

Church of God Historian

Historical Society of the Church of God

Volume 13 Number 3 Spring 2013



EVANGEL PRESS CLOSURE AFFECTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Earlier this Spring, Evangel Press, who has served as our printer, was forced by financial circumstances to close its doors for good. Suddenly we were informed that the Press would be 'dropping off' a thousand unbound copies of *The Gospel Trumpet Years*. Only Dale Stultz's barn was large enough to accommodate a shipment this size.

To our surprise, the copies were not only unbound, but uncollated as well. What was off-loaded in the barn was a large shipment of nine wooden 'flats' (or 'skids'—or whatever they are called) of 'signatures.' With an eye on the weather, we quickly gathered a team of volunteers (part of whom are shown above) to collate the signatures in preparation for binding. Dale and I were ably and patiently assisted by Walter Froese (above left), Jenni Shrader (standing), Ruth Welch (seated), and Michelle Welch (not pictured). Three days later, the books were safely stored in an air-conditioned room.

We have been able to locate another bindery and another company has agreed to produce DVDs for us. These will be offered for sale to international guests at the upcoming Global Gathering of the Church of God.

DEWelch

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*Newsletter of the Historical
Society of the Church of God
(Anderson)*

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Church of God Historian is managed by the Executive Committee of the Society. Merle D. Strege, President, Dale E. Stultz, Vice-President, Sadie B. Evans, Secretary-Treasurer, D.E. Welch, Publisher and Managing Editor.

The Historical Society

The Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) exists to encourage the collection and preservation of artifacts and documents relating to the history of the Church of God; to encourage historical research and the writing of Church of God history; and to provide a forum for like-minded people interested in participating in and furthering the study of Church of God history.

Membership is open to all who are vitally interested in what the Society desires to accomplish. Membership dues are \$15 per year (\$10 for students.) Checks should be made out to *Historical Society of the Church of God* and sent to Box 702, Anderson IN 46015.

Website:

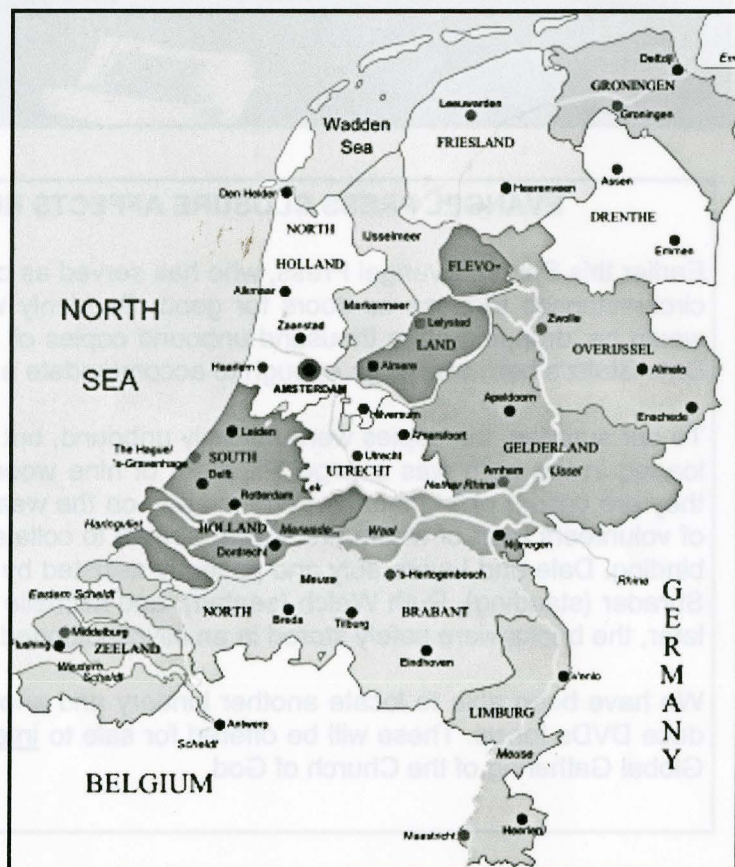
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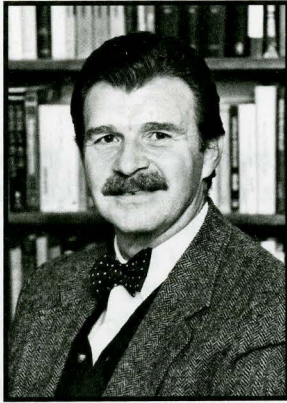


Photo by D. Stultz

Mary Govan (b. Marijke de Groot, Treebeek, Limburg, Holland, June 1925 to Jacob and Aukje de Groot). 'Mary' and her English husband, Edmund Govan were married in Holland in 1946, right after Eddie was demobilized from the British Army following World War II. They lived for twelve years in Holland, then emigrated to Chicago in 1958, moving to Anderson in 1973. 'Mary,' now a widow at 88, is shown above examining a photo taken in Holland in 1937. She has supplied us with a number of photographs and a great deal of information for this issue of the newsletter (plus a copy of *Vitaal Christendom*—which we can't read).

