just back of the church and to use the former parsonage about 2 blocks away as a teacherage. During the parsonage construction we stored our furniture and moved into a downtown apartment for almost 6 months and used the church sacristy as a study. As much of the construction as possible was done by members. As a result it took a little longer to complete it.

Two episodes related to the parsonage construction come to mind. One involved Jim. The ditch for sewer hookup between the church and house had not been closed up immediately and became partly filled with water by a recent rain. Jim and Roger were playing near it one day after school and Jim slipped into the water and might have drowned had not one of the teachers been near to come to his aid, pulling him out.

The other episode involved Gloria. A pile of clay back of the house resulting from the excavation for the basement, which had not yet been moved away because it was frozen, was very sticky in the spring thaw. At close to 4 years of age, Gloria thought she could climb it only to find her white boots stuck in the clay and she was unable to move. Mother had to come to her rescue and practically pull her out of her boots. Obviously, that became a forbidden area after that.

In Ogden we had a faithful member who lived in an apartment alone and who generously offered to babysit for us without charge any time we needed this service. It only meant that we had to pick her up and bring her back home. Also once a year Grandma Rahmoller took the family on a day's picnic, she providing all the food and we the transportation. One time while she was there with the children they honored her by telling her that they had three Grandma's, namely their fathers and mother's mother and her too. They dearly loved having her come to be with them.

Quite a variety of fruits were grown in the foothills of the Wasatch mountains. Our first summer there we were able to pick tree-ripened Bing cherries for 15 cents per pound. Were they delicious when cut up with bananas and a little cream! Quite a tasty delicacy! In early fall the peaches were ripe at the orchards a few miles to the north and we could get the tree-ripened culls for \$1 per bushel. These were either too large or too ripe for shipping in crates that were filled by count. But they were delicious and served well as canned (bottled) fruit. One summer the canneries weren't buying apricots. Therefore, tree-ripened apricots could be obtained when picking your own for little or nothing. In that ripe state this fruit needs no sugar; quite different from our usual experience when buying them in the Midwest.

In this connection I'm reminded of an incident soon after arriving in Ogden. A lady asked Edna whether she had plenty of bottles. With Gloria just 6 months or so old and still drinking her milk from bottles, she naturally thought of that. Later she learned that the lady meant fruit jars, because in Utah they don't "can" fruits and vegetables; they "bottle" them.

For the purpose of public relations the congregation paid for my membership in the local Kiwanis Club and urged me to attend their weekly meetings. At one of their meetings - in Holy Week - the scheduled speaker was the Episcopal Bishop of Utah. However, because of a snow storm he was unable to come from Salt Lake City. When I arrived for the luncheon and meeting, the program chairman asked if I could fill in for the bishop with a message appropriate for the season. During the luncheon I was mulling in my mind what kind of a message I could provide but without real success. However, thoughts were crystallized for me when the guest soloist for the day had selected two numbers entitled "The Crucifixion" and "The Resurrection." This suggested that I simply testify to what Christ's crucifixion and resurrection mean to me. This was especially appropriate, because the Mormon church takes little or no note of either Good Friday or Easter as the Feast of the Resurrection. At the close of the meeting even

a Mormon bishop commended me for my message.

At the close of World War II quite a number of German prisoners of war were housed in our area. A detachment of about 100 of them was assigned to a work detail at Hill Air Base for 6 weeks. Religious services were provided each week for those who would attend. The base chaplain had to arrange for both Catholic and Protestant services. He being Baptist and unable to use German found that I was about the only minister in the area with a German name. So I was asked to conduct a service for them early each Sunday. This I agreed to do even though it was with considerable difficulty. I must have done OK since about 25-30 attended each Sunday. On the last Sunday before their scheduled transfer to another location we held an evening service so that it could be followed by a period of fellowship. During the fellowship one of the group asked which part of Germany I had come from. I replied that I was born in the U.S. but that my father had come from Germany at the age of 5. Then he asked which province he had come from. When I told him this, he stated that he had thought so, for he could tell by the way I pronounced the words in German. I never was aware that I had any German accent.

Each Sunday I was provided with military transportation. It so happened that my driver for 4 or 5 weeks in succession was the same young Mormon. He was quite convinced that he and they had sole possession of divine truth. In our animated discussions I stated clearly that the only criteria for the truth I would accept was the Bible. This limited our discussions which covered quite a range of subjects related to the Mormon belief.

About midway thru our stay in Ogden two black ladies, Lutherans from other parts of the country, began attending our services and asked to join our church and to commune with us. When I presented the request to the church council, there was at first the usual fear that if we let them in they might in time take over the church. However, observing the quiet and shy attitude of these ladies, who were usually by choice seated in the back pew, the majority

could see no reason for not accepting them. One was a registered nurse and the other had a responsible position at a military establishment. About a year or so later the husband of the latter, a steward on a Union Pacific diner, landed in the local hospital with terminal cancer. I visited him there a number of times and became convinced of his Christian faith. As a result I unhesitatingly gave him a Christian burial when his end came.

