

A Seed Is Planted – The Pioneer Church 1834-1908

It is passing strange that the Military Arsenal which put Dearborn on the map and the First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn which was located on that map should have started almost simultaneously in the 1830's. One symbolizes humankind's volatile tendency to war and conflict while the other highlights the human quest for peace and wholeness. Yet the two movements, warfare and religion, are often juxtaposed on the larger historical stage just as they were on the smaller stage known in those days as Dearbornville or Pekin. The Military Arsenal was authorized by Congress in 1833 with construction beginning the next year. Final completion came in 1839. In 1834 the First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn was organized. Since church is at once pilgrimage and process, that story of building is never complete.

Setting these events in time and place is not easy since people were more involved in living and doing than they were in writing and recording. Much happened about which we do not know. But this we know, in the last two decades of the eighteenth century two French families, Dumais and Cissne, settled along the Rouge River in what is now Dearborn. In 1806 land on the Rouge River was set aside by the Federal Government as a military reservation. Nothing was done with that land until 1832 when it had passed into the hands of the Department of War. Since Henry Dearborn was Secretary of War under Jefferson when the large tract of land was first set aside, his name eventually became attached to the region.

It was not until the opening of the Erie Canal around 1825, however, that the trickle of settlers into southern Michigan became a small stream as people left central New York to settle in Michigan. Land in Dearbornville and the outskirts was being cleared. Monroe Blvd. ran a mile from the village into dense forests which would soon become valuable farms. Native Americans, the Potawatomi and other tribes who had previously inhabited the region, now moved westward as they were replaced by settlers whom they had earlier probably welcomed and assisted.

At the time of our church's founding, Michigan was still a territory, thus the initials "M.T." after Dearbornville, the early name of the town. At the time Detroit was but a village where life centered between the docks and Jefferson, with Woodward Avenue the main street. The First Protestant Society had built a church on Woodward just north of Larned in 1820. In 1825 it became the First Presbyterian Church, the parent body from which many later churches sprang, the Dearborn Church being one of the first.

Dearbornville in 1834 was growing. The government was constructing an Arsenal in which several hundred men were stationed.

After having surveyed the general area around Pekin and Nankin, the Presbytery of Detroit approved the organization of a church in Dearbornville, M.T. on February 21, 1834. On March 16, 1834 Rev. O.C. Thompson of Detroit came to preach in the village and "gave notice" that on the following Sabbath a Presbyterian Church would be formed. Accordingly on the next Lord's

Day the Rev. N.M. Wells and Rev. O.C. Thompson attended and after the sermon several individuals came forward and presented letters. There were eleven members in all, most of them from New York or "York State" as they called it. These were Gabriel Silcox, who had his letter from Parma, New York, John Mintonyea, Hugh Henry, Mary Silcox, Mary Kelley, Caroline Havley, Priscilla Henry, Trudy Bishop, Ann Wills, Elizabeth Parmalee, and D.D. Thompson. Gabriel Silcox was elected ruling elder and he administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Then follows this entry, "In the summer of 1834 Mr. Silcox died of cholera, leaving the church without any ruling elders."

In the village a collection of homes, a few shops, and a tavern or two were on the south side of the Chicago Road, now called Michigan Avenue, and on the north side the Arsenal was being constructed. In 1837 the railroad came to Dearborn and it was a block south of these tracks on Mason Street that the "Presbyterian Religious Society of Dearbornville" built its first church. Some of the members no doubt remembered the American Revolution, had voted for George Washington or John Adams, and were greatly saddened by the deaths of Adams and Jefferson on July 4, 1826. They knew nothing as yet of Abraham Lincoln, who, in the very year of the church's beginning, was elected to the Illinois Legislature. People heard little in those days of what went on in the West. The East and Europe were settled and cultured. It was there that important events took place which influenced thinking and behavior even in Dearbornville. In 1838 when Victoria came to the throne of England, she brought about great improvement in the public morals and her influence was felt throughout the world for the rest of the nineteenth century. We learn from the church records that Dearborn Presbyterians too were very conscious of all moral weakness or turpitude. There was great consternation over cases of covenant-breaking, absence from church, intemperance, and profanity. These were dealt with severely. There were church trials and in some cases excommunication.

There were financial problems too. Most of the material and labor for the first church building had been donated by members, but the pastor's salary of from two to five hundred dollars a year had to be raised through pew rent and gifts. The stiff wooden pews equipped with doors were rented for from four to eight dollars a year. In February 1848 one hundred seven dollars and twenty-five cents was received for annual rent. Elisha Lord and Nathaniel Ladd, two of the church officers and honored pioneers, each paid ten dollars for their pews. It is interesting to note that D. Thompson, keeper of the "Live and Let Live Tavern," and William Ten Ecyk, owner of the Ten Eyck Inn, were both contributors to the pew rent fund. To have your own church pew was a definite sign of responsibility in the Victorian Age.

Aside from the minister's salary, the only expense was an occasional bit of repair such as "Rebuilding Bible .75" or "dyeing Table spread .85" or running expenses for wood, oil, and matches. In 1865 when prices were very high because of the Civil War, these items totaled four dollars and thirty-nine cents.