According to written information supplied by Roelof Braad of the Netherlands, Church of God congregations in that country number five, plus two house churches. The congregations are: Brunssum; Geleen; Kerkrade; Leeuwarden; and Landgraaf. The house churches are: Heemskerk/IJmuiden; and Maasbracht. All the congregations are in Limburg, with the exception of Leeuwarden, which is in Friesland.





A Historical Perspective

Most of us remember the dark days the Church of God endured during the Nineties. The publishing aspect of Warner Press unraveled. The reorganized national offices took their first steps, and sometimes they resembled a halting lurch more than a confident march into the future. And of course, the disclosures and subsequent trials of Church Extension officials left scars that remain to this day.

During that period, I was asked more than once whether those were the worst days in the history of the Church of God. My reply was often greeted with surprise because in my view, dark as it was, the Nineties were not the worst days of the Church of God. Several other candidates presented themselves. One thinks of the travails endured by E. E. Byrum during the entire period of his service as editor, or the decade of trouble spawned by the *Watchman on the Wall*. Then there is the trouble that brewed between F. G. Smith and John Morrison which vexed their respective institutions from 1929 to 1934.

I do not wish to sponsor nominations for the title, "The Worst Days of the Church of God." My point, rather, is that a

little historical knowledge gives us a clearer perspective on our own times.

This is particularly important for Church of God folk born between, say, 1940 and 1960. Why is this so? It is my judgment that this age cohort grew up during a period of great advance and even prosperity in the Church of God. They were too young to have much awareness of World War II, and even the Slacum controversy that bothered Church of God leaders did not touch many young lives.

But these boys and girls of the 1940s and '50s did experience much of what I call the "salad days" of the Church of God. Churches were growing, new church buildings were being constructed, World Service budgets were met. In fact, national church agencies were so flush with cash that three of them (the old World Service Division, Warner Press, and the Women's Missionary Society) combined to capitalize the church's new pension fund with an amount equivalent to in excess of \$8.4 million in 2012.

Even in the field of sports those were great days; under Bob and Jim Macholtz Anderson College's basketball and football teams enjoyed unparalleled success. By 1965 the basketball team had twice advanced to the NAIA national tournament. The football team rarely lost a game during the second half of the Fifties into the early Sixties. The point is, if this was the limit of one's knowledge of the Church of God, he or she would think that the history of the movement was a march from victory unto victory. But given a longer view and in consideration of the several controversies that have vexed the movement, the "salad

years" may actually be an anomaly. Historical perspective helps us sort out that judgment.

Such a perspective also gives us a standpoint from which to assess developments and practices of our own day. Lately I've been recommending Thomas Bergler's fine analysis of American youth ministry strategies between 1940 and roughly 1970, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*. Bergler examines ministries of mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Evangelicals. He finds that the latter succeeded more than the former two when it came to retaining young people within a Christian orbit. However, success came with a significant price tag, for Bergler finds that while Evangelicals succeeded at keeping youth in the fold, so to speak, the level of basic Christian understanding was minimal and remains so among those who are now adults.

One could add that the level of biblical knowledge is no higher; a shocking percentage of Americans believe Joan of Arc was Noah's wife and few Evangelical high school students can identify "Blessed are the poor in Spirit" as from the Sermon on the Mount. One of my very bright seminary students has been comparing his own experience in a Church of God youth group with Bergler's description of Evangelicals and finds very close similarities. In this case, then, the knowledge offered by a little historical perspective provides the basis from which to critically assess the successes and failures of youth ministry in some quarters of the Church of God.

Merle D. Strege
Historian of the Church of God.

A CENTENNIAL YEAR IN THE NETHERLANDS: 1912-1913

In September, 2012, the Church of God in the Netherlands (*Gemeente Gods in Nederland*) began a year-long celebration of their centennial. In actuality, no congregations were established until well into the 1920s, but the distribution of Church of God literature and some response from the Dutch people occurred there in 1912, according to *The Missionary Herald*.

