

Chaplain Kenneth Zeller aboard USS Piedmont ca 1958-1960

By Bruce MacAlister with help from Robert Humphrey

The role of a military chaplain is to be a “pastor” to those within his (and today her) purview, in Piedmont's case, the ship's crew. The publicly visible part of the role is organizing recreation and holding worship services. Sometimes considered the “morale officer” the brass usually wanted the crew “in good morale” and thus pliable and productive. You can't command “good morale” so for successful chaplains that means listening to, counseling, getting help for, and caring about crew members and often their families.

In my opinion the Rev Kenneth P Zeller was that kind of “pastoral” chaplain when he served aboard Piedmont.

Adding your history or memories

If you wish to add your contributions, send an e-mail note to <mailto:webpiedmont@gmail.com>. I'll send you what I add of your comments and then let you look at them for accuracy and correction before publishing them.

Basic Information¹:

The Rev Kenneth Paul Zeller, Commander (retired), US Navy Chaplain Corps

Born: January 19, 1919 in Los Angeles, CA; died February 2, 2004 in Rochester, MN. Buried at Fairhaven Memorial Park, Santa Ana, Orange County, California²

Adopted (with his twin sister): June 18, 1920 by the Rev Francis and Mrs Mabel Zeller. His father was an Evangelical United Brethren minister.

Family: He married Lorraine Schroeder in August of 1948; daughter, Cindy, in 1950, son, Chris, in 1958.

Education: elementary school in Burbank, CA, high school in Ontario, CA. Following Navy service in World War II, Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of the Pacific in 1949, did graduate study at the University of Southern California and received his Divinity Degree from the Evangelical Theological Seminary at Naperville, IL, in 1953.

Career: With the onset of World War II he enlisted in the US Navy eventually becoming a Chief Storekeeper³. After seminary he was “Received on Trial” in 1951 into the ministry of the Evangelical United Brethren Church with the title “Reverend” and assigned as assistant pastor of Central Church. In 1953 he was “Admitted to Full Membership” and ordained as an “elder”⁴ and in charge of the “North

1 Source heavily quoted from “IN MEMORIAM.2004”, http://adot.s3.amazonaws.com/4282C95567034E028F9F5E9DAD35DF9E_2004_IN_MEMORIAM.pdf. This appears to be memorials of United Methodist Church ministers who died in 2004 and written by his daughter Cindy Meseck. The Evangelical United Brethren church, in which Zeller was a minister, merged with the Methodist church in 1968 and thus the “United” in its current name. The full content is on page 6.

2 Source: http://www.interment.net/data/us/ca/orange/fairhaven/z/fair_z01.htm

3 From an e-mail note by Robert Humphrey who served with Zeller as ship's librarian and chaplain's assistant, 12 January 2012. See page 6.

4 Source: http://www.torranceca.gov/archivednewspapers/Herald/1952_Nov_9_-_1953_May_31/PDF/00000788.pdf

Torrance [CA] Mission”. Based on information in “History of the Chaplain Corps, Part 4 [1988]” (page 5), he was in the Navy as a chaplain by 1955 not long after his ordination. After retirement from the Navy he served United Methodist Church groups in Southern California¹.

Early adult years from newspaper articles

Miss Schroeder Is Bride-Elect Of Kenneth P. Zeller

Rev. and Mrs. E. J. Schroeder, of 1633½ Cota ave., announce the engagement of their daughter Lorraine, to Kenneth P. Zeller, son of Mrs. Francis Zeller, of Burbank and the late Rev. F. A. Zeller, former pastor of Evangelical-United Brethren church.

The announcement was made at a Valentine party Saturday evening in the patio of the W. E. Bowen home on Cota avenue. Napkins and coasters revealed the names of the couple.

The bride-elect, formerly of Billings, Montana, was graduated from Western Union College, LeMars, Iowa. She is employed as secretary to the principal of a Hawthorne school.

Her fiancé, who served five years with the United States Navy, is now majoring in religion at the College of the Pacific, Stockton, California.