During the years 1865 to 1900 Dearborn made no progress. In fact, at times it went backwards. The Arsenal was evacuated and many families left town. There was little work to be had – a

few were employed at the brickyard or at the factory in the armory. The whole population was less than the number of the military formerly stationed at the Arsenal. The church suffered greatly. The members who remained were chiefly farmers. They were widely scattered, and in the winter months getting to the church was next to impossible. Times were so hard that it was difficult to pay the pastor's salary, small though it was. In 1882 Rev. J.W. McGregor, after serving several years, claimed that the church owed him one hundred twenty-seven dollars and appears to have left the congregation with great ill feeling. Rev. D.H. Taylor, who succeeded him, seems also to have run into financial trouble, leaving in 1884 with eleven dollars still due him, but with the promise that it would be sent to him the following week. Dr. Samuel P. Duffield was Secretary of the Board of Trustees at this time and his accounts of all the financial difficulties are clearly and fully set forth. Dr. Duffield was the son of the famous Rev. George Duffield, author of "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus" and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Detroit. Dr. Duffield was the founder of Parke Davis and Company. An appropriate plaque was erected near the site of his home, which was located between Michigan Avenue and the railroad east of the Carver Laboratory. He was probably the church's most famous member, though many consecrated men and women have been numbered on its rolls through the years.

The Rev. John B. Hobart was called to serve as pastor in 1895 and was installed in office on January 14, 1896. He served until 1902. In the year 1900 the membership of the church was 23, but it rose to 25 in 1901 and to 30 in 1902. It was at this time that the minister reported that despite evangelistic meetings, "no converts professed their sins." Hobart was succeeded in 1902 or early 1903 by Rev. William Parker from Troy, New York, who came as a Stated Supply for an annual salary of \$350. On May 8, 1904, Rev. R.C. Galbreath, having been called with a salary of \$400 per year, was installed. It should be noted that these ministers also served other churches at the same time. On June 17, 1906, Galbreath resigned and was succeeded by Rev. E.P. Clarke, whose ministry continued until 1911.

The Tree Grows In Dearborn – The Little Brick Church 1909-1929

About 1900, things began to look up in the village. A new school had been built on a whole square block of Arsenal property. The Methodists had left their old building on Park Street and had erected an imposing brick church on the north side of Michigan Avenue. New homes were being constructed on Garrison and Morley on what had been government property. The Presbyterian Church at Park and Mason was badly in need of repair and the thirty members decided to sell the old building to Charles Kandt, Sr. to be used as a mill. It was moved to the corner of Michigan and Oakland behind a store. A new church was erected at a cost of \$2500, including equipment, on property at Mason and Garrison. Rev. E.P. Clark, a saintly man, was the pastor at this time. He continued to serve for a time in the new building which is now referred to as "the little brick church." It was a source of real pride to the little congregation. There were electric lights, a furnace, golden oak pews, and a piano, as well as lovely stained glass windows.

This building was dedicated Sunday, March 28, 1909. The dedication was an all-day affair with a sermon at 10:00 a.m. by Rev. David Howell of Lansing Synodical Missionary; the Dedication Ceremony at 2:00 p.m. with the sermon by Rev. E.H. Pence, a prominent Detroit pastor, and another service at 7:00 p.m. with a sermon by Rev. E.I. Sutherland, one of Detroit's best loved pastors. It is interesting to note that Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford came from their home in Detroit to attend the dedication and gave a check for twenty-five dollars.

Mr. Clark left the congregation in 1911 when the membership was about 29 and became stated clerk of the Detroit Presbytery, a position which he held for many years. After his departure from the church there was another period of depression. Some problem seems to have arisen leading to Elder Van Dore's refusal to serve as elder in 1912 and afterwards moving his and his family's memberships to Fort Street Presbyterian Church. Some other families moved away and the work was carried on by a small number. From 1911 to 1915 Rev. William S. Buck was sent by the Presbytery to the church, which was now under the guidance of Presbytery. Subsequently, Rev. I.J. Van Hee became Acting Supply for little more than a year (1916-1917), followed by C.G. Sterling for a short period in late 1917. Rev. Wesley W. Cole was installed as pastor on November 26, 1918, and served for two years before being succeeded by Rev. J. Homer Alexander, who was apparently a Temporary Supply Pastor on a part-time basis from 1921-1926. In 1923 the church facility was improved and expanded with the addition of a basement auditorium. Construction cost, together with equipment purchases, totaled \$6500. That debt was paid off in 1924 and the church served the community with a more adequate facility.

With an increasing number of people moving to Dearborn, it became obvious that a full-time ministry would be required. There were thirty or forty families and a Sunday school which taxed the capacity of the new basement on which it was planned to erect an addition. As early as 1915 the Ford Motor Company had begun to relocate in the area, bringing with it new families and many additional homes. Henry Ford, born in Springwells, never lost touch with the area.

Having been served mostly by part-time supply ministers since 1834, the congregation voted on February 2, 1926 to have a full-time minister. The vote was 31 for and 3 against. On February 17, 1926, the members met with 40 present; of that number, only 25 voted to call Mr. Alexander on a full-time basis at a salary of \$2000 per year. In part because of that vote, on March 7, 1926 Mr. Alexander resigned and it was accepted; during a short interim period, former minister Mr. Van Hee came to moderate the Session. On June 20, 1926 Rev. Hubert Hall was called as pastor. While his tenure was brief, he still managed to institute regular monthly meetings of Session and to form a Music Committee. Earlier the same year, prior to the coming of Mr. Hall, the Session voted to have church stationary and regular weekly bulletins printed. Under the leadership of Mr. Hall in 1926, the church seemed at last to be flourishing. However, on December 26, 1926 he resigned because of illness and the congregation reluctantly accepted his resignation January 5, 1927. The tuberculosis with which he was afflicted later took his life in Arizona where he moved.

