

## 6. THE FIRST MOVE

In the late summer of 1940 St. Paul's at Amherst, about 30 miles south of Julesburg, asked me to serve their vacancy. After several weeks of service they held their first call meeting. In the meeting my name was proposed as one of the candidates. So they recessed the meeting until a later date and called in another pastor to guide them. At this call meeting they extended their call to me. Then I had to make a decision. Calls coming few and far between in those days added to my dilemma. Somehow for no reason I can now specify I was led to move to a new situation and accept their call, moving to the Colorado District. So we bade farewell to Julesburg and moved in early October.

Their parsonage was older and not too well insulated. Again we had a path (to the outhouse) in place of a bath until they modernized it a couple of years later and put in a bathroom. To do this they had to dig their own well and set up a windmill. One of the downstairs bedrooms served as a study while we kept the other as a guest room. But to reach the two bedrooms upstairs one had to go thru the study. There was a large country kitchen and a sizeable living room, which served also as the boys' playroom. The house was so poorly insulated that when the strong winds blew across the open fields, as they did at times, the draft under the floor was so strong that it would raise the linoleum on the kitchen floor. Most of the time the oil burner in the corner of the living room provided adequate heat for the whole house. To heat the upstairs rooms you only needed to open ceiling vents to get the amount of heat desired.

Here we still were without a telephone. The community had its own telephone system, which served a limited number of farm homes and which people maintained themselves. To make contact with the rest of the world the one grocery-postoffice had both a community phone and an outside line. At this point messages could be relayed to some people in the area. Those who had no phone could be contacted by

telegraph or mail. Telegrams were delivered personally by the station agent in case of a death announcement. Otherwise it was delivered with the next day's mail.

The church was a fairly new brick building with modern facilities and water service furnished by the neighboring home owner. It had a slate roof and one Sunday in the middle of the sermon it began to hail. The resultant noise on the slate roof made it necessary to pause for several minutes while you waited for the hail to end or subside.

The original frame church, which stood between the new building and the parsonage was converted into a school, which was maintained mainly for the upper grades and the traditional confirmation instruction with the normal curriculum. The school was also the location for small group meetings and choir rehearsal, especially during the colder months, to conserve heat in the church. It had a pipeless furnace and it became such a cold weather habit to gather around the grate above it that early comers would also gather there for visiting even on warm evenings.

Teachers for the school were usually vicars or new graduates who stayed only a year or two. The first year the teacher was married and rented a home in the village. During the World War II years teachers were in short supply. As a result we had a vicar from the seminary one year. He had been able to board with a family about a mile out of town. The next year we were again assigned a Seward graduate. Unfortunately, no family would provide room and board. So in desperation we tried to fill the gap in our limited facilities, using the guest bedroom. The individual was rather odd and was hard to communicate with. The problem developing in the school did not surface until after the Christmas vacation. At the Christmas Eve service the children sang beautifully but later we learned that it was out of fear of making a mistake rather than the joy of singing. After the Christmas vacation the congregational

chairman was withdrawing his children. This resulted in sharp words between him and the teacher, almost leading to physical violence. The upshot was the teacher's resignation. Since he had no car he wanted me to take him to the bus depot 10 miles away immediately. This I refused to do until he had met with the school board. Such a meeting could be arranged within an hour. At this he formally resigned. Since the board members had heard many complaints, of which I had not been aware, his resignation was readily accepted.

Since the war was on, obtaining a replacement was impossible. As a result I ended up in the classroom for the remainder of that school year. The pupils, I found, had made little progress in their required class work. However, with the cooperation of the pupils we were able to make up their deficiencies during the final 5 months so that they could be conscientiously advanced to the next higher grade. Here is where 3 years of teaching during my vicarage and one year of teaching after Seminary graduation proved to be a distinct advantage.

It was during this period that the wife of a faithful member, named Erdman, who herself had not been a member, became hospitalized with what was termed "infection of the blood stream", apparently resulting from the prick of a needle. Since they lived, and she was hospitalized, at least 40 miles away, this necessitated regular visits at that distance, which added to the time pressure. We thank God for her confession of faith in Jesus before she passed away, so that I could bring solid comfort to the bereaved husband and their 3 sons at her funeral.