Marriage Announcement, 1948



REV. KENNETH ZELLER
... Returns to Torrance

Kenneth Zeller Named Associate Church Pastor

Selection and appointment of Rev. Kenneth P. Zeller as associate pastor of the Central Evangelical United Brethren Church here was announced this week by the pastor, Rev. Homer H. Miller. Appointment was made at the California Conference of the church in Sacramento last week.

The son of Rev. Francis A. Zeller, pastor of the Central Church here from 1921 until 1927, the new pastor will be given the responsibility of organizing and building up a new community church in North Torrance, Rev. Miller said.

First services of the new group will be held next Sunday morning at 9:30 at McMaster Hall, 174th and Yukon.

Has One Daughter

Rev. Zeller, a nephew of W. E. Bowen, 1527 Cota Ave., is married and has one daughter, now 2½ years old. The Zellers will move into 17033 Atkinson Ave. in the near future, he said.

Rev. Miller will speak to the North Torrance congregation on Sunday morning to explain the action taken by the home mission board of the California Conference relative to the assistant established for the church, he said.

Attends COP, USC

Rev. Zeller attended the College of the Pacific in Stockton and the University of Southern California. He also attended the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Naperville, Ill. He is a veteran of four years service with the Navy during World War II.

*First Ministry Post,
1951*

Organization Of New Church Slated Sunday

Organization of a new Evangelical United Brethren Church in the North Torrance area will be completed Sunday morning under the direction of Rev. Homer H. Miller, pastor of the sponsoring Central Church, and Rev. Kenneth P. Zeller, who was assigned the task of building up the new church last spring.

Worship services were started 4½ months ago under the sponsorship of the Central Evangelical United Brethren Church at the McMaster Recreation Hall, 174th and Yukon Ave.

During August a Sunday School was started and it now has an enrollment of 71 pupils. Those working to start a church in the area later asked the California Conference of the church to furnish a pastor, and Rev. Zeller was assigned to undertake the work as a mission project of the conference.

Work Progressed

The work has progressed to the stage where it is imperative that a location be secured for a church building, Rev. Miller reports. Negotiations are under way for the purchase of grounds and at least a temporary building for worship services.

The Rev. Dr. Oliver E. Schaffer, conference superintendent, will speak and will organize the membership into a regular congregation next Sunday during the regular worship service at 10:45 a. m. Members of the Central Church who wish to transfer to the new church will have an opportunity to do so at that time, Rev. Miller said.

These members together with the several persons who have united with the church in North Torrance will constitute the charter membership of the new church. An opportunity will be given for others to unite with the church on Sunday morning, the sponsoring pastor said.

*New Church Announcement,
1952*

At Central Church

Rev. Kenneth Zeller to Be Ordained Here Next Sunday

Kenneth P. Zeller, son of the late Francis A. Zeller who was pastor of the Central Church here from 1921 until 1927, will be ordained an elder in the church here Sunday afternoon with Senior Bishop Ira D. Warner and Rev. Homer H. Miller, pastor of the church officiating.

The Rev. Mr. Zeller, a graduate of the College of the Pacific at Stockton, and a graduate of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Naperville, Ill., has been assigned here as assistant



BISHOP IRA D. WARNER
... To Visit Here Sunday

pastor of the Central Church with the responsibility of starting a church in North Torrance.

Church Growing

At the present time, the church in North Torrance, located on 174th St. just east of Yukon Ave., has a temporary building which has just been placed on a new foundation prepared by members of the church.

Sunday's program at the Central Church, Marcelina and Arlington, will begin with Bishop Warner speaking at the 11 a.m. services. He is the resident bishop of the Pacific Coast with jurisdiction over the Rocky Mountain states, Washington, Oregon, Montana, and California.

Ordination Set

At 3 p.m. Sunday, Rev. Zeller will receive the highest honor of the church when ordained an elder. The official ordination will qualify him to perform all of the ordinances of the church, Rev. Miller said. The pastor and Bishop Warner will be assisted in the ceremony by Rev. Dr. Oliver E. Schafer, conference superintendent of the Southern California district.

