

# Saints and sinners: Our families most valuable resource

Her name was Velma Jones, but she was "Aunt Bertha" to hundreds of children in her neighborhood who called her on the telephone whenever they had a problem or just wanted someone to talk to.

Aunt Bertha got an average of 20 calls a week-end and four or five every weekday. A lot of her callers were latchkey kids who came home to an empty house every day after school.

"Sometimes I can't get them to hang up," she said. Many children came from homes where both parents worked and didn't have the time — or didn't take the time — to spend with their children.

Churches in the area where Aunt Bertha lived put her telephone number on their bulletin boards.

Grandmothers (or grandmotherly types) like Aunt Bertha may be the resource we take for

granted the most. With so many mothers of school children working, grandmothers may be doing more than anyone else to hold families together as surrogate mothers.

Do we appreciate them? Well, can you think of a more touching tribute than this one delivered by an 8-year-old girl at her school's Grandmother's Day observance?

"A grandmother is a lady who has no children of her own, so she likes other people's children. A grandfather is a man grandmother. He goes for walks with the boys and talks about fishing and tractors and things like that.

"Grandmothers don't have to do anything but be there. They are old and shouldn't play hard or run. It is enough if they drive us to the store where the pretend horse is and have lots of quarters ready. Or if they take us for walks and slow down past things like pretty leaves and cater-



**george plagenz**

• saints & sinners

pillars.

"They should never hurry up. Usually, they are fat, but not too fat to tie kids' shoes. They wear glasses and funny underwear. They can take their teeth and gums off. They don't have to be smart, only answer questions like why dogs hate cats and how God isn't married.

"When they read to us, they don't mind if it's the same story again. Everybody should have one, especially if you don't have a TV, because grandmas are the only grownups who have got time."

I have been reading quite a bit recently about grandparents. There was an article by a columnist commenting on a report that said one-third of the freshmen in Ohio's state colleges need to learn the basic math and English courses they should have learned in high school.

The state, he says, is going to respond in the only way it knows how: Issue new standards and ship the schools more money.

"But what needs to be done," he says, "is something the state can't do: equip every home with a caring grandma" — or somebody like Aunt Bertha.

This columnist learned the multiplication table, he says, while doing dishes in the kitchen with his grandmother, who also would read to him every evening after supper.

"It never occurred to me that this was a reading class," he says. "I figured she was as inter-

ested as I was to learn whether Bert Bobbsey would come along in time to pull his little brother Freddie out of the creek."

Another article on grandparenting that I have been reading is by family psychiatrist Dr. Arthur Kornhaber, known as the "Dr. Spock of grandparenting" and a grandfather himself.

"All older people," he says, "need the feeling of being grandparents, and all children need somebody like a grandparent who is crazy about them."

In a culture like ours that worships youth, that gears its entertainment toward the 18- to 40-year-old group, that judges usefulness by how much one contributes to the economy, the elderly must often take a back seat.

We should not forget that by serene example they also serve who only stand and wait.

Aunt Bertha, step to the front of the line.

# Rural churches disappear from Iowa landscape, causing some to worry

By Gigi Wood

*Associated Press Writer*  
SUPERIOR, Iowa — When this town's century-old United Methodist church was shuttered last December, it became another among many closed in rural Iowa because of dwindling congregations and a lack of resources.

The trend is being lamented by historians and preservationists who say that, as these immigrant-built churches disappear, so does the heritage of those who settled the prairie. Church officials aren't happy, either.

Marcia Sangel, superintendent of the northwest Iowa district for the United Methodist Church, said she had "an argument with God" about closing the church where she was baptized and confirmed.

But an aging population and residents moving away left the congrega-

tion at Superior United Methodist Church too small to be effective, she said.

"A real small church can't be a ministry that reaches out," she said. "The congregation needs to go to other churches to be nurtured rather than taking care of a building."

Ten Methodist churches in rural Iowa have closed in the past five years, while new ones opened in Des Moines and Sioux City, said Kristin Knudson Harris, spokeswoman for the denomination's Iowa Conference.

At least seven Evangelical Lutheran churches have closed during the same period. "Rural Iowa is not faring real well right now," says Paul Bengtson, assistant to the bishop in Fort Dodge.

About 18 Roman Catholic churches have closed and some parishes have merged.

"In these small towns, schools have been consolidated, post offices have closed down, the elevator and banks have been bought out," said Carol Hoverman, spokeswoman for the Archdiocese of Dubuque. "It's like the death of these small towns."

Superior, 145 miles north of Des Moines, lost its school in the 1950s. The general store shut down in the 1960s and the cafe burned down in the 1990s. The grain elevator and post office are among the few services that remain in a community of just 120 people.

There are four other United Methodist churches in neighboring towns to absorb the local congregation. Naomi Buetel, who used to play the organ at the Superior church, now attends services in nearby Estherville.

"It's hard to get used to a big church," she said. "They're friendly and nice, but

they do things differently than we do."

Marilyn Chiat, director of the Center for the Documentation and Preservation of Places of Worship in Minneapolis, has written several books about the importance of religious buildings to communities.

She said residents of rural Iowa are beginning to recognize the importance of their little churches. "This is their heritage, and if they don't save it, they're going to lose it," she said.

The question in Superior is whether the church, which opened in 1902, can be saved.

Just last week, the Dickinson County Conservation Board turned down the former congregation's offer of moving the building to Kenue State Park to be part of its nature center.

"We decided we just couldn't handle that at this time," John Walters, execu-

tive director, said Tuesday.