Because of the war, it was difficult to hire adequate help and many available freight cars were requisitioned for movement of war materials. As a result the wheat farmers were urged to provide their own storage for their crop as much as possible. Therefore, it seemed patriotic to assist some of them in building some storage. I recall helping the neighbor across the street from us to plan and build his granary. When that was completed his brother-in-law asked me to build a small grain storage building for him next to his garage that he

operated. Even the local elevator hurriedly arranged for construction of a large storage building and asked for help. There the manager asked me to assist the contractor to complete the building in time for the wheat harvest. Then during harvest he needed help in weighing and unloading trucks mechanically. This made the summer pass by rapidly and provided a welcomed added income. This added war-time income enabled us to buy a used 1936 Chevrolet from one of the members to replace our tiring Model A Ford, which had a noise in the motor that no one could explain even after several attempts to identify the cause.

Because of their experience during the depression, the congregation was hesitant to increase the pastor's salary, lest they again find it difficult to pay the amount agreed upon because of their limited incomes. In fact, the congregation was so fearful to increase the salary that when they realized an increase was justified, they would not designate \$300 per year additional for "car expense". That need they realized would continue. They ended up granting the increase, but termed it "for miscellaneous expenses".

The members did try to provide extra food for our table and were generous at inviting the family for Sunday or holiday dinners. It was our first Thanksgiving when we were invited to a home for the feast. It was customary for invited guests to remain also for the afternoon of fellowship and card playing and to share the evening meal before returning home, because the wheat farmers usually had no daily chores, such as milking cows. It so happened that Jim was 2 and a half years old and Roger was about 10 months old. Roger had a nap during the afternoon but Jim had stayed awake. As we started for home less than a mile away, Jim was seated on a little bench between us so that he could see the road and Roger sat on his mother's lap. We had not traveled very far when Jim said, "I don't know what's the matter but my eyes won't stay open" and promptly fell asleep.

Especially during the post-Christmas and Lenten season we could be invited to some home for Sunday dinner (and supper) for many

weeks in succession. During the busier spring, summer, and early fall season such invitations were not so common. In fact, it was interesting to note that some families included us in their invitations for several Sundays as they made their rounds of annual invitations to neighbors and relatives to the extent that they could comfortably handle in their home. After they had taken their "turn" someone else might do the same.

One fall a family gave us a live turkey gobbler. We were not ready to use it immediately so we put it into a small chicken coop next to our garage. One of the windows was covered with glass cloth. It being old and quite brittle, the turkey broke out of it and began wandering around town. At first we were afraid it might have gotten mixed up with a flock of 10 that belonged to the local hair dresser and that roamed quite freely. But we did locate it and with the help of a couple neighborhood youngsters were able to herd it back to our yard where we were able to corner it, catch it and pen it up again, this time more securely.

Fortunately, an older lady, named Mrs. Naggatz, felt sorry for us and asked whether we had ever defeathered and dressed a live turkey. Upon our negative answer she offered to take it home and defeather and dress it for us. (This process is quite different from preparing a chicken.) Obviously this offer was gratefully accepted.

In our second or third year there a violent hail storm hit town on an early May afternoon. While hail storms were common in the heat of the summer and often destroyed all or part of an anticipated harvest, this was not a common occurrence during May. A dark cloud hung in the northwest and was slowly moving in our direction. Not anticipating more than a heavy rain I had driven my car to a nearby garage for some kind of checkup or repair when the hail began to fall driven by a strong wind. My car was protected on the east side of the garage. But the hail broke 21 window panes on the west and northwest of our home. In most cases this was a double loss because the storm windows were still on. There was glass all over the guest bedroom in that corner of the house. This

would have been scattered even more had the shades not been pulled. A young man had just plowed his aunt's garden with a team of horses. With hail pounding away at the horses backs and rears he had a real difficulty keeping them from running away. Most hail storms moved over slowly and were not accompanied by strong wind, therefore causing less damage.

It was here in Amherst that the boys spent their early years and a number of incidents come to mind. One Sunday in church Roger suddenly became aware that his Daddy was in the pulpit and blurted out, "There's Daddy", to the amusement of the young men serving as ushers and seated in back of them.

Although we had provided a sand box in our fenced-in yard, the boys occasionally tried their hand at making mud pies. One day they learned something new from a daughter of a cousin who was a neighboring pastor in Nebraska, 10 miles to the east. She was about the same age as the boys. They were playing outside while we adults visited in the house. After they had returned home the boys told us that Ruthie had shown them how to make better mud pies by mixing in an egg.

One day I planned to make several calls on members. So to give Mother a little rest I took Jim with me. He enjoyed riding with me whenever possible. At one home while I was visiting with the lady of the house her telephone rang in the next room. While she answered it Jim quietly asked me, "Daddy, when are you going to make that call?" Obviously he was associating calls with the telephone.