The search for a new minister came to fruition on February 23, 1927 when Rev. John T. Newell of Greenfield, Ohio was called with a congregational vote of 31 out of 34 votes cast. His salary was set at \$2400 from First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn and \$600 from the Nankin Church which he also served. The coming of Dr. Newell to the church signaled the beginning of the modern era in the life of the church, a time of remarkable growth and development in the church. He soon won great affection from the Dearborn congregation and his wife Edith was a tireless worker in the Sunday School, Missionary Society and all the other organizations.

The Sunday School met regularly and the Women's Society worked with perseverance. In the 1920's the church had started to grow again and by 1929 "the little brick church" was outgrown.

Little has been said of the thousands of women and children whose work through the years made the growth of our church possible. In the early years, 1834-1929, the work of the women alone kept the church alive. Even little children sold tickets for suppers and entertainments, and sacrificed to give their pennies to help the church projects. By 1929 there were more men to carry on the work and the women and children were relieved of much of the planning and financing. However, the effort of our women and youth during these years has been heroic. To name those who have worked in the Women's Association, the youth groups, and our religious education program is next to impossible. We can but say, "God bless them every one."

The Tree Spreads Its Boughs – The Third Building 1930-1965

Under the leadership of Dr. Newell the church outgrew its facilities. In 1928 the congregation began to plan for a new facility on the same site where "the little brick church" had stood. In a spirited congregational meeting April 10, 1929 a motion was made that no new church building should be begun until one half the necessary funds had been raised. The motion failed 13 to 9. A second motion to proceed with the new church building carried 18 to 4.

In the summer of 1929 the beautiful "little brick church" was razed and construction of a replacement building begun on June 2, 1929. Ground was broken and on July 21, 1929 the cornerstone was laid. Services were held in the Dearborn High School auditorium during the construction of the new building. This building was built and equipped at a total cost of around \$65,000. The Sanctuary seated 400 and featured a pipe organ given by Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church. The facility also included a minister's study, recreation room, a kitchen, and many church school rooms. Built in modified gothic style, it was an imposing structure constructed of light colored brick and stone, located just across the street from the First Methodist Church.

Obviously building a new church edifice in 1929 just before the Stock Market crash was not exactly the best timing. The Great Depression had come on just after the completion of the building and many people were unable to pay their pledges for a long time, but the church was not lost as some feared. It was dedicated April 6, 1930 and stood as a monument to some

seventy members who gave of their money, labor, and talent. In 1945 the church mortgage was burned.

Dr. Newell continued his faithful ministry in very trying economic circumstances. One record of those times indicates that Mr. Cameron, a friend but not a member, made a special gift of \$500 to the church with the stipulation that the money be used exclusively for the pastor and his family. Because of that gift in the darkest depression days, Dr. Newell and his family did not go hungry.

On December 30, 1929 a letter from Rev. M.C. McPherson of the Presbytery Board of Church Extension was read, containing a request that the First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn join in "mothering" a Sunday school and church being organized in Allen Park. The Session, upon motion, agreed "that we give our full sympathy to this work with the understanding that we do not assume any financial obligations to this work." To this day the church in Allen Park considers itself a daughter church to the First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn. Some years later, the congregation also sponsored the Dearborn Woods Presbyterian Church.

Those were interesting days in Dearborn, which had combined with the city of Fordson (Springwells) to form a larger city in early 1929. Voter approval for the merger was given on January 15, 1929. Other events of interest and importance include the opening of the Edison Institute on October 21, 1929 with President Hoover, Henry Ford, and Thomas Alva Edison present for the occasion. Dearborn Inn opened in 1931, followed by the opening of Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum on June 12, 1933. The city was in a stage of rapid development, but the Stock Market crash cast a pall of gloom over the future.

Within the context of great national turmoil, the church continued its work. In 1930 the Philoxenes, a class for women, was organized with Clara Putzig as the first President. The title of the group came from a Greek word meaning "lovers of strangers." During the days of the Depression, the Philoxenes served many meals to community groups as a way to raise church funds. Mrs. Pearl Weamer, who had been instrumental in creating the Philoxenes, persuaded the group to join the Ladies' Union in order to form the Women's Association in 1940. Later the Philoxenes became a fellowship and social group.

In the year 1931 a group of members signed a petition objecting to card playing and dancing in the church building. After considerable discussion and investigation, the Session persuaded those who had raised objections to withdraw the petition. That done, the Session urged all organizations that they "do not do anything that would lower the spiritual standing of our church." With that, the troubled waters of church life were calm again.

Some entries in minutes give insight to life and struggle in the church. In 1930 a committee reported to the Session that they had made no progress in obtaining officers to serve in the Church School. Later that same summer, however, Leo DuVall took over leadership of the Sunday School and thereafter it began to flourish again. All during this period, from the time he

joined the church in 1920, Harold Putzig, now an elder, was instrumental in making sure that a vital youth program be sustained.

Other entries in the records reflect the impact of the Depression on the church. In the January 6, 1932 minutes these words were recorded: "The relief committee reported the distribution of several baskets and some coal." In March another report indicated that funds were depleted and much more funding was needed. Obviously the church was trying with limited means to meet the desperate situation.

