

The history of the village of Dutton goes back to 1875, when it was first platted out. Situated on the Central Michigan Railroad, Dutton was approximately eleven miles by rail from Grand Rapids. The village grew quickly and by 1914 included a railroad depot, school, grain elevator, general store, and two churches. However, with no Reformed presence in the area, Classis Grand Rapids East of the Christian Reformed Church established a mission station in Dutton on August 18, 1914, with Rev. J. R. Brinks as its home missionary.

At this time there were several families in the area who were attending the Cutllerville, East Paris, or Kellogsville Christian Reformed Church. The means of transportation was primarily by horse and buggy. Although horseless carriages were beginning to make their appearance, they were largely useless on the country roads. It was often said that these contraptions had “pneumatic tires and rheumatic motors.” If they could be cranked to life, they might blow a tire in the frozen ruts, or the whole automobile might get stuck in the mud. With this difficulty and distance involved in travel, attending worship services as well as Sunday School and Catechism classes on a regular basis became very difficult.

In addition to travel, language barriers posed an issue for younger church members. The churches they attended were using the Dutch language for preaching and teaching. As a result, the children were not comprehending what was being preached and taught. The teaching of 1 Corinthians 14:19 evidenced the fact that it would be better for the young members to hear five words they could understand than ten thousand which they could not. This gave further impetus to having a church in Dutton where English would be the primary language used.

When Rev. Brink began the work in Dutton, he was received enthusiastically by these families who were traveling many miles to attend worship. Steps were soon taken to organize a church which would use English exclusively. On November 17, 1914, Classis moved that the Dutton mission be placed in the hands of the Deputies of the Home Missions and of the consistories of the Cutllerville, East Paris, and Kellogsville churches. At the May 19, 1915 meeting, Classis was presented with the petition from seventeen families in the Dutton area to be permitted to establish an English-speaking church. This would be the first Christian Reformed congregation in a rural area to use English exclusively. Classis granted the request. The first few meetings were held at the Kraft School located at the corner of Kraft and 68th Street. Shortly thereafter meetings were held in the Dutton Church of God located on 68th Street, about one quarter mile east of Hanna Lake Avenue.

On June 17, 1915, the much-anticipated organizational meeting was held at that location. Rev. Brink preached the sermon, based on 1 Peter 2:4–5. After the service the election of officers was held. Mr. C. Bishop and Mr. M. Huizenga were elected elders and Mr. P. Van Til and Mr. R. Wiersma were elected deacons. Rev. Vander Ploeg of the Kellogsville Church read the Form of Installation, thereby constituting the first consistory. Rev. J. Post from Cutlerville closed the meeting with a few remarks and offered a benediction. Following this, a short consistory meeting was held for the purpose of electing officers and signing the Form of Subscription. Subsequent consistory meetings were held in the homes of consistory members, and, early on, they placed a priority on establishing catechism classes for the youth, scheduling family visiting and taking up a collection for Home Missions.

We do not have a list of the names of those who were charter members, but at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration it was reported that there were sixteen families with twenty-two confessing members and a total of sixty seven souls as charter members. At the time of our fiftieth anniversary, we had four members who had been with us at organization: Mrs. Arthur Bajema, Mr. George Huizenga, Mr. John Huizenga and Mrs. Al Vander Laan. Mrs. Vander Laan was the only living charter member at the time of our 75th anniversary.

From the date of organization, services were held in the Dutton Church of God. Worship services were at 9:30 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. The consistory met on June 28, 1915, and decided to look for a place to build “not more than 100 rods from the present location” (approximately three tenths of a mile). With no clear consensus of the congregation on whether to buy a vacant church on French Street (76th Street) or to build new, a committee was formed at the congregational meeting of August 3, 1915, and was authorized to buy an acre of land on which to build. With several sites suggested and the building committee split on which one was preferable, the congregation voted on November 22, 1915, to purchase from Mr. William Blake one-and-a-half acres on the northwest corner of Hanna Lake Avenue and 68th Street. Informed that they would have to vacate the church where they were meeting and the horse shed they utilized by February 1, 1916, the congregation was encouraged to begin construction immediately. Apparently, they were able to negotiate an agreement with the Church of God, for records indicate that they continued to worship there until the dedication of their new building on June 12, 1917.

At the congregational meeting of February 7, 1916, the consistory was authorized to borrow \$1500 in addition to the \$1000 previously authorized. Work began soon after with the basement being

constructed by Mr. F. Monseau with the help of men from the church. The church itself was built by Mr. Jake Karsten. Unfortunately, the cost to build the church was not recorded in the consistory minutes, but it is thought to have been around \$3500. In spite of the fact that Dutton depended on subsidies as a mission church, this was quite a step of faith for a small congregation whose collections were averaging about \$9.00 per week. At the congregational meeting in December of 1916, a budget equivalent to 80 cents/week per family was adopted and the consistory was authorized to borrow another \$500 to finish the church building. Construction was completed in May of 1917.