Sunday's ordination service will complete a cycle of activity in the local church for Rev. Zeller. He began working in the church as a youth when his father was pastor, and he became a member of the church here. He was married here several years later to Lorraine K. Schroeder, and this congregation recommended him for his license as an ordained minister.

Considers Navy

Rev. and Mrs. Zeller now live at 17035 Atkinson Ave. in North Torrance. He is considering a term with the U.S. Navy as a Chaplain.

Following the ordination services, a reception will be given in Central Guild Hall by the Ladies Guild of the Central Church and the Ladies of the Alpha Society of North Torrance.

The day's program will be concluded at 7:30 Sunday evening when Bishop Warner will show a series of colored slides



REV. KENNETH ZELLER
... To Be Ordained Sunday

which he made while on a recent trip to the church's mission fields in Sierra Leona, British West Africa, and the Sudan Mission in Nigeria.

Lesson-Sermon Cites John I

The practical healing import of Jesus' atonement will be explained and illustrated in the Sunday Lesson-Sermon "Doctrine of Atonement" in all Christian Science churches.

The Golden Text from I John (1:3) reads, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

The Apostle Paul declares (Hebrews 4:15, 5:9), "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin . . . And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

A correlative passage from "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" by Mary Baker Eddy says, "We acknowledge

Herald Want Ads
Will Get Results . . .
Place Your Ad Today!

ONE DOLLAR

and your old washer puts
A New
MAYTAG
in your home
Famous Maytag
Gyracum Action
Easy Terms
Liberal
Trade-In!



FRANK'S FURNITURE
134 EL PRADO, TORRANCE

Ordination Announcement, 1953

Sources are the *Torrance Herald* scanned and stored as PDFs at the website <http://www.torranceca.gov/archivednewspapers/Herald>. The files:

Marriage: [http://www.torranceca.gov/archivednewspapers/Herald/1948 Jan 1 - Nov 25/PDF/00000188.pdf](http://www.torranceca.gov/archivednewspapers/Herald/1948%20Jan%201%20-%20Nov%2025/PDF/00000188.pdf)

New church assignment: [http://www.torranceca.gov/archivednewspapers/Herald/1952 March 13 - Nov 6/PDF/00001058.pdf](http://www.torranceca.gov/archivednewspapers/Herald/1952%20March%2013%20-%20Nov%206/PDF/00001058.pdf)

Ordination: [http://www.torranceca.gov/archivednewspapers/Herald/1952 Nov 9 - 1953 May 31/PDF/00000788.pdf](http://www.torranceca.gov/archivednewspapers/Herald/1952%20Nov%209%20-%201953%20May%2031/PDF/00000788.pdf)

Navy Chaplain Service

There isn't much out there. What I found is below.

History of the Chaplain Corps, Part 4⁵ [1988]

During the next few months, the trip between North Vietnam and South Vietnam was repeated eight or ten times by Estes. Two additional units of Amphibious Group, Western Pacific were transferred to North Vietnam during the initial phases of Passage to Freedom. They were Landing Ship Dock Squadron 1 (LSDRON 1) and Landing Ship Tank Squadron 3 (LSTRON 3) with Lieutenant Daniel G. Stone (United Methodist) and Lieutenant (j.g.) Kenneth P. Zeller (Evangelical United Brethren) attached.

This chapter "FERRYING TO FREEDOM" has this introduction:

The first active involvement of Navy chaplains in Vietnam occurred during the humanitarian effort undertaken by the United States Government in response to the joint appeal by the Governments of France and Vietnam. This effort was known as the Passage to Freedom operation during which more than 300,000 Vietnamese fled aboard U.S. Navy ships from Ho Chi Minh's communist regime in northern Vietnam to the regions south of the 17th parallel. Upon completion of the operation, official passenger totals for the Passage to Freedom operation included 293,002 civilians and 17,846 military evacuees. The humanitarian aspects of the operation indicated one of the essential motives for American assistance to South Vietnam in the years that followed. From the beginning, Navy chaplains played a prominent and strategic role in the effort. Eighteen Navy chaplains participated in the Passage to Freedom operation which extended from 8 August 1954 through 18 May 1955.

