



Poplar Grove 4th Ward Bishopric (1954)



Groundbreaking for the new Stake Center

Bishop Nemelka 8

In his farewell talk to the membership of the Poplar Grove Fourth Ward—the ward over which he presided as Bishop for ten years—Joe delivered the following words:

MESSAGE OF INSPIRATION

In the preparations for Ward Conference of the Poplar Grove Fourth Ward to be held January 13, 1963, the following message was given in answer to prayer. I had the strong impression to write a letter to our Heavenly Father from the membership of the ward. This is the message that came:

Dear Heavenly Father;

With grateful hearts we humbly give thanks for the gift of life. We give thanks for the gift of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, for the testimonies we have of His divine mission as our Savior and Redeemer. We recognize the Plan of Life and Salvation, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as our guide in our missions here on earth.

We thank Thee for the Gift of the Holy Ghost to lead us in the path of truth and righteousness back to Thy presence in the eternal heavens.



Earl Dartnell



Larry Nemelka



Mark Nemelka



David Mauerman

We pray Thee to bless us with an increase of the Gift of Faith, give us greater understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a stronger desire to serve Thee and keep Thy commandments. Send into our hearts a greater love for each other that we may forgive one another of our faults and weaknesses. Increase our strength in our strivings to overcome our shortcomings. Lead us through Thy Spirit in the way of truth.

We invoke Thy blessings upon our children that they might remain faithful in Thy Kingdom. Help us to teach them to be clean and virtuous before Thee. We ask Thee to bless us with the Spirit of Unity that we may be united in our efforts to build Thy Kingdom.

Teach us to be humble and prayerful, that we may endure faithful to the end of our life's mission.

With Sincere Thanks,
Thy Sons and
Daughters of the
Poplar Grove 4th Ward

Growth in the Poplar Grove area had been continually mounting. The old Poplar Grove Ward on Concord Street was crowded with members. Bishop LaMont Olson was approached by President Henry A. Smith of Pioneer Stake to divide Poplar Grove Ward. Silence prevailed; no one seemed to know what was to happen. Then, at the Sacrament Meeting on the thirteenth of June 1954, the announcement came. The division was made and "Poplar Grove Fourth Ward" was born. Bishop Joseph Nephi Nemelka was named as Bishop.

One of Joe's greatest challenges was the organizing of the Poplar Grove Fourth Ward. He was ordained a



Lynn Dotto



Jay Doulson



Ted Boekweg



Michael Alma Austin

Bishop on the 30th day of June 1954, by Apostle Harold B. Lee of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. His two counselors, John C. Beynon and C. Walton Metcalfe, assisted him. They had many problems to overcome; namely, a lack of willing and able members for executive and teaching positions. There were approximately ten active families at that time.

The boundary lines of the Poplar Grove Fourth Ward were the south side of Fifth South to the north side of Seventh South and from the Jordan River on the east to the east side of Navajo Street on the west.

Joe was bishop for ten years—from June 13, 1954 to September 1964. His second set of counselors were J. Stewart Mackay and Devon W. Foote. When Brother Mackay moved, Brother Foote became First Counselor and Alma E. Austin was named as Second Counselor. Ward Clerks over the ten years were Dean Patrick, Stewart Mackay, Bert Watson, Ralph Jackman, William Hansen, Alfred Jaensch, and Robert Kent.

Young men called on missions while Joe was bishop were Earl J. Dartrell, our sons Lawrence P. Nemelka and Mark S. Nemelka, David A. Mauerman, Lynn Gordon Potts, Jay B. Poulson, Theodore J. Boekweg, Michael A. Austin, and David G. Boekweg.

A new Stake Center was built, one of the first of its kind, having four wards and the stake offices all together within its walls. It was difficult for meeting schedules, road show practices, and the use of the cultural hail, but we managed to participate. The Poplar Grove Fourth Ward became a united group—almost like a family. Everyone worked hard to build the Stake Center, and it was dedicated March 20, 1955.

We had various activities in the ward. Every year we had a birthday party for the ward at Jordon Park. Games included grabbing the greased pigs or catching



David Boekweg

chickens. Everyone brought his own lunch and enjoyed the association with other members.