The dedication took place on June 12, 1917, almost two years to the day from the date of organization. Taking part were student D. Flietstra, who was working in the congregation during that summer, Rev. Brink, Rev. J. DeHaan of East Paris, Rev. M. M. Schans of Kellogsville, and Rev. J. Post of Cutllerville. Dutton's conservative nature or sense of propriety was already evident at this time. Rev. Brink stated, "A fine spirit prevailed and the people of Dutton were sensible enough to feel that during the rendition of the program, although thoroughly enjoyed, applause by handclapping was out of place in the church."

With the church building completed, on August 29, 1917, the consistory was authorized to build a horse shed to accommodate 12 rigs. This was to be built on the North property line and "constructed on a cement wall with a tarpaper roof" with a budget of \$144 for carpenter's wages and \$100 for material. Construction was completed by early winter. This building served until June 8, 1926, when it was sold for \$50 to Mr. Art Bajema and Mr. Koning.

From organization in 1915 until September 1921, the pulpit was filled by Classical appointment, professors from Calvin, reading services by the elders and, in the summers, by five different seminary students. Catechism classes for children ages five through sixteen were taught by an elder on Saturday afternoon at the church, while the Compendium class for the young people was held after the second service on Sunday afternoon and taught by the minister or elder serving that day.

Transportation was primarily by horse and buggy or by railroad in those days. The minister usually came by train on Saturday afternoon and was picked up and shown hospitality in the home of a member of the congregation. On Monday morning he was returned to the depot by the same member. Traveling on Sundays was not allowed. Consistory minutes from March 1920 record a letter received from Calvin College asking the consistory "to assist them in stopping as much as possible students from traveling on Sunday." The consistory replied "that they will do all they can to prevent this evil."

During this time the membership grew, and a Ladies Aid Society was organized. There were eleven members present at the first meeting held on April 14, 1920. Their purpose as stated in Article 3 of their Constitution was "to advance the knowledge and spiritual development of all the members...and also to help in the financial support of the church, and God's Kingdom in general." The ladies were very active in providing the church with many necessary improvements. One project was providing a cement floor in the church basement. Prior to this, sawdust was sprinkled on the sand floor when meetings were held. In 1927 they purchased a one-thousand-and-ten-pound bell for the belfry, which, for many years to come, would be faithfully rung each week at twenty minutes and five minutes before the worship service.

Having been established for six years now, the little Dutton Congregation increasingly felt the need for their own pastor. However, with not having a parsonage in which to house their pastor and struggling to meet their expenses, they questioned whether now as the time to extend a call. The consistory called a congregational meeting on June 22, 1921 to gauge their commitment to this endeavor and approve a calling salary of \$1200. Based on this meeting, the consistory presented a trio and called for a congregational meeting on July 12, 1921, at which time candidate John Medendorp received the call to serve as Dutton's first full-time minister. He accepted, and he and his bride moved into the Charles Wabeke bungalow on Kalamazoo Avenue in September.

In the meantime, the building committee was busy getting bids on building a parsonage. At the congregational meeting held September 27, 1921, the contract to build was awarded to the Caledonia Lumber Company, and the committee was given full authorization to proceed. Again, no prices were recorded, but the consistory did agree "to have a private phone installed in the parsonage at a cost of \$12.00 per year plus installation." By late Spring of 1922, the Medendorps were able to move into the newly completed parsonage right next to the church.



John Medendorp

Rev. Medendorp labored faithfully alongside the elders, visiting, admonishing, and even disciplining members of the congregation in addition to preaching the Word twice each Sunday and teaching Catechism classes. It was during his tenure that the consistory felt compelled to establish a "Poor Fund" even though the Dutton Church itself was receiving subsidies of \$500 to \$600 each year from Home Missions. The Lord saw fit to bless the pioneering work of Rev. Medendorp so that when he left in November of 1926 to serve the Christian Reformed Church in Rusk, Michigan, Dutton had grown to 30 families and 62 confessing members.