Each afternoon Mother regularly took the boys upstairs for their nap. However, it was her practice to have them pick up their toys and put them into a box before they lay down for their nap. One day Roger, the younger, surprised her with the excuse for not picking up their toys first by remarking, "Us boys is too tired." Since she was tired and wanted to take a nap also, she relented. In that way a working routine was spoiled.

After a rain the boys, like all youngsters, liked to stomp around in the little puddles that

resulted. After a little while at this game they got wild at it. When Mother looked out, their clothes were practically covered with shiny mud, as one would picture a wallowing pig. When she scolded them, sheepishly they were ready to come into the house to get cleaned up and "get the business." However, she surprised them by asking them first to stay out on the porch, since she wanted to get the camera and take a picture of them. So we have a permanent record of this episode.

When a lot of building was going on in wartime the boys got the notion too. One day we looked out the back window and saw their heads pop up over the edge of the low, slanting roof of the old chicken coop. Upon investigation we learned that they had found some nails and a couple hammers, climbed on the fairly low roof from the back side and began their "project" of shingling the roof. You can be sure that there were plenty of nails in that roof.

Living next door to us on the other side of a vacant lot were the Deden twins, who were a year older than Jim. The boys spent quite a bit of time playing with these two lively girls. One day they came home with their hair shining and matted down. Now what had they done? They explained that the girls decided to play "Viola". She was the local beauty operator. To set the boys' hair they had found some home-made laundry soap and with it made a watery paste to give their hair the shiny and slicked-down appearance. Obviously, Mother had to play "Viola", too, but in a different way.

One day the twin's mother was amused by what she observed. This time they were playing "church". The twins and Roger were seated on the step of the front porch and were singing some tune until Jim, the preacher, climbed into a tree close by that was to serve as his pulpit. On occasion Roger would get tired of being ordered around by the older playmates and would slowly walk back home across the vacant lot and end up quietly playing with his cars and trucks in the sand box.

At one time we detected an odor of something decaying at a certain point in the living room. For some time this kept us baffled until one day

I moved our small radio away from the wall and looked back of it. There I discovered that a mouse had seemingly gotten caught between two wires carrying a current and been electrocuted. Removing the limited remains that were still there took care of the odor problem.

During the colder season the boys spent their time playing in the living room, on which we had a 9 X 12 carpet. Often they had the floor covered with a variety of their toys. One day they decided to try a new game while Mother was away for the afternoon and I had stepped over to the school for some purpose. They found some thin rope or cord and tried to make a clothesline by fastening each end to a floor lamp. All went well until they began to hang clothes on the line. One lamp soon toppled over and the glass reflector bowl broke. About that time I came back into the house. But they must have seen me coming because when I entered the door there was no boy to be seen or heard and the mess was on the floor. After listening for a few seconds I could hear a little snickering back of the davenport. There they were hiding and hoping they wouldn't be found. So we had to go to work cleaning up the mess before Mother came home.

One summer we had been away on vacation for about three weeks. When we returned we lifted the door to the small basement under the kitchen. The door happened to be on the back porch. As we opened the door we saw several mice scampering for cover. So I went to the hardware store for a mouse trap. After putting a little cheese on it for bait, setting it and then placing it on the top step, we again closed the door and waited for the trap to snap. The mice were so hungry that when the trap snapped shortly two of them were caught. I took it back to the hardware store and suggested that he could use it to advertise his efficient traps. Obviously, the proprietor laughed since we needed the trap to catch more of that invasion of the mouse family.

Either the second year at Amherst or early in the third year I received a call to a church at Onarga, Ill. It was a rural church in that mostly corn-growing country in east central Illinois.

(That's not far from where our son Roger now lives.) They still had German services once a month. They offered a salary of \$1200 per year. But the vacancy pastor explained that this salary was guaranteed by the end of the year but not promised to be paid at \$100 per month. Besides, in the parsonage the pastor had to furnish a stove for every room that he wanted to heat in the winter. This we assumed meant oil heat and heaters. Since our salary at Amherst was only \$100 per month and we had trouble meeting our expenses with that kind of limited income, that phase of the call didn't seem an answer to prayer. Besides, I had misgivings about providing the kind of German services they might expect. These considerations prompted me to return the call. The irony was that another pastor near us received the same call after I had it but at a salary of \$1500 and he was a bachelor. Seemingly, one of my reasons for returning the call had made the people willing to offer more.