In October 1930 the music program of the church began to show new vitality with the employment of Mr. Harold Koch as director at a salary of \$10 per week. It was specified in an agreement with the pastor that there should be two special numbers in the morning service. That, together with Christmas and Easter programs and one Oratorio, constituted a rather ambitious music ministry. Koch served the church for two years and resigned.

The 1932-33 report to the General Assembly shows that the church had 319 members and an income of \$5,532. There were 261 enrolled in Sunday school and \$319 was given for benevolences. By 1934-35 there were 329 members in the church with 245 enrolled in Sunday school. Benevolence giving dropped to \$208. These statistics mirror something of the steady but slow progress of the church.

The Women's Association was formed in 1942 from groups variously called The Ladies' Union, The Women's Society, and The Women's Missionary Society. An early Sunday school class included the Westminster class, followed by a young group that called themselves the Philoxenes, a Sunday school class and a social group which did many interesting activities to raise money for the church. In 1939 Mrs. Weaver, who taught Sunday school for both the Westminster and Philoxene classes, suggested that the Philoxenes join with the Ladies' Union or Society to form the Women's Association with Grace Gregory of the Philoxenes becoming the first president. The ladies formulated bylaws which are still followed in 2009, with some revisions and updating. During the early years, the women made financial pledges to the Association to have seed money, but this was discontinued after the rummage sales started.

Having begun his pastorate in Dearborn in 1927, Dr. Newell continued until age 70 in 1945 when, at a special congregational meeting on September 12, 1945, his desire for the status of Honorably Retired be requested of Presbytery was put in form of a motion. That motion, with appreciation, was passed and Dr. Newell was elected Pastor Emeritus of the church with a continuing salary of \$125 per month. It was agreed that Dr. Newell's pastoral relationship would end when his successor was chosen. This generous salary for Dr. Newell continued until his death in 1954.

At that same congregational meeting a Pastoral Nominating Committee made up of eight persons was elected. The Committee completed its work rather quickly and was ready to report on October 19, 1945. At that meeting of the congregation Rev. Donald E. Zimmerman was

called to become pastor of the church at a salary of \$4000 per year and \$600 for house rent. It was necessary to increase the budget by \$3500 to meet the terms of call. He took up the charge and entered into the work of the church almost immediately. His installation occurred on December 16, 1945 with Dr. Fred Olert, First Presbyterian Church of Detroit, preaching the sermon.

Dr. Zimmerman and his wife Ruth had been interned by the Japanese in the Philippines during the course of World War II. They had gone to Japan with a view to becoming missionaries in China. For some reason they went to the Philippines and were there when the war broke out. Having just undergone that perilous experience, he came to Dearborn soon after the war ended to begin a significant ministry.

Before Mr. Newell's retirement in 1945, the parcel of land directly behind the church was bought, and after the coming of Dr. Zimmerman and his wife Ruth, the new Christian Education Building was constructed. It was dedicated in 1950. There was remarkable growth and many improvements during Dr. Zimmerman's pastorate. While Dr. Zimmerman was pastor, he was assisted in that ministry for a short time by Emilie Bohnhorst, Assistant to the Minister, and later by Richard Rowe, Assistant Minister. The church flourished during the short ministry of Dr. Zimmerman who, while he was pastor, was granted a Doctor of Divinity degree from Alma College. In 1951, he accepted a position with the Synod of Michigan, assigned to the Detroit Presbytery as Director of Church Extension. Throughout the rest of his life he continued to serve "the larger church," but he left behind him a lasting impression and legacy in Dearborn.

On May 31, 1946, Boy Scout Troop D-31 was organized with First Presbyterian Church as its sponsoring body. The first Scoutmaster was Edward Shear, who led the Troop for six years. In 1953, Eugene Reynolds took over the reins of leadership for the first of four stints totaling 31 years.

A Pastoral Nominating Committee was elected to seek a successor to Dr. Zimmerman. Before the year 1951 was over, their quest was rewarded when they agreed upon Rev. Dr. John VanderMeulen, First Presbyterian Church, Lansing, Michigan. Dr. Vander-Meulen was installed in the office of pastor on January 13, 1952 in an impressive evening service at which Dr. John Arthur Visser, pastor of Westminster Church, Detroit, was the preacher. During his four year pastorate, many members were added and the church grew materially and spiritually, and three morning Services of Worship became necessary. The second floor of Adams Jr. High School directly across Garrison was rented also on Sunday mornings for Christian education classes. At this time, 2.7 acres of land on Outer Drive north of Ford Road were purchased on which it was planned to erect a building which would be an extension of the church and served by the same staff and officers. This plan was later given up entirely in favor of a totally new plan. It was much easier to give up the plan than it was to give up the land, and it was with a lot of legal work by Janet Witkowski that the last tract was finally deeded back to the City of Dearborn Heights.

The Garrison Avenue church building was not air conditioned. Consequently, the sanctuary windows were opened during the summer months, making it fairly comfortable for morning worship – except for the balcony. One summer Sunday a gust of wind blew Dr. VanderMeulen's sermon notes off the pulpit while he was preaching. Al Moore, one of the ushers, walked down to the foot of the Chancel, gathered up the notes, and handed them back to Dr. VanderMeulen so the service could continue. Another time, on a warm autumn Sunday, a couple of junior choir members decided to run around yelling outside the sanctuary after being dismissed from choir instead of coming back into church or going to Sunday school, much to the dismay of their parents.