Explorers of Post 207 visited the World's Fair in Seattle, Washington, July 1962. The Explorers washed and cleaned nearly two hundred cars, were "Jiffy Helpers" for the ward members, and restored a 1948 vintage G.M.C. sixty-six passenger bus. The bus was their transportation for their activities. There were fourteen boys who earned enough money to go to the Fair: David Boekweg, Keith Mauerman, Jay Marsh, Tim Hobbs, Steve Wilson, Paul Bluemel, Ken Austin, Joseph Nemelka Jr., Tommy Johnson, Paul Fountaine, Steven Ingram, Paul Covington, Charles Cleverly, and Don Crowder. The leaders were Richard Durfee and his wife Joyce, Michael Austin, Alma Austin, and Bishop Joe Nemelka.

The Space Needle, the ship yards at Bremerton, and the Grand Coulee Dam were a few of the places they

visited. The boys and their leaders also visited two wards and made many friends along the way.

One of the highlights of the trip was Joe's experience in snipe hunting. Brother Austin told me that the fellows really pulled a joke on Joe. They talked about going out into the woods in the dark to hunt for snipe. They took Bishop Nemelka with them because he had never been snipe hunting and wanted to go. They left him holding a sack, beating two sticks together, and calling, "Here snipe, snipe, snipe. Here snipe, snipe, snipe." The boys wandered back to the campfire leaving Joe calling for snipe. About 2:30 a.m., Joe was back in camp with no snipe and laughing at himself for being so foolish as to have gone snipe hunting when there was no such thing as a snipe. He was a good sport about it though and laughed many times about the snipe hunters.

The Relief Society took turns with the other wards in serving meals to those working at the new Stake Center. They also took charge of the "Old Folks Party" every year. We always had plenty of talented sisters to show the members how to cook, sew, and do creative work. The sisters always helped with the many Building Fund Banquets, gave yearly bazaars, helped provide funds for the stake farm, and had other fund raising events throughout the ten years that Joe was Bishop.

The young people of the M.I.A. participated in many activities. They held a smokeless smoker every year. This event was a lot of fun for boys who liked boxing and wrestling. There were also roadshows, plays, talent nights, music festivals, speech contests, Boy Scout activities, and Explorer activities. Our son Dick was the first Eagle Scout, and Ken Austin was the second Eagle of the Ward.

Throughout the ten years of the Sunday School and Junior Sunday School, all the classes taught the Gospel

and functioned well under the leaders. We also entered a float in the 24th of July parade. The purpose of the Sunday School was fulfilled in Poplar Grove Fourth Ward.

The Primary children won activity awards, Dick Nemelka winning the horseshoe pitching tournament. That gave our ward its first trophy. There was a roundup parade and booths at Harold B. Lee Hall on South Eighth West. The officers and teachers cooperated to raise money for the new Stake Center and afterwards had activities for fun for the children. They helped to sponsor the Christmas parties with Santa Claus, daddy dates, graduations, and demonstrations.

Many enjoyable parties were held at the Stewart Mackay home on Fifth south. At one of the parties, all the men had to remove their shoes. Joe held back and was the last to get his shoes off. When he did take them off, we could see why he held back. All of his toes were sticking out of his socks! They tried to make believe that I hadn't mended his socks. I was so embarrassed that I could have died right then and there. Joe told me afterwards that they had him take off his socks and put on the holey ones. Another time, the Bishopric had the Stake Presidency over after Ward Conference for a little refreshment and then we spent the evening talking about Church Doctrine. When all of them went to their cars to go home, someone had let all the air out of all the tires. Oh what fun! We never did live that one down.