The consistory wasted no time in forming a trio to present to the members, but it would take several calls and ten months before they would be greatly encouraged in receiving a letter from candidate Marinus Arnoys stating that the Lord of the vineyard had inclined him to accept the call extended to him. He arrived with his bride and entered the ministry with great enthusiasm. His first consistory meeting was September 20, 1927. He labored faithfully for a period of three years and captured the hearts of the congregation, especially of the children and young people. This became evident when the congregation voted to give him a car. The money was raised by canvassing the congregation, with each family expected to give \$20.00. During his ministry, many confessions of faith were made and the church enjoyed a breathing spell from building so more attention could be given to the routine matters of the congregation. Some of the changes during his time at Dutton include the following: indoor plumbing installed in the parsonage, elders and deacons were elected to a three-year term instead one year, Rev. Arnoys was allowed to pick the closing hymn of the service, the order of worship was changed to have the scripture passage read immediately before the sermon rather than before the "long prayer," and wine was used for communion instead of grape juice. The consistory also decided to change to individual cups for communion, but this was met with such resistance that they dropped the idea.



Marinus Arnoys

All too soon came the time in October 1930 when Rev. Arnoys informed the consistory that he was constrained to accept the call extended to him by the East Leonard CRC of Grand Rapids. The consistory reluctantly acquiesced and gave him a letter of release. By this time the church had grown to thirty-five families with eighty-four confessing members. Candidate C. Oldenburg was asked to teach the young people's catechism class during the vacancy.



Joseph Vande Kieft

At the congregational meeting held May 11, 1931, Rev. Joseph Vande Kieft was elected to receive a call from Dutton. It is interesting to see the Lord's hand at work as this was the third call extended during this vacancy and he was elected on the third ballot at this meeting. Though not our first choice, the Lord knew what we needed and moved him to accept the call. He began his work at Dutton on July 12, 1931, and immediately began visiting many members who were delinquent in their church attendance. He labored faithfully and there was a gradual dual growth in membership. At this time the Great Depression gripped our country, and in 1932 he graciously offered to reduce his salary by \$400, which the consistory gladly accepted. To give some perspective, the bank balance as of January 1931 was \$678. By January 1933 it was \$18.87 and would remain below \$100 for much of the year. We were still heavily dependent on Home Missions for help, requesting \$500 to \$700 assistance per year.

In spite of this, there was a strong desire for a Christian education for the youth of the church. In late 1931 a committee was appointed by the consistory to investigate the possibility of providing a Christian day school in the community or joining with a Christian school in the area. Most, if not all, of the children attended the public school, and this was tolerable because the teacher was a Christian and church members served on the board. This changed in 1938 when the teacher resigned and new board members were elected. At this time many families began sending their children to Cutlerville Christian School. In the summer of 1944 a society was formed to provide transportation for these children and a used bus was purchased.

The economy gradually improved, and in November of 1937 the congregation voted to "ask no more subsidies from Home Missions." Other notable changes in the Depression years were the following: changing to individual communion cups in December 1934, in May, 1937 voting to have the second

worship service at 7:30 P.M. for the summer months along with a ten-minute song service before this evening service, and the purchase of a new Kilgen pipe organ in January of 1940, which was still in use when we sold the building in 1970.

To commemorate and show gratitude for twenty-five years of God's faithfulness and blessings to the Dutton congregation they set aside the afternoon and evening of July 17, 1940. The afternoon was marked by a picnic lunch and social gathering in the Dutton Shadyside Park with a more formal evening meeting in the church. Revs. J. R. Brink, J. Medendorp, M. Arnoys, J. Vande Kieft, and Prof. C. Bouma took part in the service. It was noted that Dutton had grown to fifty families at this time.

World War II greatly impacted our congregation. Twenty-five of the young men of our congregation gave their service in defense of our country and freedom. One was called to make the supreme sacrifice. Mr. Fred Oudman was killed on Anguar Island in the Carolines on September 22, 1944. In January of 1942 the consistory granted Rev. Vande Kieft a six-month leave to become chaplain at Camp Livingston, Louisiana. Former member Roger Van Laan was stationed near Washington D.C. at this time. He remembers Rev. Vande Kieft making the trip from Louisiana to visit him. This left a very favorable impression on him, since travel during the war years was not easy. There were no automobiles being manufactured, gasoline and tires were rationed, and the national speed limit was forty-five miles per hour. Once at the base it would be difficult to gain entry without prior clearance. This spoke highly of his level of dedication to his call to minister to these young men. Rev. Vande Kieft's pastorate at Dutton ended on December 4, 1943, and during his time here he showed himself to be a truly dedicated and humble man.

It was during these war years that joint prayer meetings were held with the Christian Reformed Churches of Ada and East Paris. Prayers were offered for the welfare of the young men in harm's way and for the well-being of our nation. It was a time of relying on God's love and mercy, knowing from His Word that "the effective, fervent prayer of the righteous avails much." The congregation communicated with the servicemen by letters, and Alice Oosterhouse, the servicemen's secretary, sent out Sunday School papers, bulletins, and the *Young Calvinist*. The hymns requested by each of the servicemen were sung at a servicemen's hymn sing held in the church on Sunday, April 22, 1945.