In late summer, after we had moved into the new parsonage, a couple of burglars cut the screen of a partly open kitchen window, got into the house and helped themselves to lunch from our refrigerator before they began collecting loot while we were attending a church softball game on Sunday evening. When we returned within one and a half hours we saw two men walking beside the church and carrying something as we neared the house. We thought they might have come from the back part of the church basement so we checked that first. When we unlocked the front house door, we saw the lunch remains on the dining room table and saw the back door open. We walked down the street a half block after phoning the police and found some of the loot, such as my typewriter, in a corn patch next to the sidewalk. They had emptied the kid's piggy banks and taken 7 of my shirts out of a closet. When the police arrived they scouted the neighborhood for suspicious-looking characters and found one of the men hiding behind some brush in a vacant lot diagonally across from the church. They took him into custody and at the jail found him wearing my 7 shirts and returned them. Most of the loot, except the children's money, was immediately returned. The second burglar was never found or apprehended. Fortunately this was at the end of the month. Otherwise they might have also taken our weekly church envelopes for the month, into which we customarily placed our offerings in cash after cashing the monthly pay check. Few people used checking accounts in those days.

The next morning the family rode with others up the Ogden Canyon to join about 50 other children and adults on a 3-day camp outing at a Girl Scout camp. I had to stay behind to do further checking with the police. Most of the

campers slept in tents set up on a slab of concrete. The first night the temperature dropped to below freezing in late August. Consequently those in tents had trouble keeping warm. When we asked the boys the next morning whether they had been warm enough, they told us that they were and explained that they had just put their pajamas on over their other clothes to solve the problem. Edna was asked to serve as counselor for some 7th and 8th grade girls. Because of the cold she suggested the next morning upon leaving the tent and moving to warmer quarters that the next night she would sleep with the cooks where it was warmer. To the girls this was totally unacceptable, because when the night before they investigated a strange rustling sound at one of the suitcases with a flashlight, a mouse jumped out after trying to get at a candy bar. They felt they needed an adult for protection from such wee creatures.

It was in Ogden that the boys had their first bicycle. We were able to get a usable one for \$8. Roger was 8 and a half and Jim was 10 at the time. They both learned to ride it in one day. As one of them rode the other helped him keep his balance until they gradually mastered it. All day they took turns at riding and helping. At the end of the day they were riding the bike around the block without help.

After moving into the new parsonage Gloria found a playmate about her age in the neighborhood. One day as they were playing on the front porch Edna overheard their conversation. Gloria seemingly had said something about Jesus. When her playmate asked who Jesus was, Gloria said, "You ought to come to my Sunday school. Then you'd learn about Jesus". For some reason the girl never came back to play with Gloria again.

At Layton, about 16 miles to the south, there was a sizeable housing development near the Clearfield Naval Supply Depot. Because most of the people living there were non-Mormons, even street names reflected this. Since all non-Mormons are called Gentiles by the Mormons, one of the major streets was named Gentile Way. We had at least a half dozen families living in that development. Since several of

them had children of an age for confirmation instruction, we arranged for a special weekday class for them. In this class was a girl of about 14 who had never been baptized. In one of our lessons on Baptism I asked whether the class thought any person could be saved, who had never been baptized. Most of them felt that no one could until I asked what finally saves a person, Baptism or faith in Jesus. They agreed on the latter especially when I used the 14-year-old class member as a case in point. Not long after this she and her two younger family members did receive Christian Baptism.

Because of the potential of reaching other families such as this, those families who were members in Ogden felt that we should begin a Sunday school and regular worship services in Clearfield. Since the local community building was available such a program was begun early in 1948. The group also was anxious to organize a congregation. I recall that the initial membership was 15 communicants and 26 baptized members. This group was determined to serve the community and resolved to conduct a Vacation Bible School that first summer. Their faith and effort was rewarded with an enrollment of 60 children.

To show what a witnessing opportunity this presented I recall one incident. In one of the classes for 6th & 7th graders the teacher was speaking pointedly about Jesus, only to have one of the class ask, "Who's Jesus?" Whereupon the teacher asked whether the youngster went to any Sunday school. "Yes," he replied. "I go to the LDS (Mormon) Sunday School all the time." To the teacher's surprise he had never heard of Jesus there. Such an incident really made the VBS much more purposeful and meaningful.

With weekly services at Layton this added more to the schedule of trying to minister to such a broad area, reaching 50 miles north to Logan and about 16 miles south to Layton.

For a period of 6 weeks I went even farther south to Bountiful, where I was asked to conduct services on Sunday evenings for a vacant community church that was ordinarily staffed by the Congregationalists. It's

interesting that the contact was made by a brother-in-law of a man with whom I had played basketball during my vicarage 12 years earlier and who happened to be visiting there at the time. As a result of these services, interest in what Lutherans could offer in terms of Gospel preaching was stimulated and a few years later a Lutheran mission was opened there, resulting in a congregation in that community today. Also, I got the Sunday School superintendent acquainted with our Concordia Sunday school materials.

