

Bell, Charles Masser and Katherine Klipp were charter members of Bethel Tabernacle, an unincorporated religious association, but deny that they have retained their membership in said congregation as originally formed, and say that the said J. Vernon Boone, Silas T. Rickerds, Marshall Bell, Charles Masser and Katherine Klipp are not members of Bethel Tabernacle nor have they been members of any church or congregation affiliated with the General Council Assemblies of God for more than two years past; and further answering said paragraph, admit that the said Marshall Bell, J. Vernon Boone and Silas T. Rickerds were elected Trustees of the congregation of Bethel Tabernacle, but say further that the said Trustees were replaced at their own suggestion and in response to their wish, successors having been regularly elected by a duly called meeting of the congregation and by ballot cast by the congregation.

(2) That these Defendants confirm and re-assert all other facts set forth in the Answer to the original Bill of Complaint.

Leslie N. Coblentz
Attorney for Defendants.

Filed June 3, 1938.

OPINION AND DECREE

Bethel Tabernacle, an unincorporated Religious Association, et al,	"	No. 13,686 Equity
	"	In the Circuit Court
vs.	"	for Frederick County.
Evelyn D. Becker, Elizabeth A. Baylor, William Elmer Sittig and William H. Layman.	"	In Equity.
	"	

This case arises out of a schism or division within an unincorporated religious association of the independent or congregational type known by the name of Bethel Tabernacle, and involving the title and control of the property of the association. The original congregation, stated in the Articles to number sixty, was composed of some members who had previously worshiped as members of the Assemblies of God and recognized by the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri, but a majority of the members were converted by ministers and evangelists of that faith principally by Miss Evelyn D. Becker, an evangelist and later an ordained minister of the Gospel of that Council, and who became the first pastor of the congregation.

The movement to establish a congregation began with tent services conducted by evangelists beginning in June, 1930, and by November 9th of the same year they had erected and dedicated the church building. In the spring following, the roster of membership was made up and signed and the "church set in order" by being recognized by the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

At first the movement prospered and the small congregation contributed liberally to pay for the church building and land. Then Miss Becker sent in her resignation as pastor to the Secretary, and it was decided to buy additional land and build a parsonage, which was built and furnished by the congregation. Miss Becker, however, did not leave, and shortly after this an Assistant Pastor, Miss Elizabeth A. Baylor, a friend of Miss Becker, arrived and stayed. This innovation caused some criticism, and Miss Becker again threatened to leave in 1933. Whereupon, on October 27, 1933, three members, signing as "Committee representing Bethel Tabernacle", signed up a paper stating in effect that the church had agreed on that date to give Miss Becker the parsonage furniture. This gift was confirmed by another paper signed October 29, 1933, by the same persons.

By this time there was a definite schism in the congregation. In 1934 Miss Becker decided to withdraw from the General Assemblies and did not apply for the renewal of