At the congregational meeting of January 5, 1944, Rev. Fred Handlogten of Allison, Iowa was extended the call to serve our congregation. He accepted and began his ministry in May of 1944.

During this time of vacancy, a drive was held to liquidate the debt on the church. June 15, 1944, was another historic date in the life of our congregation when a mortgage-burning ceremony was held in the church. Rev. Handlogten led devotions and read letters of greetings from former pastors Medendorp, Arnoys, and Vande Kieft. Twenty-two young men from the armed services sent in requests for hymns to be sung on this occasion. As the mortgage was being burned by Rev. Handlogten and Elder R. Nagelkirk, the congregation sang Psalter number 297: "O Praise Ye the Name of Jehovah." A social hour followed closing remarks and prayer by Elder P. Beukema.



Fred Handlogten

There were several notable changes which occurred during Rev. Handlogten's ministry at Dutton. On December 10, 1947, the congregation voted to hold worship services in the morning and evening year-round. Prior to this, services were held morning and afternoon during the winter months and morning and evening during the summer months. In February of 1948, after a two-year fundraising effort, the congregation voted unanimously to move forward with the expansion of the church building. The contract was awarded to Gerritson Brothers, and construction began that summer. Services were held in the Pine Rest Chapel during construction. Also during his ministry a mission society was formed whose function was neighborhood evangelism through the distribution of Christian literature and Bibles to those who promised to read them.

Rev. Handlogten labored faithfully for eight and one-half years, and the congregation, as with Rev. Arnoys, decided to show their appreciation by giving him a car. This was a happy occasion for both pastor and congregation. The pastor and elder were to spend the night visiting family, but, as was previously arranged, they were called back to the parsonage. When they arrived, they found the church filled and a program planned, during which Rev. Handlogten was presented with the keys to a new car. He gave his farewell on November 16, 1952. During his ministry the congregation grew both in numbers and spiritual depth.

During the fourteen months of vacancy that followed, several calls were extended, including one to Rev. Rein Leestma of the Plainfield Christian Reformed Church. In January of 1954, we received the welcome news that he had accepted our call. The installation service took place on February 11, and for his inaugural sermon he chose Song of Solomon 4:16 as his text.



Rein Leestma

The summer of 1954 brought about a greater commitment to mission work, as it was during this time that our church took over the work of evangelism in the Caledonia area from the Jenison CRC. The work was done by evangelist Albert Bytwerk under the supervision of our consistory. Families, along with an elder from our congregation, were assigned to attend worship services there. There were many opportunities for members to help with canvassing, organizing and teaching Vacation Bible School, and teaching Sunday School. Our load was lightened when the Plymouth Heights church joined in this work. Worship services were held in the Caledonia Elementary School building until the newly erected chapel was dedicated on March 13, 1959. Caledonia Christian Reformed Church was organized in 1962 with 24 families.

Another big event in the life of our church was marked by a program of thanksgiving held the evening of June 30, 1954. The long-awaited dream of having our own Christian school would now be possible due to the bequest of \$32,000 from John and Elsie Wierenga. Land was purchased, and work on the school began immediately. On July 21, 1955, the laying of the cornerstone and a dedication ceremony was held at the school. The doors of the three-room school opened to 78 students that September.

Rev. Leestma was a man firmly committed to the authority of Scripture, and under his preaching the flock at Dutton remained firmly established. It was in late 1958 that he accepted a call to the West Leonard CRC, and the consistory wasted no time in forming a trio of ministers to present to the congregation. Rev. Leestma actually presided over the December 30th consistory meeting at which Rev. Charles Steenstra was placed on trio. On January 12, 1959, the congregation voted to extend Rev. Steenstra of Chandler, Minnesota the call to serve at Dutton.

This was truly an occasion for joy as we learned that God had led him to accept our call. The installation service took place on April 7, 1959, and on Sunday, April 12, he preached his inaugural sermon. He quickly endeared himself to the congregation, especially with the children and young people. He was able to keep their attention during the sermon and didn't seem to have that "Dominie"



Charles Steenstra

air about him. On one occasion he even attained somewhat of a hero status when he took a snowball full in the face while chasing off some public-school teens who were bullying his catechism students.

The work with the Caledonia Chapel came to an end when they were granted permission to organize and call a pastor of their own in 1962. Dutton did continue to provide financial help for a period of time. After this, our mission energies were directed to the partial support of Rev. Gerald Neyenhuis in his labors in Coyoacan, Mexico. Closer to home, several young people participated in the S.W.I.M. program during this time.