During the tenure of Dr. VanderMeulen as pastor, Rev. William V. Pletch served as Assistant Minister (1952-54).

When Rev. Minoru Mochizuiki was proposed as an Assistant Minister in 1954, there was an emotional debate at the congregational meeting about hiring a non-caucasian, and especially a Japanese, minister. It is of special interest to us that when Mr. Mochizuki was ordained by the Detroit Presbytery, September 27, 1954, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake was the guest preacher in our church. Dr. Blake was at that time the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and was often referred to as "Mr. Presbyterian." On February 11, 1966 he was elected head of the World Council of Churches meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. Dr. VanderMeulen left in 1956 to accept the call to become pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Santa Ana, California, and Rev. Minoru Mochizuki and Rev. Rudolph Garypie directed the services and church work. Mr. Garypie was on staff for about a year. Many prominent preachers supplied the pulpit during this period, including Dr. Robert D. Swanson, President of Alma College, Dr. Kenneth G. Neigh, Executive Director of the Synod, Dr. G. Merrill Lenox of the Council of Churches.

Mr. Mochizuki was very popular with the youth groups. While he was Christian education minister, the junior high fellowship had a weekly attendance of 40 or more young people. For youth retreats, he and the youth advisor would fetch a bus from the city motor pool and Mr. Mochizuki would drive the group to Camp Sarah Grindley, Skyline, or another church camp. No one worried about insurance in those days. One Friday evening the group arrived at Camp Sarah Grindley and found it full with another church group; he had forgotten to make a reservation for the weekend. The bus returned to the church and some 40 junior highs slept in the church basement.

At the request of the parents of the young people, a ballroom dance class was organized. It was such a hit that a group of adults began to organize a class for themselves. The proposal became a controversial issue leading to Elder Watts Shelly's remark during a layman's Sunday sermon, "What's next? A turkey raffle?" As a result, the Session dispatched Jim Chester and another elder to meet with the dance promoters and to convince them to desist so as to maintain the peace and unity of the church.

Under the leadership of Mr. Mochizuki, the Mariners got their start in 1957. The original board of officers included Dick and Ginny Garrett, Walt and Maude Baker, Ralph and Cherie Vogler, Allen and Mary Ann Bassett, and Gil and Betty Bird. The group was open to all couples of the church and met once a month there for fellowship. After several meetings, they decided on a mission project that included adopting a Korean orphan through the Foster Child Care program. The group would send \$15 a month to this organization for the upkeep of their orphan, Park Chan Chun. He was sponsored until he turned 18 and the group was able to correspond with him. The meetings were social and mission oriented, and the main goal was to invite and encourage newcomer couples to join in Christian fellowship. After moving into the Brady Street church, the group continued to grow and became more social oriented with many different programs.

In many ways 1957 was a watershed year for the church. On February 22, 1957, after many months of search and deliberation, the Pastor Nominating Committee, headed by Elder Grey Firth, submitted to the congregation the name of Rev. Dr. John K. Mitchell who was currently serving North Presbyterian Church of Cincinnati, Ohio. There was a unanimous acceptance of the motion to call Dr. Mitchell, who accepted the call and arrived in Dearborn May 1, 1957, with his wife Betty and their two children. The installation service was May 26, 1957 with Dr. Kenneth G. Neigh, now executive secretary of our Board of National Missions, giving the Charge to the People. Thus began a new and exciting chapter in the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn.

Parking was at a premium for Sunday services and the businesses around the church were unwilling to let us use their spaces or sell us any land. Dr. Mitchell would often say, not always in jest, that he couldn't remember if he'd said some point of his sermon at the third service for the first time or was remembering the first two services.

These developments and other factors caused the leadership of the church to conclude that a new church structure was necessary. The Annual Meeting of January 16, 1958 was held in the Auditorium of the Ford Administration Building with more than 500 members attending. The high point of the meeting came with the announcement that there was an opportunity to purchase nearly five acres of land from the Ford Motor Company as a site for a new and larger church, which by now was badly needed. Previously, a modest six-room California-style frame "Bungalow" or retreat had been built in late 1909 on the west bank of the Rouge River opposite the Black Farm, on property purchased from Anton Degen. The Bungalow was located about where our north parking lot is today and was there until after Mr. Ford's death in 1947. This isolated spot allowed the Fords to get away from the city on summer weekends, away from the prying public who were to greatly inhibit the Fords for the rest of their lives. This plot, located on the east side of Brady Road, north of Cherry Hill, appeared to be an ideal location. Mr. Jack Sluiter, Chairman of the Building Planning Committee, was authorized to proceed with negotiations. A purchase contract for the land was signed and a \$1,000 payment made on June 24, 1958, with the balance of \$111,500 to be paid by January 30, 1959.

In the spring of 1957, Mrs. Janet Berry turned over the Junior Choir program to Mrs. Penny deStigter, who led it until Dr. Turco came on staff in 1964.

In 1957 also, the Parish Organization Plan was designed to bring about closer fellowship by dividing the congregation into smaller neighborhood zones. It was decided that the Assistant Minister authorized by the congregation in January should head this program. The committee, chaired by Mr. Charles Montgomery, found the perfect answer in the person of Rev. Edward O. DeHaven, who came to us from East Jordan, MI, with years of experience in the Petoskey Presbytery and the Synod of Michigan. Mr. DeHaven was installed as Minister of Visitation on February 15, 1958 and he and his wife Lucile and children at once became helpful members of our church family.