As the boys were growing up it was an extra convenience to live close to the church. One Sunday they were in an irritable mood and repeatedly pestered each other even though Mother usually seated one of them on each side of her in the back pew of the main section. This behavior finally irritated her to the point where she grabbed one under each arm and dragged them out the side door. As she did so the young men who ushered and were seated across the aisle behind her couldn't hold back their grins. But she made the trip to the house, gave them each a spanking, and went right back, giving them little time to dry their tears as she ordered them to behave. At the dinner table that noon Mother said to me, "The boys were naughty in church today and I think you better talk to them." Without waiting for me to say a word Roger piped up with the excuse, "But Daddy, you preach too long." You can imagine the difficulty of practicing any discipline after such a remark.

While I was helping with the storing of wheat at the local elevator the one summer during the war, Roger was about 3 and had difficulty pronouncing some bigger words. So it often amused us to hear him explain that his Daddy was working at the "elevafar."

On May 1 it was customary in the village for the smaller children to go to doors of the neighborhood to hang May baskets. The boys didn't want to be left out of this fun either. So Mother helped them make little baskets and found some flowers to put into them. Just when they were about ready to leave Roger at 3 had to make a quick detour to the windmill and try climbing one of the steel corner posts. It so happened that his foot slipped and his one arm caught on a wire end of a brace, resulting in quite a gash. The result was that he and I made a quick trip to the hospital 10 miles away to have the gash stitched up for quick healing, while Jim and his Mother went hanging their May baskets.

It was around Thanksgiving in 1943 that Mother came down with the flu. But as one usually does at a time like that, she tried to keep meals on the table even though recovery was not complete. About a week later she developed a weak cough and started running a temperature. Since the doctor was coming to town anyway for a nearby neighbor we had him stop to examine her also. His diagnosis was pneumonia and ordered her to the hospital at once. While she was there for at least 8 days the boys and I tried to manage as well as we could. They tried to be helpful and did the dishes. All went well for a while, but then it got to be fun to splash in the dishwasher, creating more work than their helpful spirit was saving.

Mother was in serious condition for several days. But with the Lord's help, a so called pneumonia jacket and a regular dosage of sulfa tablets (the most effective drug then available) she recovered sufficiently to return home after 8 days. However, she was still quite weak and spent much of her time in bed. We calculated that she had taken at least 120 sulfa tablets when she felt that her memory had been affected by the drug. After deciding to let nature gradually bring about healing and restoration of strength, her mental powers steadily returned to normal. This all happened while she was 2-4 months pregnant with Gloria. Being so ill, we thank the Lord for enabling her to carry thru.

By Christmas she had not ventured out of the house. So after the Christmas worship the choir came over to the house to carol for her. I had not yet returned home. As usual the boys had been playing in the living room and had their toys scattered around. When one of the choir members, whom the boys knew quite well, knocked at the door, Jim went to answer. When she asked, "May we come in?" Jim quickly replied, "Come in if you can get in."

We recall no special incidents during the next few months. However, someone had given the boys a small dog for a pet. With it they had lots of fun as it grew up. In spite of our extreme care, one day it was left outside by one of the boys only to be mated by a waiting male outside the back door. Of course, that meant anticipation for a litter of puppies.

On Decoration day the boys and I had driven some miles to the south of town where there were some sand hills to bring home some new sand for their sand box. Of course, Mother didn't want us to stay away too long lest she start with labor pains and be anxious to get to the hospital. That day passed without incident.

We had arranged for the mother of the twin girls next door to look after the boys in case we had to leave hurriedly for the hospital. Shortly after midnight that day the indications of impending birth began. So the neighbor lady came over to rest while the boys still slept as we made our way to the Holyoke Hospital 10 miles away. Our regular doctor, Dr. Hill, was out of town so he had arranged for another older doctor, Dr. Means, to take care of his patients. He came alright and checked the progress and concluded that it would be a couple more hours at least. Even the nurse accepted his judgment even though we tried to explain that on the two previous occasions the final stages went rapidly. That happened in this case also so that Gloria was born with neither a nurse or doctor in the room until a few seconds later. Then everyone moved hurriedly at 7:30 a.m. We were thankful that all turned out well in spite of this lack of attention.

When I came home an hour or more later I asked the boys what they thought they had. In

their greater anxiety and greater interest about the litter of puppies than a baby sister or brother, their response was "Puppies." This prompts Gloria to observe that from the time of her birth her brothers have "treated her like a dog," but obviously in humor. They were, of course, thrilled to have a baby sister. But their interest in puppies caused us to check out that situation, only to find that their dog had given birth that same night to a litter in the cold garage where she usually stayed. But since it was an especially cold night, only one of the puppies survived. Thus, there were two special events to start May 31, 1944.