Once again the church family at Dutton showed their appreciation for their pastor when they gave him a brand new car at a church picnic. After just five short years it was time to say goodbye. On the evening of March 4, 1964, the congregation gathered to bid farewell to Rev. Steenstra who was leaving us to serve the Faith Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

A brief vacancy of five months ensued before God sent our next under shepherd, Rev. Bernard Kok. Originally from the Protestant Reformed Church, he came to us from the Cochrane, Ontario Christian Reformed Church. The installation service took place on September 9, 1964, and the following Sunday he delivered his inaugural sermon based on Galatians 6:4. To the younger members he was the quintessential "Dominie" but many older members appreciated him for his pastoral visits. Many of us remember how emotional he would become when he reminded us of our sin and of our need of salvation through Christ Jesus.



Bernard Kok

The matter of overcrowding was already an issue when he arrived and became more pronounced as the numbers slowly increased. With no more room in the sanctuary, families were assigned to sit in the basement fellowship room and participate by listening through one speaker on the wall. Something needed to be done. The Long Range Planning Committee sought out and recommended three building sites. On April 25, 1966, the congregation voted to buy two of these, a one-acre lot next to the parsonage and a four-and-a-half acre parcel on 68th Street, one half mile west of the church.

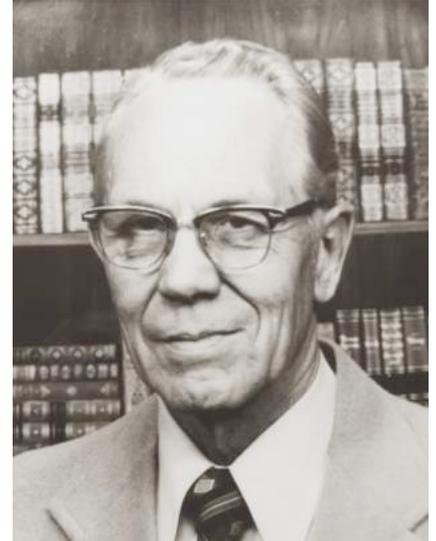
Being a rather divisive issue, this gave them the option to either build new or add on to the existing church.

About this same time the Evangelism Committee began making plans for a Vacation Bible School in the Kettle Lake area. VBS was held the week of June 19, 1967, and the first worship service took place in the Kettle Lake elementary school on June 25, 1967, with 35 people in attendance. Thus began the work of another churchplanting. In August, Dutton bought an old casino building near Campau Lake and remodeled it for this start-up church. Again, families from Dutton were assigned to attend worship services there and encouraged to help in any way they could. A year later, Millbrook CRC partnered with us and an evangelist was hired as the Lord continued to establish the work there. Growth was steady albeit not without growing pains, and in 1977 the church was organized as Lakeside Community CRC.

Rev. Kok's ministry came to a close in October of 1969 when he retired and was granted emeritus status. He agreed to help out during the vacancy with teaching catechism classes and visiting the sick and shut-ins of the congregation. He was given a farewell in January 1970, at which time he was presented a grandfather clock.

During this transition, plans for a new church building were being developed, and it became more apparent that there would be greater benefit to building next to Dutton Christian School where facilities could be shared on a limited basis. On April 27, 1970, a vote of the congregation was taken which authorized the consistory to purchase the present site and sell the two vacant sites purchased in April of 1966. On October 5, 1970, the go-ahead was given to begin construction of our current facilities with a groundbreaking ceremony held after the Thanksgiving Day service that year. The cost of the new church facility was not to exceed \$299,000, and no more than \$145,000 was to be borrowed for this purpose. The sale of the old church and parsonage for \$42,500 to the American Reformed Church was approved nearly unanimously on January 25, 1971 by congregational vote. We were able to continue using the old church until our new church was completed. In true Dutton fashion, the cost of construction was kept under \$200,000 due to donated materials and labor of many of the members. The first congregational meeting was held in the sanctuary on July 26, 1971, and the new facility was dedicated in September.

When Rev. Kok announced his retirement, the consistory went to work and formed a duo of Rev. P. De Jong and Rev. J. Byker. The vote went to Rev. Peter De Jong at the November 10, 1969 congregational meeting, and we soon learned that he had accepted our call. He and his wife, Thelma, along with four children, arrived in January, 1970. They lived in the parsonage of the old church until the new parsonage was finished. Having served as a Navy Chaplain in World War II and a missionary to China in addition to pastoring several churches, he brought much ministry and life experience to Dutton. With a sanctuary now double the size of the old one, there were empty pews; moreover, growth was slow in the 1970s.



