

Pioneering Presbyterian minister dies

By Janel Andersen
staff writer

The loss of a great friend, role model and minister has several people in the Cache Valley community taking trips down memory lane, remembering how his enthusiasm affected their lives.

Miner Bruner, who influenced the religious and secular community as a long-time Presbyterian minister and community leader, died Oct. 21, 2002.

Upon his graduation from seminary, Bruner moved to Logan in 1943 on assignment to be the Presbyterian minister. He has been busy in the religious and secular community up until recent years when he suffered from complications of a stroke.

His forced withdrawal from an active lifestyle was greatly felt. His good friend Tom Bahler said it was difficult to see such a friendly person who was good with names lose the ability to easily recognize people.

Now his absence will be even more strongly felt, Bahler said.

"He will be remembered for a long time," said Bahler, who played the organ during most of Bruner's time as minister. "People will always remember Miner. He was a very active force in the community."

The Herald Journal was working on a story to illustrate Bruner's impact on Cache Valley at the time of his death.

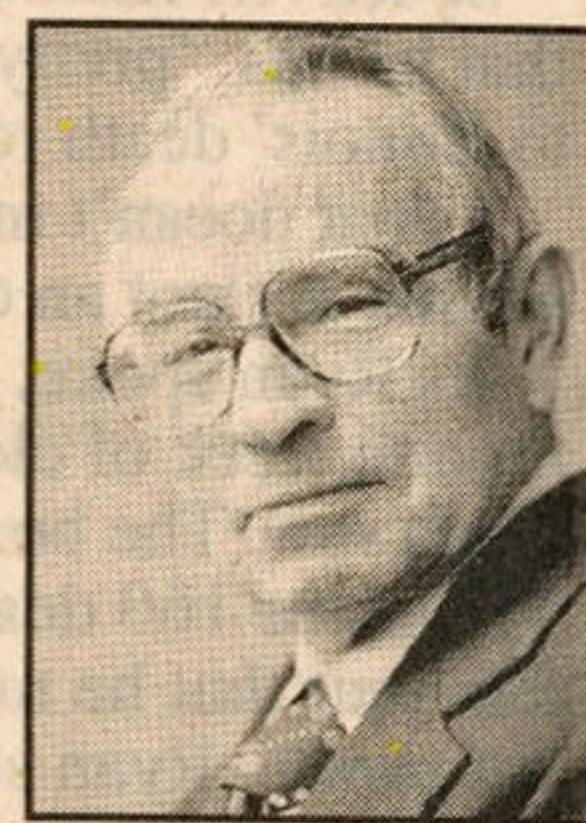
In an interview on his 89th birthday, just four days before his death, Bruner said that, in all his work, he most enjoyed working with the youth.

"I loved meeting with the young people at the college level," he said.

Bruner established a school of religion at the agricultural college teaching students of non-LDS faiths.

He also established a youth religious class he called "12 Below," where students would walk from Logan High School at noon to the church at the corner of Center and 200 West. There Bruner would teach from the Bible and the students would have lunch and mingle.

In addition to working with the church and youth when he first came to Logan, Bruner was assigned as chaplain to the 1,000-plus Air Force cadets that USU was preparing as part of the war effort.



Miner Bruner: In 1979 HJ photo

Bruner

Continued from A1

Bruner was instrumental in helping the First Presbyterian Church grow from a "mission church," meaning its financial needs were subsidized by other Presbyterian churches, to a self-sustaining church due to increased membership.

In the 1960s, Bruner was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity at Westminster College and was elected Moderator of Synod of California, one of the highest honors in the Presbyterian church.

Bruner retired from the Logan-based church in 1986. But that retirement turned out to only be a rescheduling of his time. He then ventured on to Preston, where he began preaching regularly at the church he established in 1953. He retired from there in 1994.

"He was on the go from the moment he woke up in the

morning until he went to bed at night," Bahler said. "He didn't walk. He sort of ran," Bahler added with a chuckle.

Bruner not only busily served the people of his faith, but also the community in the Rotary Club and other organizations. He also assisted in the establishment of Troop 1 of the Boy Scouts of America in Cache Valley.

"Being a non-Mormon, he was able to become a community member because of who he was rather than his theological belief," recalled his daughter Diane Watkins. "He touched everybody. It wasn't just about religion. That's probably why he was so successful."

"He went all-out in everything he did," added his son, Larry Bruner.

Jim Jarvis, a good friend and member of Bruner's congregation in Logan beginning in 1950, said, "Miner was well received in the community. He worked well with other faiths."

Bruner's son-in-law, Stan Watkins, said his father-in-law established "Brunerism" in the valley — a pretty special philosophy to just be yourself."

When Bruner was busy being himself, he was serving others.

He would drive around late Christmas Eve up on USU campus and if any lights were on in the dorms, he would knock and invite the people to dinner at his home.

His wife, Helen, busily made stockings for each visitor, complete with goodies stuffed inside.

And she was content to serve alongside her companion. She will always remember him as a "wonderful, caring husband."