1959 saw the beginning of a community institution, more commonly known as the First Presbyterian Church's Rummage Sale, organized and run by the Women's Association. Many thousands of dollars have been raised for the Association's treasury, church needs, mission projects at home and around the world.

Another busy and productive women's group was the Wedding Belles, organized in 1959. Serving at weddings, the group donated \$2,546 to the church for the building fund and the purchase of kneeling benches, candelabra, and a linen communion cloth. The group disbanded in 1967.

The choosing of an architect for our new building took more than a year of search by the seven member committee. Thirty-five architectural firms submitted answers to questionnaires. The committee finally decided on Alden B. Dow, a recognized leader in church design, his name being presented by Mr. Lee Mills, chairman of the committee, and was approved by the congregation at the Annual Meeting of January 21, 1960.

At this meeting, two mortgages were burned in a symbolic ceremony in which Miss Kathleen Parr represented the Pioneer Church, Mrs. Dorothy Stewart the third church, and Mr. John Baird the second church which he could remember as a small boy. Dorothy Stewart then passed a candle on to Gilbert Meyer, President of the Board of Trustees. At this meeting too, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Lawson asked to be allowed to provide the pipe organ for the new building.

In the fall of 1960 a building fund drive was conducted with considerable success and plans for the new building began to take definite shape. The Session hired a professional fund raising organization, Ketchum and Skinner, to assist in the fund drive; this group was humorously referred to within the church as "Catch 'em and Skin 'em." By the time of the 1961 congregational meeting, Mr. Dow had many plans to reveal. He also suggested that the church acquire 6.5 additional acres of land to allow for greater areas for landscaping and parking. The congregation approved his suggestion and plans for the new building. At this meeting also, fourteen members were presented with gold pins representing forty or more years of service to the church: Mrs. David Willett, Mr. and Mrs. Austin Allmendinger, Mrs. George Thompson, Mrs.

Harold Carnell, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Hamilton, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Gregory, Mrs. Joseph Parr, Miss Kathleen Parr, Miss Lottie Cosbey, Miss Lydia Jahr, and Mr. Harold Putzig.

In 1961, communion Sunday fell on New Year's Day and the deacons had failed to prepare the elements on New Year's Eve. The 8:45 worship service had no communion that day, which meant there was none from World Wide Communion Sunday in October until Maundy Thursday in April as communion was offered only four times a year.

Also in 1961, Troop D-31 received a name change to Troop 1131 during Mr. Reynolds's second tenure as Scoutmaster.

The recommended budget for 1961 totaled \$125,260. Compared to the expenses of a hundred years before which were less than two hundred sixty dollars, we realize how miraculous has been our growth.

On November 30, 1962, Rev. Kenneth Bowser, Minister of Christian Education, left our congregation to accept the call of the First Presbyterian Church of Edwardsburg, MI. During their three years with us, Mr. Bowser and his wife Ann did much to further the work of the church. His position was not filled until nearly a year later, when, on October 7, 1963, Rev. Ivan G. Smith came to assume the duties of Minister of Christian Education. He had experience as a businessman, a college dean, and pastorates in Wichita and Kansas City. His contagious Christian spirit did much for our church; he left us in April 1965 to become pastor of Grandale Presbyterian Church of Detroit.

It was on April 21, 1963 that ground was broken for the new church. On this beautiful spring afternoon hundreds of people crowded the hills with a carpet of flowers, including white and pink trillium, may apples, and jack-in-the-pulpits, extending as far as the eye could reach and background music of birds filling the air. Dr. Mitchell turned the first sod and Dr. Kenneth Neigh, who had preached at the three morning services, took part in the ceremony. Our new building, so long only a dream, now seemed really possible and a happy people resolved that the \$1,500,000 minimum cost would be raised.

Work on the building began immediately and by October 1963 the foundation and framework of the great building was nearly completed. It was difficult for the older members to realize that so monumental an achievement could be ours. By April 1964 the construction had reached the point where the cornerstone could be laid. This was celebrated by a fitting ceremony on Sunday, April 19. A large copper box containing all the material from the cornerstones of the 1909 and 1929 buildings and from the Christian Education Building of 1950, with much additional contemporary material, was put in place near the main entrance to the Sanctuary. After the cornerstone ceremony, several hundred members and their friends were given a general tour of the building which was now taking form.

For many years music had been an important part of all our services and social affairs. In its pioneer church, the little parlor organ had been played by Mina Gulley Ives, daughter of a pioneer, and others not recorded in history but who gave of their talent without compensation solely for their love of the church. In the second building a piano was used and part of the time the pianist received pay. Our third church was given a fine pipe organ by the Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church when their old building was razed, but in time this instrument wore out and a Baldwin electric organ took its place. Several talented organists were employed. After Donald Wicks resigned because of ill health, substitutes served until the arrival of Dr. Alexander J. Turco, who was installed as Director of Music on September 20, 1964. As Director, he would act as both choir master and organist. Harper C. Maybee, Jr. had been our Adult Choir Director for eighteen years. He is the talented son of the late Prof. Harper C. Maybee, who was an outstanding educator in the music departments of several Michigan colleges. It was with considerable reluctance that the Session accepted Harper's resignation in June 1964. Mrs. Penny deStigter, who for years had been active in our Music Department, ceased to direct the children's choirs but was given a new title in its place – Director of Christian Education – in the fall of 1964.

