

HISTORY MINUTE

Presented by Mike Zapf

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Excerpts from Viola Tobler's Letters to Rev. Kretsinger

The following History Minute includes excerpts from letters from Viola Tobler, wife of Reverend Aaron Tobler dated January 21st and 26th, 1976, sent to Reverend Michael Kretsinger, the then pastor of New Jerusalem.

Last summer Joel Lemp reported on his exhaustive research on John Herman Froehlich, the artist of New Jerusalem's the altar painting, "Christ in Gethsemane." Today's history minute is page two of the story of the church windows and the chancel in the words of Viola Tobler, whose husband, Aaron Tobler, served here from 1927 to 1945.

"Mr. Froehlich was a well-known painter of religious pictures, known especially for their spiritual quality. Mr Keplinger was a specialist in church decorating; he spent most of a day studying our church, answering questions and giving advice; then went back to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and designed the stained glass windows, just for New Jerusalem.

"Later Mr. Fritz Bowers, a well-known architect of Frederick, Maryland, came over and measured the chancel and had the altar, pulpit, and lectern made especially for New Jerusalem. (The matching flower stands were made by Mr. Grant Compher in May 1933). We tried so hard to build wisely for the future ...

"Now a few words about the windows in the tower:

"When we decided in 1941 ("we" means pastor and people) to put the stained glass windows in the rest of the church—we found that the tower windows were not desired as memorials.

“And here I must insert a little story—

“Back in the 1930’s there was a dear old gentleman in our congregation—Americus Arnold. We had been told that he had been a lay-preacher in the Midwest many years ago. He was poor and without near of kin ... lived with a distant relative I think near Lovettsville. He was becoming frail with age so wanted to go to our home for the aged in D.C. while he was still ambulatory (a requirement for admission).

“So Pastor Tobler was able to get a promise of admission. But he was told Mr. Arnold would have to have a certain amount of money when he was admitted. So Mr. Tobler made haste to solicit funds for that.

“While that was being done and only a few days before the date to go, Mr. Arnold fell and broke his hip. Well he had to be sent to state hospital in Staunton. Lived only a short time. So we paid his funeral expenses and bought a gravestone (burial in union cemetery). We had some of the money left. Years later after proper consultation, it was decided to pay for the tower windows with the remaining money.

“Before 1941 the company which made the upstairs (memorial) windows had dissolved. But we learned that Mr. Killinger was still doing a limited amount of such work. We still had the design Mr. Keplinger had made for the upstairs windows. Sent that and the small windows were made to match.

“Mr. Killinger came July 29th, 1941 to see about the windows. He returned September 30, 1941 with his helper to begin installation. On October 3, 1941 the work was finished. And on October 6, painting the church outside was begun. Then October 19, 1941, all the windows were dedicated. It was the 14th anniversary of Pastor Tobler’s installation as pastor.”