Peter DeJong

If there were a phrase which could characterize Rev. De Jong, it would be “a watchman on the walls of Zion.” His life and preaching reflected his high regard for the Word of God, and he was keenly aware that the CRC denomination was beginning to drift away from the firm moorings of God’s Word. Dutton’s consistory had already dealt with some of these issues, and under his leadership Dutton repeatedly attempted to call the CRC back to faithful adherence to the Word of God. The historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis began to be questioned as science seemed to be elevated to a level on par with God’s Word. Consequently, some miracles of the Bible were denied because science couldn’t explain them. These issues facing the CRC at this time were ultimately rooted in questioning the authority and infallible nature of God’s Word. Much time and energy were devoted to combating this trend with many protests, overtures, and appeals being forwarded to Classis and Synod during his tenure. The consistory was not alone in this, as many members of the congregation expressed their concern as well.

After ten years of faithful service to our congregation in preaching and in leadership, Rev. De Jong announced his retirement and was granted emeritus status in 1980. As a farewell gift, the congregation presented him and his wife with a two-week vacation to the Holy Land. They were so surprised that they were speechless. After retiring from the ministry he continued to serve as editor of *The Outlook* and remained a valuable resource to the council when dealing with denominational issues.



Warren Lammers

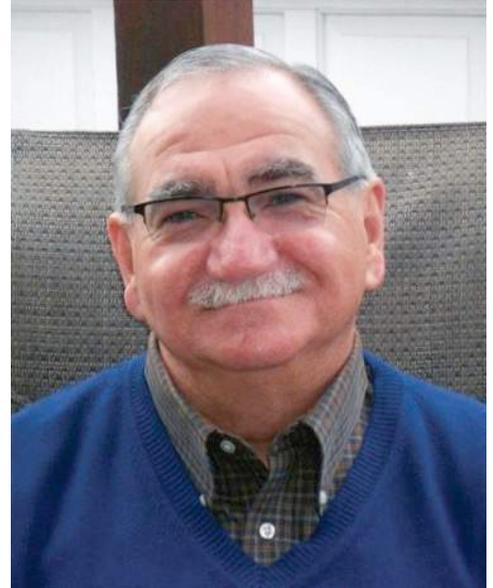
After a vacancy of a little more than a year, the Lord provided another faithful servant in the person of Rev. Warren Lammers. He and his wife, Jobbe, along with four children, made the short trip from Ellsworth, Michigan and he began his ministry at Dutton in August of 1981. In one of his early sermons he preached about being fruitful and multiplying and replenishing the earth. Apparently the congregation took it to heart because the Lord blessed us each year with a bumper crop of babies. Baptismal records show a peak of 21 baptisms in 1985. This growth continued, as young adults of the church married and families joined Dutton CRC. Records show our church size listed as 106 families in 1981. By 1987 this number had swelled to 146. To accommodate this growth, several classrooms were added in the gymnasium balcony.

With the blessings of church growth came greater time demands for Rev. Lammers and the consistory. This workload was greatly increased by our turbulent relationship with the denomination. We began to hear much about the “New Hermeneutic,” which labeled certain texts as “culturally or historically conditioned.” This increasing experimentation with, questioning about, and in some cases, outright denial of the clear teachings of the Bible, were driving a wedge between us and the denomination. Much of this was coming out of Calvin College and Seminary and manifested itself in the decisions of Synod. As a result, many members of Dutton asked to have their quotas for Calvin withheld. Others maintained that as long as we were a part of the denomination we were obligated to contribute. This issue alone resulted in many hours of debate in the consistory room and culminated in overtures to Classis and Synod on the biblical perspective on giving.

In 1984 Synod voted to officially open the office of deacon to women in the church. This decision only served to widen the rift that already existed between us and the denomination. The consistory and congregation were encouraged by Rev. Lammers to stand firm in the face of opposition and remain obedient to the Word of God in all things. Prayers for humility and wisdom were offered up. Overtures were written and forwarded, only to be disregarded or thrown out on a technicality. Appeals were written and denied, and letters also were written to those advancing this position. Though at times it seemed futile, Dutton continued to make its voice heard.

In November, 1988, Rev. Lammers accepted a call to serve the Blythe, Ontario CRC. During the seven-and-one-half years he faithfully served the Dutton CRC, his pastoral heart for the congregation and reverence for the Word of God were clearly evident. He even found time to serve as chaplain to the Dutton Fire Department. A farewell sendoff for him and his wife and family was held on January 19, 1989.

During this vacancy, one of the ministers who filled our pulpit was seminary student Paul Murphy, who was attending Calvin Seminary in order to be eligible for ordination in the Christian Reformed Church. His no-nonsense, practical approach to the Bible as summarized in the Reformed Creeds soon attracted us to him. In October of 1989, he was extended the invitation to be our stated supply, to which he agreed. He and his wife, Julie, moved into the parsonage in December of 1989 and, he officially began his ministry with us on January 1, 1990. In May the Seminary Committee recommended him for candidacy, and at the congregational meeting on July 9, 1990, we officially called him to be our minister. Many of us recall being present at his ordination exam, which he successfully sustained on September 20. The ordination service took place on October 3, 1990, with Rev. Steve Arrick and Rev. Steve Schlissel giving the charge to faithfully execute the duties of this sacred office.