The land, which was purchased from Ford Motor Company, had been donated to the County as part of the extension of Edward Hines Drive from Ford Road to Michigan Avenue. When the County surveyed the park extension, it discovered that this parcel was at the level of residences along Brady Road. Since it was the County's policy to avoid the Hines Drive Parkway intruding into residential areas, it was deeding this land back to Ford. Because Jack Sluiter was involved in the discussions as part of his job for Ford, he asked the company if the church could bid on it. We did, and our bid was accepted.

The property was far from level when it was acquired. We arranged for Gene Levy, who had a contract to remove and dispose of Ford's blast furnace slag, to dump slag along the southeastern portion of our newly acquired land to bring it up to grade. We later found that deep-rooted trees cannot survive long when planted in the shallow top soil over the slag. When Ford cleared the sod just north of its Glass House for construction of a new computer facility, we acquired the sod and it became the lawn just outside our lower level.

By September, 1964, the building was completed enough that the Sunday School program could be moved into the lower level of the church. Much to the dismay of the builders, the children were very serious about getting value for "their money" and pointed out each hairline crack in the plaster to anyone who would look or listen. A shuttle service brought the children and teachers over to the new building for the 10:00 Sunday School and brought them back to the Mason and Garrison building afterwards.

Thriving In God's Garden – The Fourth Church, 1965-present

The year 1965 was perhaps the greatest year in the long history of our church. A hundred years before, our church and the village knew great excitement when the Civil War ended and

the boys came home from battle and again took their places in civilian and church life. Now 1965 brought to completion many plans made over a period of years. On January 3, 1965 the last service was held in our third church. It was with mixed emotions that many members left the beloved building for the last time. This building had already been sold to a Detroit congregation, the Central Church of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

On January 10, 1965 the first sermon in the new church entitled "What Do These Stones Mean?" was preached by Dr. Mitchell. Believing that "an expression of the integrity of this congregation is woven from several strong strands of faith," these strands were identified as the sovereignty of God, the Lordship of Christ, the Church as the Body of Christ, and the congregation as a Family of Faith. That latter emphasis on "Family of Faith" became thereafter a theme of ministry in the church.

At the Congregational Meeting of January 21, 1965, Mr. Lee Mills and Mr. Jack B. Sluiter of the Building Planning Committee gave their final report on the project to which they had given their whole-hearted attention for five years. No words could express the appreciation of a happy people for their great effort.

Sunday, January 24, 1965 was Dedication Sunday. For the occasion, Dr. Vander-Meulen came from his church in Missouri, Dr. Zimmerman from Illinois where he was Executive of the Presbytery of Chicago, and Dr. Neigh, our friend of many years, came from New York City.

Now a great, modern church building became a reality, reflecting in its solid construction the firm basis on which the church stands and in its light airy texture an openness to the movement of God's Spirit in moving times. The triangular design reiterated throughout the edifice emphasizes the Trinity, which is basic in Christian faith. Christians experience and express God as Father – Source of Life; Son – fellow human being; and Spirit – unseen but real abiding presence in all that life is. The crosses outside and inside the sanctuary opening out on the world with the green carpet picking up the color of grass outside, reminds worshippers that they live and worship in God's world, not apart from it. In the Chapel, worshippers experience sanctuary, a place to be away from the world with God alone. The arrangement of seating in the two rooms used principally for worship is a reminder that Christians gather around the table in the presence of Christ, who calls them together. So the building does, in fact, bring forth the faith that members profess.

For many years, the modern architecture and beautiful setting did much to bring visitors to our services and the excellent sermons and music kept them coming back.

Many innovations took place upon our entry into the new building. Instead of the three services held in the smaller building, only two were now needed at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. with Sunday school and an adult lecture at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. "Our Hour of Excellence" – this lecture period, was attended by approximately four hundred persons each Sunday, starting the concept of a two-hour Sunday morning worship and study for the entire family. Such inspired

speakers as Prof. Thelma James and Milton Covensky from Wayne State University, Mr. Karl Haas of WJR radio, Leroy Augenstein of Michigan State University, Rev. Robert Werenski, and other well known persons have delivered the lectures.

The installation of the impressive organ was completed in May 1965 and was dedicated in an impressive service on Sunday, May 23rd with Marilyn Mason, chair of University of Michigan's Organ Department, at the console. It was built by one of the preeminent organ builders of the day, Aeolian Skinner of Boston, having been conceived of and built concurrently with the new church building. With over 4000 handcrafted pipes of wood and metal divided over Great, Swell, Choir, Positiv, and Pedal divisions, the instrument is rich in variety of sound and color, from the 32' Bombards to pipes of just a few inches in length. The dedication was followed on the evening of June 6 with a concert by guest organist Jack Ruhl, who had served as consultant for the instrument's construction. It is still one of the premier organs in the metropolitan Detroit area and one that organists love to be able to play for concerts and recitals.

On June 27, 1965 the great white oak cross designed by Alden B. Dow and hand fashioned by Theodore A. Garzdula was dedicated to the glory of God. The installation of the stained glass pictures outside the Murray Wilson Chapel drew lots of comments as viewers tried to find all the different pictures featured in the accompanying booklet.

The parlor was, and continues to be, a delight to many as members and visitors discovered the Feminine Foibles and Fancies in the ladies' powder room. The "oohs" and "aahs" as people see the picture made of discarded jewelry and cosmetics for the first time is a special treat to all. Another unique feature is the fabric representation of the 23rd Psalm along the west wall. Unfortunately, this has lost a lot of its impact on visitors with the installation of the room divider, as usually one only sees half of the mural now. The three dimensional picture of Jesus doing the Chancel Chat by Dick Blair is another masterpiece for visitors to comment on.