Later that day Roger's curiosity got the best of him about the puppies that didn't survive. So he found a hatchet and was about to perform his own type of autopsy to find out why they didn't make it. When I discovered this I put an end to that process. Then we found a place to bury the non-survivors.

While Mother was in the hospital with Gloria, some of the ladies decided this was a good time to come in and do some wall papering in the parsonage. In order to provide a little refreshment with coffee for the willing workers I decided to bake a cake. I found a simple recipe for what was called "Hurry Up Cake." In this case you mix up all the ingredients at once, pour it in a cake pan and let it bake in the oven for the prescribed time. It happened to turn out so well that a couple ladies asked for the recipe.

When I visited Mother in the hospital that evening and told her about this experience in the presence of the nurse, she said she wouldn't believe it unless I produced a sample. So the next day I had to bake another cake and bring a couple sample pieces to the hospital for the nurse and Mother. I still chuckle over that simple recipe in one of Mother's favorite cookbooks.

In October of 1944 the congregation again felt the pastor should receive an increase in salary or income. But they were still afraid to raise the salary. One member moved to increase the salary \$300 per year. But this died for lack of a second. They still couldn't consider an amount for car expense. Finally, one of the elders

moved to increase the allowance for "miscellaneous expenses" by \$200 per year. This was then approved. After the meeting the men who had made the motion on \$300 came to me and said he was disappointed and knew that I needed more to live on. So he handed me a \$50 bill.

Only a week or two later a call came from Ogden, Utah. For several weeks I wrestled with the Ogden call. The congregation in meeting asked me to remain. Since Ogden offered no increase in salary and car allowance I felt inclined to remain. In the meantime one of the elders during a visit even promised, "If you stay we'll give you anything you want." On the Friday before I was to announce my decision I answered the question of one of the trustees with the statement that I felt inclined to stay on. However, when I tried to write a letter that evening in which I would decline the call, a restlessness came over me that kept me awake most of the night. It seemed to me that the Lord was pushing me to accept the missionary challenge that Ogden's call presented despite the unattractiveness of the physical considerations. When I finally decided I should accept the call, a calmness came over me that seemed to assure me that I was doing the Lord's will. You can imagine the startled trustee to whom I had spoken on Friday when I made my announcement after the Sunday service. Mother claims that she was surprised too. I must add here that as time went on I never regretted this decision, and I think Mother agrees, because it opened up for us a very broadening experience

Before closing this chapter, there are a couple of items about church or congregational life that I should mention. One of them is the introduction or dedication of the new hymnal in late 1941 or early 1942. As I recall we had ordered an adequate supply of 200 copies. For the dedication of them they were stacked at the front of the church in the shape of a cross. Then came the challenge of learning the new liturgy. This was practiced with the choir in shorter segments and they then led the congregation in the introduction of each segment. In this way the various portions of the responses were introduced and gradually the

whole worship order became part of the congregational life on a regular basis. Since most of the responses were the same with or without Communion the procedure was simplified.

Since the Athanasian Creed was also printed in this new hymnal, members were familiarized with this perhaps on Trinity Sunday. Despite the fact that the term "catholic", printed without a capital C, was explained in parentheses or brackets, some members were offended by its use and asked, "Are we turning Catholic?" A repetition of the parenthetical explanation didn't seem to satisfy some.

When I came to this church it was customary to celebrate the Lord's Supper only about 8 or so times per year on Sundays chosen by the pastor. When I urged more frequent use of the Sacrament, there was little change. When I asked members about this as they registered during the preceding week at the parsonage, one lady provided a revealing explanation. She told me that when she was confirmed the pastor urged them to go to the Lord's Supper "every other time" it was celebrated. This obviously explained why most faithful members never communed more than 4 times per year, or even less if they happened to be visiting away from the parish on one or more Communion Sundays during the year. So to encourage more frequent attendance we suggested celebration of the Sacrament once each month on a designated Sunday so that members could plan their visits away from their home parish around those designated Sundays. It was surprising what a change this made in the frequency of attendance.

Because personal or family registration at the parsonage during the preceding week was the custom, mostly on a designated day, and no telephone was available, this meant a special trip into town. When gasoline rationing was instituted during the war this created a problem for many parishioners. As a solution we offered the practice of group registration following the service prior to the Communion Sunday. This would eliminate the need for the extra trip in most instances. For those not present then, the registration during the preceding week was

retained. Also, since it was my custom to offer a brief spiritual message during the registration visit, I was able to offer this message to the whole group after the previous Sunday's service before recording the names or have them fill out registration blanks.

With this we conclude this chapter and in the next move on to our experiences in Ogden, Utah.