Evangelical United Brethren Ministers Serving in the Armed Forces U.S.A. as of January 7, 1966⁶

By action of the Committee on Chaplaincy, names of only chaplains on active duty are printed. Frequent shifting of addresses has made it seem wise not to include addresses of chaplains.

UNITED STATES NAVY

Wendell R. Begg (LCDR)
Florian W. Cassady (CDR)
Kermit R. Cassady (CDR)
Jack V. Crawford (CDR)
Dale E. Doverspike (LCDR)

5 Source <http://www.sigcpoa.com/library/nrtcs/generalinterest/14284.pdf>

6 Source http://www.archive.org/stream/yearbookchurchan00unknuoft/yearbookchurchan00unknuoft_djvu.txt

Milton E. Merritt (LCDR)
Roy C. Osborn, Jr. (Lt.)
George B. Riley (CDR)
Marlin D. Seiders (CDR)
James K. Snelbaker (CDR)
Charles W. Solomon (CDR)
Warren D. Trumbo (LCDR)
Maurice R. Van Laningham, Jr. (Lt.)
George A. Wright (Captain)
Kenneth P. Zeller [no rank given]

"IN MEMORIAM.2004"¹ [United Methodist Church]

KENNETH PAUL ZELLER

January 19, 1919. February 2, 2004

ZELLER, KENNETH P. , (T.51; F.53) EUB. CAL.; PSW 77 L/A; 78 SEAL BEACH: LEISURE
WORLD, ASST.; 79 (JAN) ORANGE COUNTY CHINESE (LFT); 80 R.D.; C-P 85 R.D

Chaplain Kenneth Paul Zeller was born January 19, 1919, in Los Angeles, CA. He and his twin sister, Lois, were adopted by Rev. Francis and Mabel Zeller on June 18, 1920. His father was an Evangelical United Brethren minister. Ken, as most knew him, attended elementary school in Burbank, CA, high school in Ontario, CA, and college. When World War II broke out, Ken began his career in the Navy, achieving the rank of storekeeper. He married Lorraine Schroeder in August of 1948 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of the Pacific in 1949, did graduate study at the University of Southern California and received his Divinity Degree from the Evangelical Theological Seminary at Naperville, IL, in 1953. He became the father of a daughter, Cindy, in 1950, and son, Chris, in 1958. Ken became a Navy Chaplain and traveled to many countries, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He especially enjoyed the close contact and opportunity to share his love of Jesus with the many servicemen and families with whom he was stationed. He spent much of his career in the Far East and his only regret was leaving his family. He was perfect for the role of Chaplain and very devoted to sharing God's love with the servicemen he met along the way. He retired as a Commander in 1973. I might add, at this juncture, that my father was a very loving dad during this time. As a dad, he loved to spend time walking, shopping and sharing with his kids. He was a great listener and supporter of his kids and, as he said, .I.d do anything for you if I could.. The greatest thing my dad did for me was to give me a good foundation in what Jesus was about. After retiring from the chaplaincy, dad became a visitation and fund- raising minister for the Methodist Church in Orange, CA, for 13 years. He was always on the go and loved to give people in the congregation his time. He also loved to talk about his Navy career and was very proud of helping his country. Ken and Lorraine lived in Irvine, CA, for 34 years before moving to Rochester, MN, and into assisted living. In his last days, he struggled with Alzheimer's, dementia and Parkinson's Disease; but, he still loved walks, spending time and chatting with those he loved. Ken is greatly missed by his wife, Lorraine, of Rochester, MN; daughter Cindy and son-in-law David Meseck (who miss their best friend); son Chris of Fullerton, CA; granddaughter Susan and husband Steve Van Kekerix of Two Harbors, MN; granddaughter Lisa and husband Jim Robinson of Stewartville, MN; Aaron Meseck and wife Jill of Independence, MO; Scott Zeller and Katie Zeller, both of Simi Valley, CA; great-grandchildren Trevor, Karissa, Jacob and Jesse. CINDY MESECK