At the Boy Scout Pancake Supper held in the spring of 1971, just prior to Joe's passing, he again anticipated cooking and serving his potato pancakes to many people. He prepared and cleaned his grill, collected plates, and bought his potatoes, onions, canned peaches, and applesauce. German people will usually eat peaches or applesauce with the pancakes. Anyway, Joe had everything prepared in anticipation of another cookout

for his beloved ward. He waited and waited, but no invitation came for his German pancakes. When the day of the Pancake Supper came and Joe still hadn't received an invitation to serve his food, he was genuinely sad that someone had forgotten to ask him to participate. He didn't say very much, but as he cleared away his utensils and grill, he remarked that he guessed that they just didn't want him to serve them. To this day, I think that it was just an oversight, because no one could have honestly hurt him like he was apparently hurt and do it with forethought. Anyway, here is his famous potato pancake recipe:

German Potato Pancakes

4 large potatoes, peeled
1 small onion
2 eggs
2 tablespoons flour
Salt to taste

Put potatoes and onion through medium blade of meat grinder. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in remaining ingredients. Grease and preheat griddle. Drop batter by tablespoons onto griddle and press into thin pancakes. Cook for about 3 minutes.

Joe enjoyed speaking to the membership of the ward, and his messages were always uplifting and thought provoking. Joe's interest in Gospel subjects began when he was fairly young, and this interest brought an understanding of the Gospel which few possess. The following talk, made when Joe was fairly young, is an example of his knowledge of the Gospel and the type of inspirational messages given to the members.

Repentance

Jesus Christ, during his personal ministry on earth, gave the children of men the simple principles of salvation unto eternal life. He taught faith in God as the great power through which men can obtain all spiritual blessings. He inculcated true repentance as the means of purifying human lives.

In the days of the primitive Christian Church, repentance had a very simple meaning. It meant godly sorrow for sin that lead people to actually turn from sin to righteousness.

The never to be forgotten "Parable of the Prodigal Son" helps us to understand the meaning of repentance.

He realized the unrighteousness of his selfish desertion; he was not only remorseful but repentant. He had sinned against his father and against God; he would return, confess his sin, and ask, not to be reinstated as a son, but to be allowed to work as a hired servant. Thus he returned home and was received with open arms.

But less than four hundred years after the first introduction of the religion of Christ, these beautiful principles were perverted. Insipid belief in relics and images took the place of living faith in the living God. Doing "penance" took the place of true repentance.

In the process of time it was found that it is very difficult to truly reform. At this time, Christians commenced to lose the living faith which inspired the first Christians to live righteous lives. When they lost this faith they lost the spirit of repentance. For only living faith in Jesus Christ will lead people to turn from sin.

So they commenced to think of an easy way to appease their guilty consciences. Soon the practice of sending persons who had fallen in sin on pilgrimages, loaded with chains and other weights, was developed. As early as the fifth century A.D. a very complete set of rules was formulated specifically defining the acts of “penance” that offenders should perform.

In 855 A.D. Alfred the Great of Great Britain obtained from Pope Benedict III, a ruling that Englishmen did not need to go on these pilgrimages.

Towards the end of the Seventh Century the practice of vicarious “penance” was commenced. The rich were allowed to pay to the Church money for relief of the poor instead of going on pilgrimages and doing other things that required much effort. This practice in time led to the sale of Indulgences.

So, little by little, the true spirit of repentance was lost to the world. The plain principle of godly regret for sin, leading to a confession of sin and actual reformation of life, was supplanted by a mechanical system of “penance.”

Nor did the reformation bring back to the world the true Christian idea of repentance. None of the Reformers placed emphasis on the saving power of repentance. It was left to Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, to give to this doctrine, through divine revelation, its true meaning and proper place in the Plan of Salvation.

The essential element in repentance is the changing of the desires of the heart from evil to good.

But sometimes every effort to change the lives of men is discouraged on the ground that men are what they are and cannot be reformed or made

over. "Human nature is what it is," runs the argument, "and cannot be changed."

This belief that the character of man cannot be changed implies a spiritual slavery. It is not only anti-social, it is anti-human' *fatal*, not only to the idea of a progressive civilization, but to all the achieving aspirations of man.

History declares on every page that human nature *can* be changed. You cannot change the constitution of the human mind, nor the corpuscles of the human blood, but you *can* change a man's ideals, his beliefs, and his desires; and when you change these you change his conduct and when you change his conduct you change his very nature.