Paul Murphy

One of the steps the Dutton Consistory took after the decision of Synod 1984 was to reach out to like-minded CRCs. In 1986 Dutton joined two other conservative consistories in calling for a Consistorial Conference to form a united voice of opposition and formulate a plan of action going forward. After years of fighting this battle it was good to draw encouragement from like-minded consistories. About this same time (1985) a number of concerned laymen (many of whom were from Dutton) came together to form the “Concerned Members of the CRC” with chapters organized throughout the Midwest.

By the time Pastor Murphy joined us in 1990, this Consistorial Conference had grown into the Christian Reformed Alliance. This was renamed Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1992 and would later become the core group from which the URC was formed. Dutton continued to be actively

involved with this group until we joined the URCNA. In 1990, Synod recommended that all offices of the church, including the office of minister and elder, be opened to women. In spite of the pleas of many churches to reverse this decision, Synod 1992, while not ratifying it, affirmed it in practice. Now the question of Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" was imminently relevant. It was obvious that we were not in agreement with the official positions of the denomination. On August 3, 1992, the consistory voted to separate from the Christian Reformed Church and communicated this to the congregation on August 9, 1992. An informational meeting was held on August 13, and a vote of the congregation was taken on August 17. An 85 percent majority of the congregation voted to support the consistory in this decision to leave the Christian Reformed Denomination. For the next seven years we would be known as the Dutton Independent Reformed Church.

In spite of the difficulties we faced, this was a time of great blessing. We were being fed the solid food of God's Word with practical application for everyday life. There was both spiritual and numerical growth taking place. In July of 1992 we began broadcasting one worship service per week on WFUR. This spurred further growth as more families came to visit and eventually joined. Once again, the issue of overcrowding was becoming a problem.

In March of 1994 the consistory appointed a committee of members interested in starting a church in the Dorr/Wayland area. On May 15, this daughter church held its first worship service in the Wayland Elementary School gymnasium. Once again, Dutton families were asked to attend worship services, Pastor Murphy was assigned to preach there one Sunday a month, and Dutton pledged financial support. This young church was becoming well established, and in September, 1994 a committee was formed to consider organizing. In May of 1995, just one year after their first worship service, they were organized as Covenant Independent Reformed Church and would later join the URCNA.

Some other notable events occurred during Pastor Murphy's time at Dutton: the church addition was completed in the summer of 1995, the time of the evening service changed to 6:00 P.M. in June of 1996, and the church secretary responsibilities increased in 1998. While the church secretary position relieved Pastor Murphy of time consuming clerical work, there was still a need to give him assistance in the ministry labors. It was the desire of the consistory to hire someone for this purpose on a part-time basis.

Recognizing that it was not desirable to remain independent as a church, Dutton cautiously evaluated the newly formed URCNA. The Church Order was carefully examined and observer delegates sent to Synod and Classis. With questions and concerns about the new denomination answered, the Dutton congregation voted to join the URCNA in November of 1999.

In November of 2002, Pastor Murphy informed us of the call issued by West Sayville Reformed Bible Church (URCNA) who, together with Messiah's Congregation of Brooklyn, joined to establish a church plant in the Wall Street, Manhattan area. With a heart for the city in which he grew up, he was firmly convinced of God's call to minister there. During his stay at Dutton, we had been privileged to see the Murphy family grow from husband and wife to a family of seven. The time had come to say goodbye and on January 24, 2003 a farewell sendoff was given.



Richard Miller

Rev. Miller's time at Dutton began in August of 1998 when he was hired to help Rev. Murphy. For the remainder for Rev. Murphy's time at Dutton, Candidate Miller helped by teaching, visiting the sick and shut-ins, and preaching one Sunday per month. He took leave of his work at Dutton for ten months while he served as pastor of Cutlerville IRC. During his absence, council had decided to call a second full-time pastor and a search was being made. In July of 2001, he was chosen by congregational vote to be our second full-time minister. His Ordination exam took place on October 16, and he was installed October 21, 2001. After Rev. Murphy left, Rev. Miller carried on these ministerial duties of preaching, teaching, and visiting the sick and shut-ins of the congregation.

The intention of the Council¹ was still to have two full-time ministers, so in January of 2004 the congregation affirmed the recommendation of Council that we call Rev. David Klompfen of New Covenant URC in Twin Falls Idaho. He accepted, and with the planned moving date in May, the building committee went to work refurbishing the parsonage before he and his wife, Angela, moved in with their two children. His installation service was held the evening of May 26, 2004.