"On our way through Holland we distributed some literature which was eagerly received by the Dutch people. God is working among the people. A family of Hollanders accepted the truth recently; now they attend the meetings and several of them are saved. It was so good to be there" (Otto Doeber, *Missionary Herald*, Dec 1912, p.363).

It is likely, according to Walter Froese, Doeber's statement that "a family of Hollanders accepted the truth recently," refers to members of the Jeeninga family. We know from a brief 'history' written by Fedde Jeeninga that he and two of his brothers were then living and working in Germany, just across the border from their home in the Netherlands. A sister, who had married in Germany, came in contact with a family who attended the Church of God meetings in Recklinghausen. Two of Fedde's brothers moved there to work and were soon persuaded by their sister to attend Church of God meetings. These two elder brothers were later 'saved' in Essen, where they had gone for a 'convention' of the Church of God.

Following are some excerpts from Fedde Jeeninga's personal reminiscences.

"In 1913, I also went to Germany....I was to stay with my brother, Jan....I had to admit that he had changed. Many Sundays, my brothers and sister came together to talk about the Bible, sing a few songs and pray....The brothers and sisters prayed earnestly for me and talked to me, but I had a hard battle. But then I became so convinced that the Lord had forgiven my sin that I got up and gave a testimony right there on the spot....In my heart there was such a longing to go back to Holland and talk to my old friends and relatives about the wonderful thing which had happened to me. It was not very long and my brother [Jan] and I decided to go....We had a wonderful opportunity to testify, which we did. After we had settled everything we went back to Germany again...."

And so we come to 1913. Some 'Hollanders' refer to the church of God presence in Holland as beginning in 1912, others in 1913. The pragmatic solution? Split the difference. Thus the centennial celebration runs from the Fall of 1912 to the Fall of 1913.

In 1914, the Dutch Government called the Jeeninga brothers 'to arms.' The story continues:

"In 1918 when the war was ended, we went to our relatives. I went to my brother in IJmuiden. He had made a few acquaintances among some religious people and had a

few meetings with them at home. Upon my arrival there I became part of this also. My brother and I then started going out into the streets and had some public preaching. There were a few who had been saved at the meetings and before long wanted to be baptized. The first time this ceremony took place in the North Sea....Shortly after that I went to Limburg where my brother Jan lived....I discussed the possibility of starting a Sunday morning service with him....We did not know how to conduct a service. All we did was to tell them of our experience with God, how he gave us peace in our hearts and we sang a few songs and prayed....We went on like that for some time, then my brother Jan started to preach. This is how the second church of God then originated....My brother Jan took the lead in Limburg....I happened to meet a religious man from Haarlem...He invited me to come and speak there. I accepted the invitation and found a group of religious people there who had all left different groups for many reasons....Some of those dropped off, but the remainder adopted me as their leader. This then was the start of the third church of God."

Photos to the Right

Top: At the annual convention in Waubach, Holland 1937. (Mary Govan, in long 'pigtails' seated front right.)

Bottom Left: Dutch and German leaders at front of group.

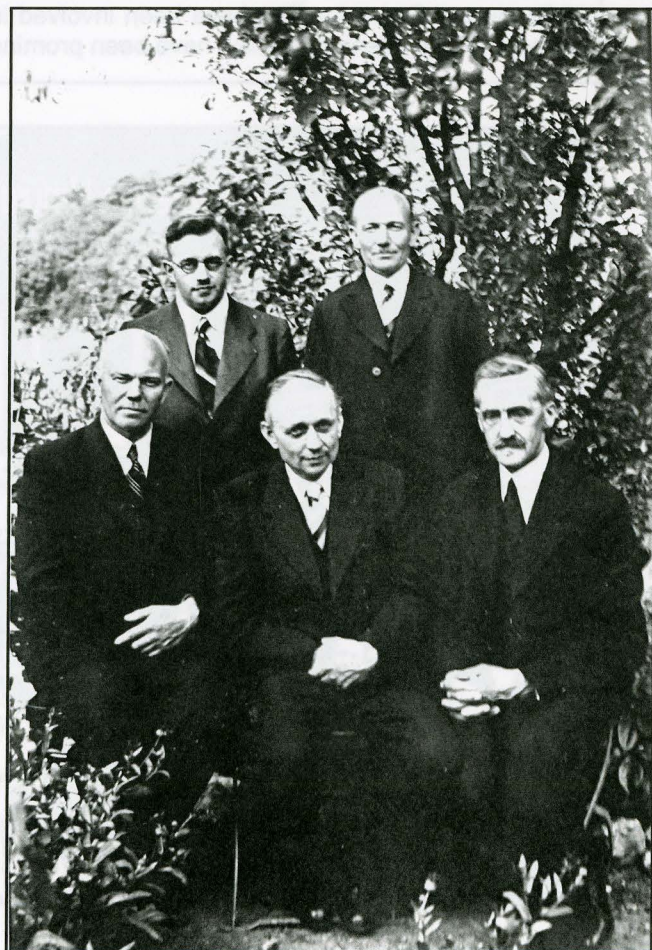
Bottom Right: Back row: Walter Waurich; Jan Jeeninga. Front row: Fedde Jeeninga, August Borbe; and Gottfried Zuber.