Only by changing human nature can you save the human race; for salvation, or deliverance from the power of sin, comes chiefly from changing bad natures into good natures.

But how can a bad man be made good? We shall get the right answer to this question by asking and answering another. What is the most harmful effect of sin upon the soul? Sin enslaves the sinner by making him love sinful things. The only escape from this enslavement is purification of the heart or true repentance.

It is the knowledge of the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. A story will help us to understand this truth.

A wayfarer, tired and hungry, called one evening at the home of a wealthy farmer for entertainment. The proud landowner spurned the traveler's request for food and shelter. A few years later the situations of the two were reversed. Misfortune reduced the farmer to poverty and rags. Prosperity elevated the tramp to the position of a wealthy landowner.

Late one evening the once wealthy man, now in rags, called at the home of the former vagabond for food and shelter. With utmost kindness he was invited in. When he detected that his benefactor was the very man whom he had turned from his own door some years before, his heart was touched. He truly repented of the wrong he had done to one of his fellowmen, as is life thereafter proved.

It is when we learn, through the great mission of Jesus Christ, that God truly loves us and is good to us, notwithstanding we have dishonored him in our lives, that our hearts are filled with that pure godly sorrow for our sins, which purges our hearts, and leaves in them only the pure gold of holy desires.

God knows every little deed locked away in the secret chambers of our soul. Let us confess our sins to Him, and He, through the beautiful principle of repentance, shall forgive us and purge our hearts of sin; for true repentance is a gift of God.

With the restoration of the Gospel we now have a living faith in the Son of God as the Redeemer of the world. This revival of faith has brought back the true spirit of repentance. With the return of this spirit there has come back to the earth the only cure for this sin-sick world. For godly repentance is the only power that can reform the world and bring lasting peace and happiness to mankind. But this repentance is an individual matter. Let us not look upon our fellow men and think, "He should repent," but let us each say:

Father in Heaven,
I am weighted down with the habits of sin
Which bind me with fetters of steel,

May the peace of thy spirit renew me within
And the joy of repentance reveal.

I plead not for mercy from heaven above,
I pray not for power, riches or pelf.
Oh, grant me a share of thy infinite love,
O Lord, give me courage to conquer *myself*.
The fame of the conquering general is great
When behind him vast ruins we see,
But, Father, I crave no such honor or state,
Oh please, give me power to conquer just me.

The Poplar Grove Fourth Ward was a living symbol of a group of people's love and respect for their Bishop. Many innovative ideas were put into effect; the banquets were large and the Sacrament attendance sometimes went higher than fifty percent. Joe and his bishoprics were the catalyst for reaching goals and doing good works. When Joe was finally released as Bishop, the Ward members, in their own special way, showed their love and gratitude for the service Joe rendered. The following words of thanks were included in the Ward History book given to Joe after his release.

President Joseph N. Nemelka

Through all these years you served us well
Of all your deeds no one can tall.
Here stands a man of Royal Birth
He did his work well upon this earth.
He was called and set apart as Bishop of our Ward
He knew in his heart his work would be hard.
He was handed a paper on it a map

These are your ward boundaries now in your lap.
Choose you two men to Counsel and Pray
And get your ward organized without delay.
The name of our Ward is Poplar Grove Four
And Bishop Nemelka opened the door
On opportunity for Service, Growth, and Unity
That is what makes us on top, don't you see.
The men that he chose to help in the work
Were John C. Beynon, C. Walton Metcalfe,
J. Steward Mackay, Dean Patrick as clerk.
A Bishop must have a good wife by his side
A family that will help and serve with pride.
They must be unselfish and sacrifice much
Always be faithful and give their personal touch.

Ten faithful families were all he had to begin
They started and prayed more would move in.
With organizations to staff and meetings to hold
And the most important work, people's lives to mold.
The work was hard and progress was slow
With the help of the Lord our ward did grow.
As time passed and changes they came
Pioneer Stake began to recognize our name.
There were many heartaches, and sometimes joys
But his greatest concern were the girls and the boys.
Now the project was started to build a new church
Poplar Grove 4 wouldn't be left in the lurch.
We had fund raising events and banquets galore
To raise enough money we gave more and more.
With working on Saturdays and holidays too
Pioneer Stake Center grew and grew.
Then it was finished and time to move in
The project was over, we sighed with a grin.
The Dedication was a lovely affair;
 an Apostle of the Lord gave the prayer,

And the Spirit of the Lord was felt by all who were there.