The church group hasn't given up, however, and has had an inquiry from another community within the last week, said Stan Thomsen, one of the group's members.

"We're still attempting and interested in saving it for historical purposes. So we hope it will work out," he said.

Thomsen said there is no deadline right now on finding a new home for the church.

The stained glass windows are boarded up and protected from vandals,

he said, and the church is in good shape.

If no one wants the building it will be burned down — but that is a last resort, he said.

"The church is 100 years old, he said. "It should be saved for people to appreciate today what the old church was and what it meant for a community in those times."

*On the Net: The Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church: http://www.iaumc.org/; Catholic Diocese of Des Moines: http://www.dmdiocese.org/; Evangelical Lutheran Church of America: http://www.elca.org/*

**Internet tonight! 899-2338**



## Emmanuel Lutheran Church

**Bible Baptist Church**  
Pastor: Don Crutcher  
Fifth & Broadway  
899-7368  
Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am  
Worship Service: 10 am  
Evening Service: 6:30 pm  
Wednesday: Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

**Calvary Gospel Church**  
Pastor: Rev. Steve Rains  
Fourth & College • 899-3605  
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Morning Service: 10:30 am  
Evening Service: 6:00 pm  
Wednesday: Adult Prayer and Worship: 7:00 p.m.  
Youth @ the Rock House: 7:00 p.m.  
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**Church of Christ**  
401 Caldwell  
899-6185  
Sunday: Bible Study: 9:45 am  
Worship Service: 10:45 am  
Wednesday: Bible Study: 7 pm

**Church of the Nazarene**  
Pastor: Matthew Delp  
Third & Caldwell  
899-2080 or 899-3797  
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am  
Worship Service: 10:50 am  
Evening Service: 6 pm  
Wednesday: Evening Service: 7 pm

**First Baptist Church**  
Pastor: Bud Chester  
Fifth & Center • 899-3450  
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Morning Worship: 10:30 am  
Evening Worship: 6:30 pm  
Tuesday: Mens' Prayer Group: 6:00 am  
Thursday: Night Bible Study: 7:00 pm

**Seventh Day Adventist Church**  
1160 Cattletrail  
Pastor: Arlin Cochran • 785-332-2888  
Saturday: Sabbath School: 9:30 am  
Worship Service: 11 am

**First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**  
Pastor: Loren Strait  
Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233  
Sunday: Worship Service: 10:30 am  
Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.  
Activities: Junior High & High School Youth Groups, Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men's and Women's Groups, Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship  
Special Notice: Handicap Accessible, Hearing Assistance Equipment and Infant and Toddler Nurseries Available

**First United Methodist Church**  
1116 Sherman  
899-3631  
Pastor: Rev. Janet Hernandez  
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am  
Worship Service: 10:30 am

**Sonrise Christian Church**  
Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398  
Minister: Tony Kafka  
Youth Minister: Doug Bean  
Sunday: Worship Service: 9:30 am  
Sunday School: 10:45 am  
Wednesday: Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm  
Adult & Children's Classes: 7 pm

**Emmanuel Lutheran Church**  
13th & Sherman • 899-6161  
Pastor: Scott Grimshaw  
Sunday: Sunday School: 8:45 am  
Worship Service: 10 am  
Wednesday: Confirmation: 6 pm

**Kanorado United Methodist Church**  
Pastor: Leonard Cox  
399-2468  
Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am  
Worship Service: 10:15 am

**Goodland Bible Church**  
109 Willow Road • 899-6400  
Pastor:  
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am  
Morning Worship: 11 am  
Evening Worship: 6 pm  
Wednesday: Call for location

**Grace Fellowship Church**  
104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423  
Pastor: Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134  
Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am  
Worship Service: 11 am  
Youth Group at Gattshall's at 5:30 pm  
Adult Bible Study 6 pm

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church**  
13th & Center  
899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114  
Priest: Father Charles Schneider  
Deacon: Gretchen Talitha  
Adult Forum: Sunday : 8:30 am  
Morning Prayer: 9:30 am 1st & 5th Sundays  
Holy Eucharist: 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Sundays: 9:30  
Sr. Warden for emergencies during the week 899-2067

**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**  
1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (719) 346-7984  
Sacrament Meeting: 9:30 am  
Sunday School: 10:45 am  
Priesthood/Relief Society: 11:30 am

**Word of Life Foursquare Church**  
223 E. 10th  
899-5250  
Pastor: John Coumerilh  
Weekend services  
Sunday: Worship Celebration and Kids' Church: 10:30 am

**United Methodist Church Brewster:**  
Pastor:  
Worship Service: 10:45 am CST  
Sunday School: 9:45 am CST  
Winona:  
Minister: Rev. Bob Winters  
Worship Service: 9 am CST  
Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

**Iglesia Del Dios Vivo**  
La Luz Del Mundo  
Spanish Speaking Church  
Minister: Esteban Ortiz B.  
1601 Texas • 899-5275  
Daily Prayer: Sunday thru Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm  
Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help**  
Pastor: Father Norbert Dlabal  
307 W. 13th • 899-7205  
Sacrament of Reconciliation: 4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment  
Mass Schedule:  
Saturday: 6 pm  
Sunday: 10:30 am  
Spanish Mass: 1st & 3rd Sunday: 2 pm

**Pleasant Home Church**  
Serving the rural community for over 100 years  
Rt. 1, Box 180 • 694-2807 • 3190 Road 70  
Pastor: Charlie Busch  
694-2242  
Sunday: Worship Service: 9 am  
Sunday School: 10 am  
Evening Service: 6 pm

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