Convention Waubach Holland 1939



Convention Waubach Holland 1939



More Photos from the Netherlands...

Through the Courtesy of Roelof Braad



Jan and Maike Jeeninga



Fedde and Thea Jeeninga



Jap and Oppie Hage

While several Dutch families have been involved in the planting of the Church of God in the Netherlands, it is evident that the Jeeninga family have been prominent. Fedde and Thea's son, 'Gus' (Gustav) taught at AC.



Photo courtesy of
Roelof Braad



At first, *Evangeliums Posaune* was distributed in Holland. In 1935, F. Jeeninga began publishing a Dutch version (as shown above). This had to be discontinued after the German invasion in 1940. The current magazine, *Vitaal Christendom*, is shown to the left.



Roelof Braad captions this photo as "Missionteam in 1948." It consists of Dutch leaders (Jeeninga brothers, back left), missionaries (Wick and Grace Donohew), European leaders (Gottfried Zuber and John Larmour) and C.E. Brown.



Eddie Govan, standing next to the four ladies in white, waiting to be baptized.

DOOPDIENST | in 1947 in Waubach



Photo Courtesy
of R. Braad

"After the war, in 1920, the family of Jan Jeeninga moved to the Limburg coalmine area, to Treebeek. He soon started a home meeting. After attempts by Fedde and his brother Bauke to start a church in IJmuiden came to nothing, Fedde moved to Limburg in January 1921....Jan and Fedde evangelized enthusiastically, occasionally renting a hall, and soon people came to faith. In some outdoor gatherings of Fedde, the Frisian family of Jelke Bouma and the family of Jacob de Groot came to faith....Slowly the group grew and by 1927, they had to look for larger accommodations....In April 1927, Jan Jeeninga moved to (Waubach-Landgraaf) where he and Fedde held church services first in his home and later in a spacious barn....In 1928, Fedde moved to Velsen/IJmuiden, where he had a grocery store. There in 1930 the congregations in IJmuiden and Haarlem originated...In the congregations in Waubach, IJmuiden, and Haarlem, between 30 and 40 gathered every Sunday for services....In these years, the tradition of the Dutch annual conference was created. These were supported mainly by preachers from Germany, who also attended the annual conference in Essen. The first Dutch Annual Conference was held in Waubach in 1937, the last in 1989." (Roelof Braad. Rewritten by D. Welch.)



BULLETIN BOARD

*** Please keep in mind there will be no annual meeting of the Historical Society this year due to the Global Gathering of the Church of God (Anderson) which is to take place in Anderson June 21-25. Some of you are accustomed to paying annual dues at the annual meeting of the Society. This year, you may hand your checks to Dale Stultz or Sadie Evans in person on the Convention grounds, or send them to Box 702, Anderson IN 46015.

*** We are happy to report that Sadie Evans has been given a clean bill of health and will be allowed to operate her motor vehicle again. She expects to be back at work as our Secretary-Treasurer early in June and to be present at the Global Gathering. It has been a long fourteen months and we will be most pleased to have her back with us.

*** Recently, Dr. MaryAnn Hawkins has edited a book of special concern to women ministers of the Church of God (Anderson). The title is: *Called to Minister, Empowered to Serve*. It is published by Warner Press and sells for \$17.95. While the special concern of this book is women in (or anticipating) ministry in the Church, it also speaks to a Church which may have followed the dictates of society just a little too closely. Sexism is one of our ongoing 'battles.' *Called to Minister, Empowered to Serve* is a major step in the right direction.

*** The Historical Society of the Church of God (Anderson) has been in existence now for thirteen years. At the beginning of this year, we were sending out about 310 newsletters. But the membership rolls are shrinking. Perhaps we need to renew our membership drive. Keeping our story alive is essential to our ecclesial health. This should be the concern of all of us, not just the elderly. Ongoing research and dialogue are not optional. Volunteers do this best.