Brother Beynon was called to head the Stake M.I.A.
The Stake High Council took Walton Metcalfe away.

To fill in their places Bishop Nemelka did put
Brothers J. Stewart Mackay and Devon W. Foote.
Brother Bert Watson was called to be our Financial Clerk

This duty he did with never a shirk.

The attendance at meetings continued to rise
Soon Poplar Grove 4 took the Stake prize.
The people were wanted and needed you know
To help P.G. 4th Ward continue to grow.
The Love and Devotion by these men were shown
By the way that the people have spiritually grown.

Our first Missionary was called to Holland; he served well

A boy by the name of Earl Dartnell.

Other Missionaries were called; all over the world they were sent.

They were loved and respected wherever they went.

To Germany to serve the Lord's will to hold sway
Went Larry Nemelka, Lynn Potts, and Ted Boekweg.

To serve the Lord in the Netherlands

Went David Boekweg, David and Keith Mauerman.

To Central America Mark Nemelka did go,
The seeds of the Gospel there he did sow.

Jay Poulson to France, Michael Austin, Peru,

Out in the world to represent me and you.

Others were called to serve here at home

Stake Missionaries were called Pioneer Stake to comb.

There were pancake suppers and smorgasbords too;
There were so many things for us to do.
Welfare Banquets and Ward Bazaars
And Explorer Scouts washing cars.
All the auxiliaries parties and events to attend
And we had a lot of fences to mend.
Many babies were born to Bishop Nemelka's delight,
And many a good stalwart gave up the fight.
Many good people were brought into activity
And set as their goal "Sealed for Eternity."
Many people have come and gone
But Poplar Grove 4 still carries on.

After seven good years the Mackays moved out
And Alma Austin was called, he's a good Scout.
With Love and forgiveness and dignity too
Ten years Joe devoted to serve me and you.
His heart burned within him, his eyes brightly shown
When we bore our testimonies his reward was
known.
To show your devotion to one who served you,
Make your lives show the "Gospel is True."
After ten long years the calling it came,
The title of President was added to his name.
Our Ward sure will miss him and yet we are proud
President Joseph N. Nemelka is one of our crowd.
"Good Luck and God Bless You wherever you go
Is the wish of the Ward Members who all love you
so.

All our Love
Betty and Devon Foote

When we started to think about building a new
home in 1964, before Joe was released, he decided that

the Kingdom of God had to be built up here in Pioneer Stake as well as in other places. Thus his answer to building a home was that we would build in Pioneer Stake where we were needed, not in a stake where there was already plenty of talent. He keenly felt the lack of education, and he didn't want to be in the midst of brethren who had more to give than he. If he had but known of the true love and admiration of his people, he would have been humble but proud of his achievements.

This story of Joe's life would not be complete unless I tell the story of how I decided to go back to school. It was because I did, that Joe was able to become the Bishop without feeling that he was not caring for his family.

As I have already related, I only had two years at the Junior College when I stopped to marry Joe and after Johnny was born, I was very restless. I applied and was hired at Sears Roebuck Co. in the toy department for the Christmas season of 1952. I enjoyed working and relaxing away from home, so in January of 1953 Joe asked me if I would like to go back to the University and finish school, get my degree and teach. I was agreeable so he sent away for my transcript, enrolled me at the "U", paid my tuition, found out what classes I would need and did all the preliminary work. I attended school for 5 consecutive quarters and graduated in June, 1954, with High Honors. Joe did most of the housework and the cooking, encouraged me when I cried because I was so tired and had to study, tended the children with Michael's and Mom's help, and actually put me through school. I was rewarded by his participation and he was able to accept the position of Bishop, stopped his other 2 jobs, and depended upon me to help him with an income, thus relieving his burden of anxiety in taking care of our family.

What a wonderful man he was!

