



Eileen Herman

Eileen grew up on a farm in southern Saskatchewan, Canada, during the drought and depression years of the 1930s. Her church was built in 1898, about 15 years after the first settlers arrived in that part of the province. At first there were services twice a month, with congregations averaging about 50 people, but by the 1930s the numbers had dwindled to an average of a dozen or less, with services three times a month in summer and autumn. There were no services in the winter because the roads were snow-bound, nor in the spring, due to roads being deep in mud. Eileen recalls:

‘Since there was no Sunday school, I was enrolled in the Sunday School by Post, operated by the diocese, until I graduated from high school and began attending teacher training college in the city. A volunteer in charge of the Sunday School by Post gave me a year’s subscription to BRF notes. At the end of the year I began renewing the subscription myself and when BRF offered lifetime subscriptions I took advantage of the offer.’

After teaching for five years Eileen married a farmer. During the first years of their marriage they lived in an 8x24 foot trailer as they moved from place to place so her husband could

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work on road construction to earn money to buy their rented farm, at the same time as doing the field work on the farm. After a few years they moved to where her husband could work repairing cars and added a second trailer. When, eventually, the farm was paid for, the

Hermans moved into the house on the farm, shortly before their fifth child was born. Eileen picks up the story:

‘Our farm is about the same distance from the rural church I attended as a child, as from the one in the nearby town. As soon as we moved to the farm, we decided to join the church in town, so we could attend there throughout the year, because the municipality by that time had begun keeping the roads open all winter.’

‘There was no room in our trailers to store back copies of BRF notes but shortly after we moved into our farmhouse in 1968, I started saving them. I soon realised that if I wanted to refer to them, I needed to make an index of where to find the notes referring to various passages in the Bible. I made an index of the notes that I had saved since the mid-1970s and to which I add at the end of each year. Now I can easily refer to notes from the past more than 40 years.’

The congregation of the church in town, like many congregations, has greatly diminished over the years. With less than a dozen people on the parish roll we cannot afford even a

shared resident clergy, so until the pandemic disrupted normal life, including church services, we depended on supply clergy from the city or from a nearby town twice a month, plus lay services on the other Sundays. Another parishioner and I shared the responsibility of giving the sermons on Sundays when we had lay services. Besides providing me with aids to my personal Bible reading, BRF notes indirectly benefited our small congregation. By the time of the centennial of BRF perhaps the world can get back to normal and I can again make use of the notes for preparing sermons, but in the meantime I can still continue to have BRF material for my personal use.

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