¹ After Dutton joined the URCNA, the body of Elders and Deacons would be designated Council, and the body of Elders would now be called Consistory.

Having two full-time pastors was still new to Dutton and required some flexibility and adjustments on the part of pastors and the consistory. The preaching and teaching assignments were assigned by the consistory, but other divisions of labor required good communication for both men to effectively minister. Each contributed his own particular strengths in preaching, teaching, visits, and leadership. They were instrumental in preparing many of our young people to make profession of faith, and it was their recommendation that we move from using the NIV Bible to the ESV in worship. Overall, this was a relatively tranquil time for the leadership of the church to minister to the needs of the congregation. Once again we were blessed with men who had a high regard for Scripture as they ministered to the members of Dutton.



David Klompjen

The issue of having no room to grow was ongoing. Since the late 1990s, Council had been exploring ways to deal with this. One option explored was to purchase the vacant Calvin Reformed Church building in Cutlerville and plant a church there. This was voted down in April of 2001, as was the idea of expanding our current sanctuary. Another vote to expand was taken in January, 2003, and it failed also. An interesting turn of events came in September, 2003 when the Board of Faith Reformed Christian School voted to donate ten acres of land on 76th Street to Dutton URC. This was gratefully accepted, and the focus shifted to building a new, larger facility on that site. On May 31, 2005, the Dutton congregation voted to move forward with building when the specified funding level had been reached. Plans were drawn up and fundraising pursued. Further evaluation of the site revealed that we would require more land to build the facility desired. This obstacle was removed when Bert Hofstede Jr. bequeathed the surrounding property to the church upon his death. The goal was lofty, and as the years passed the momentum lagged. With the downturn in the economy, it was time to reevaluate our plans. On October 7, 2008, the vote was taken to essentially place the building proposal on hold.

The Summer of 2011 brought a big change to our church. In a chain of events that only God could orchestrate, both Rev. Miller and Rev. Klompjen received calls to serve in other United Reformed churches. Rev. Miller was called to serve the Bellingham URC in the state of Washington, and Rev.

Klompfen was called to the Preakness Valley URC in Wayne, New Jersey. Both men accepted their calls and preached their farewell sermons on August 21, 2011. Dutton went from two ministers to no ministers in one Sunday. Reflecting on their time spent with us, we had watched the Klompfen family grow to a family of seven, and the Miller children grow up to their middle school and high school years. After many years together, it was time to say goodbye.



Brian Najapfour

As God continued to direct the events at Dutton, one of the men who filled the pulpit during this vacancy was a young Filipino man whose name we were not sure we could pronounce. Rev. Brian G. Najapfour, an ordained minister, was studying at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and preached for us from time to time. A search committee had been formed and was in the process of gathering names of ministers to recommend to Council. In the meantime, there was something about this young minister's passion, unpretentious manner, and love for the gospel that began to resonate with the congregation. The Council took note of this and held an extensive interview with him in March of 2012. He was presented to the membership for an "up or down" vote at the April 17, 2012 congregational meeting and received the majority vote.

He accepted the call and, with his wife, Sarah, moved into the parsonage in August to begin his ministry here. Because his ministerial credentials were not with the United Reformed Church, he needed to undergo his Colloquium Doctum exam before he could be installed as our pastor. This took place on July 31, 2012 at our church, and we remember our disappointment as we learned that he would have to be reexamined on two of the sections of this exam. In this, too, he gave us a lesson in humility as he graciously accepted this decision and gave God the glory for preordaining even this turn of events. Having sustained his re-exam on October 9, 2012, he was installed on October 19, 2012. In the three years he has been our pastor, we have been blessed with hearing the clear call of the gospel each Lord's Day and challenged to reach out to the lost with this gospel. Once again, our heavenly Father has provided a faithful servant to minister to this congregation.

As we reflect on these past one-hundred years, we acknowledge that it is God who has established and maintained His church at Dutton. We are thankful for faithful men who sought to guide this church in obedience to the dictates of Scripture; for ministers and elders who labored for the spiritual growth

and well-being of the members and for deacons in their ministry of mercy. We have been blessed with covenant homes where the Reformed faith has been passed down from generation to generation. We are thankful for men who exercised spiritual leadership in the home, and we owe a great debt to godly wives and mothers who invested so much of themselves in the nurture and training of the next generation. So much more could be said of teachers, leaders, helpers, organists, pianists, nursery attendants, librarians, ushers, and many more who used their talents and gifts for the building up of His church here at Dutton. As those who went before us were faithful, may we be found faithful until our Lord returns.