While in Ogden I recall one instance of winning over a Mormon. She was the wife of a man who had been brought up in a nominally Lutheran home but had never been baptized. Since he worked at the post office also on Sunday mornings, he could rarely attend church. How we made first contact with them I don't recall but they agreed to take a course in Lutheran doctrine. Since his schedule didn't allow them to attend regularly scheduled classes, I didn't want to miss the opportunity and arranged to meet with them weekly in their home. Because of her background she had many questions, thereby prolonging each week's session and the series of weeks to complete the course. I recall that we had them ready for Baptism on the last Sunday of the year and also included their two daughters, aged 5 and 8 in the baptismal ceremony. Even after that special day she frequently came up with questions, partly as a result of continued visits by Mormon missionaries after she requested a demit from the Mormon membership roster, a request that was never officially granted.

Other than this we felt that our objective should be to help nominal Lutherans and others avoid falling prey to the social and other pressure of the Mormons surrounding them. In Ogden this pressure was not so heavy because it was reportedly only about 45% Mormon. But in Logan this was more noticeable since the area was reportedly 92% Mormon.

One could enter into a religious discussion at the drop of a hat. The postman delivering a package to the door might start a discussion. Or the beautician serving my wife in the beauty parlor might bring up a religious subject.

Members reported that noon lunch hours would often be taken up with some religious topic. Therefore, opportunities to witness to one's faith abounded and faithful members felt the need to be prepared to make the most of such opportunities.

Of course, we Lutherans were usually at a disadvantage. To us the Bible is God's revealed Word and the final answer on any religious subject. But when discussing a point with a Mormon, he often used the defense based on his belief that the specific quote offered to clinch the matter by saying "This must not be correctly translated." To him the Bible is the Word of God only "insofar as it is correctly translated." While he wants to use the name of Jesus Christ in his official title as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, he really feels no need for a crucified and resurrected Christ. He strives to work his way up the ladder to glory, as study of their beliefs would clearly reveal.

In the early months of 1949, I received 3 calls, all about the same time. At any rate, before I could return the first of them, the third one had already arrived. Seemingly, the District president had put my name on the calling list, because a couple members had small complaints which they never mentioned to me. These came out in a meeting with the District president, called for the purpose of airing them. I'm still amazed how petty they were.

These complaints may have been enlarged by a member who had been serving as Treasurer and Financial Secretary, and whose feelings were hurt by my suggestion for changing the procedure in handling the offerings just to protect his good name. What happened was that he regularly took the Sunday offerings to his home and counted it alone before depositing it. When several complaints were voiced to me about failing to receive credit for contributions made, I wanted to take him off the hook by suggesting a change in procedure. I suggested that two men count each Sunday's offering at church before it was turned over to the Treasurer and financial secretary for deposit and for the recording of envelope contributions. Altho I emphasized that I was trying to prevent some specific accusations of dishonesty, he

seemed to bitterly resent what had been done. I have my own private theory as to what may have happened to the unrecorded offerings, which even included several weeks of our own as well as of the school principal. However, I was told that soon after I left there, he and his family joined the other Lutheran church in Ogden.

Now back to the calls I received. One was to a country church near Arapahoe, Nebr. It was pointed out that sometimes creek beds that were usually dry ran so high that they were impassable because normally no bridges were needed to cross such creeks. As a result at times members could not get to church or classes, etc. Another call was to a country parish in northern Kansas near Linn, where 40 acres of land were available to the pastor to raise his own cattle or to rent out in order to supplement his income. I don't recall what kind of salaries were offered at either place.

The third call arrived before I was able to respond to either of the other two. This was to a parish about 5 miles from Edna's home and 4 miles from her home parish at Bear Creek, Wis., where I had spent 3 years as vicar and school teacher. Seemingly some members of that neighboring parish had remembered me when they were vacant and began calling and suggested my name. At any rate this parish presented much more challenge than the other two to which I had received calls. Actually, the membership I was asked to serve was as great as the membership in all of the Utah congregations at the time and the remuneration was 50% better than I was receiving. Having considerable difficulty to make ends meet where I was and enabling my wife to get nearer her aging parents as well as serving a larger parish than I had at the time made it rather easy to come to the decision to accept this call to serve St. Mark's in Symco, Wis., together with the small church at Big Falls, 15 miles away.

My farewell sermon at Ogden was given on Easter Sunday. But since I had taken no vacation for two years I received 3 weeks vacation pay. This helped us to decide to take three weeks to make the move, deciding to travel to visit a classmate and some friends in

California before starting toward the East via Arizona, part of New Mexico, southwestern Colorado and Denver, reaching Symco for installation on May 12.