Memories of Piedmont Sailors

From Robert Humphrey in response to e-mails⁷ amongst Piedmont reunion group sailors in January 2012:

I was the chaplain's assistant during the late 50s. I first worked for a Southern Baptist minister but I cannot recall his name. After that and until I left the Doc in Feb. 1959 I worked for Kenneth Paul Zeller. He was an Evangelical United Brethren and a real card to work for, I really enjoyed him.....

56-59 Chaplain's Assist. & Librarian

Bruce MacAlister responded to Robert Humphrey:

Robert,

⁷ Author's personal collection.

It appears we served on Piedmont at the same time, roughly 58 and 59 or maybe early 60. I was an FT. I remember two chaplains. The first was cool, distant, seemed very proud to be an officer, didn't have much use for us enlisted, and had no pastoral skills I noticed. He was followed by Chaplain Zeller whose pastoral skills were, I thought, first class. As I remember he had been a storekeeper before leaving the Navy and going to seminary. That he was a "mustang" got him even more credibility.

...

One story I remember was about the division parties as we left Japan to return to San Diego. They were hard-drinking strip shows. One of the divisions, not mine, apparently hired a stripper to rub her naked body all over Zeller. At our party he slipped out when the strippers appeared because he said he didn't want that to happen again. I always thought that he might have been one of the few married men on the ship who hadn't strayed on our 7 months away.

It turns out there was another "Chaplain Zeller" who I uncovered - Army I think - who was also on Taiwan when we were there. He remembers meeting our Zeller once while there. He's the person who gave me Zeller's first name to help with my research.

Regards, Bruce MacAlister, ex-FT2, USS Piedmont 1958-59

Reply:

to Bruce

Yeah, you are right. The first chaplain was a hard man to work with. I was a beginning roller skater at the time because Billy Caldwell and I did not like to run around drinking all the time. This chaplain thought the money I spent skating was a "shameful waste" because I did not have a tangible product to show for it. On the other hand, he would go to the Tandy Leather store and spend a hundred bucks on little pieces of leather that he used to make key fobs. That was okay because he had an end product to show for it.

Zeller used to tell me stories about adventures as an enlisted man before he went to the seminary and he was a Chief storekeeper. Good stuff, made him more real and likeable.

He was flighty at times. I mainly worked in the crew's lounge (library) which suited me fine as I love to read. One day while we were at sea somewhere he came in and told me to take all the books down off the shelves and stack them on the deck. When I asked why he just said, "Go ahead and do it". Of course it was "aye aye sir." When I finished, he said, "Go get me a chipping hammer." I again asked why and got the same response. I got it and he took it and began beating on the shelving until he had knocked all of them down. He had me deep-six them. Then he went down to the carpenter shop to make arrangements for new shelving to suit him. Of course they were backed up with work and I had books stacked on the deck for weeks until the new shelves went up.

Once at a beach party at Rec Beach in Olongopo, Amos Goolsby and I had taken empty San

Miguel bottles and filled them with ice water from the half drums used to cool off the drinks. We were busy splashing each other with ice water when the bottles hit together and shattered . Nothing happened to Amos but my right thumb was severely lacerated and I was peppered and bleeding from a lot of little pieces of glass in my chest and abdomen. I had wrapped my left hand around my lacerated thumb to stop the bleeding when Zeller came running up. He was apparently into his 4th or 5th San Miguel and was “very relaxed” but trying hard to be in charge. He insisted that I lay down on the sand while we waited for the boat to come back and take me to sick bay. No matter that the sand was 150 degrees from the summer sun. I finally argued him out of that. I was taken back to the ship and it took about 30 stitches to close up my right thumb. I have never felt that it was right that Amos came out of it unscathed.

Robert Humphrey