On July 1, 1965, Rev. Donald A. Wright came with his wife, Dorothy, and four children to act as our Minister of Christian Education. He came to us from Niles, MI, where he was the Associate Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and was presented formally to the congregation on September 19, 1965. He soon started the Chancel Chat for children at the 9:00 service, which has been a permanent part of the Sunday worship ever since. Not knowing what to expect the first week, Dr. Turco threatened his long-time friend Mr. Wright with the Senior High Choir coming down to be part of the group, not totally in jest.

On September 5th the older members of the church were thrilled to have a visit from Jackson and Phyllis Bird, fraternal workers on furlough from Teheran, Iran. Both Jack and Phyllis were raised in Dearborn and came from pioneer Christian families. Jack preached the sermon at the regular morning services. He referred to his youth in the Dearborn Methodist Church where his parents were active workers, and to Phyllis's grandmother, Phyllis DuPont Proctor, and her mother Gertrude Proctor MacGeachy. Both had been dedicated workers in our church for many years.

The years 1966 and after would perhaps appear to be an anti-climax after the culmination of our great plans in 1965, but we had high hopes for the years to come also. The reports given at the Congregational Meeting of January 20, 1966 were probably the best in our history. They showed a financially sound and spiritually awake membership. Rev. Allen Ward Beach, the new Minister of Visitation and Evangelism was introduced at this meeting. Mr. Beach, his wife, and six children had just arrived from Darby, Pennsylvania, where he held the position of Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. On Sunday evening, February 20, 1966, Rev. Donald Wright and Rev. Allen Beach were both installed as associate ministers in a most impressive ceremony. The sermon was preached by Dr. Douglas Trout, President of Tusculum Collage. Rev. Dr. Robert H. Yolton, Executive of this Synod, Rev. Andrew L. Janssen, Presbytery Moderator, and our ministers Dr. Mitchell and Mr. DeHaven, as well as Rev. Dr. Samuel C. Weir of the Cherry Hill Presbyterian Church all took part in this service.

In the spring of 1966 and continuing until 1999, a preschool program was offered at First Presbyterian Church. At times there was the co-op nursery in addition to the program sponsored by the church with a religious overtone to its curriculum.

In 1966 a valuable and useful acquisition to our property was the gift of Les Cheneaux Lodge in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This was the generous gift of Mr. and Mrs. Murray Wilson of our congregation. A group of men from the church would go up early in summer to open the lodge and make needed repairs. Again in the fall a trip would be made to secure the buildings and property for the winter. During the summer many of our people enjoyed wonderful vacations in this fine resort. The property was sold in 1979 on a land contract. The Murray Wilson estate also made a gift during the last years of Dr. Mitchell's pastorate to make the Endowment Fund of major proportions a reality.

In December 1966 Mr. DeHaven retired after several periods of severe illness. The entire congregation parted with him regretfully, but wished him the best in his retirement. It was also in 1966 that Dr. Mitchell and his wife Betty were given a trip to Europe and the Holy Land in appreciation of their service to the church and in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dr. Mitchell's ordination. Shortly after this, in recognition of the many excellent sermons Dr. Mitchell delivered to the church, WKNR 1300 AM began broadcasting our 9:00 a.m. services that were enjoyed by shut-ins and many others each Sunday morning.

Easter, with all of its special additions, was often fraught with extra challenges. On one such Easter Sunday while we were being broadcast live, Dr. Turco learned a valuable lesson, namely keep pencils off of the organ console. One rolled off into the pedal keyboard during the Hallelujah Chorus at the end of the service and shorted out the organ, to the dismay of all in the choir and Dr. Turco. Another Easter the brass ensemble hired to enhance the music played the 9:00 service, and as the choir was having a repast in the Turco Room between services, Dr. Turco looked out the window and saw some of the brass players making toward their cars in the parking lot; some fast footwork was needed to provide the 11:00 service with brass music.

Maybe this was the same Easter service that Dr. Mitchell looked at all the chairs in the Narthex and lining the promenade and turned to the choir to request that our “Hallelujah’s” didn’t sound like “Hardly knew ya’s.” Dr. Turco also started the pre-service concert on Easter mornings, a tradition that has continued at the traditional service through the 2009 Easter season, replete with brass and handbells.

Another Easter tradition that lasted through 2004 was decorating the organ pipes with Easter eggs. In the early years, Dr. Turco used real hard-boiled eggs and one year an egg fell into the pipe framework, causing quite a stink, literally. After that, it was always plastic and/or Styrofoam eggs, but lots of them regardless. At Christmas time there would be a little tree about 18-24” tall on top of the organ console to add to the festive spirit.

Each Christmas there would be a beautiful 18’ Chrismon tree in the chancel, decorated with Chrismon ornaments handmade by the ladies of the church. Before the purchase of the artificial tree, the huge chancel tree was donated and delivered by Ford Motor Co. The first year in our new building saw the Chancel decorated in beautiful red poinsettias, but every year since then they have been white to go with the white and gold Chrismon ornaments.

The choir made two records under Dr. Tuco, in 1967 and again in 1984 for the church’s 150th birthday. Because everything had to be perfect for the recording, he and the choir spent many hours in rehearsing the various songs. One church member was showing a friend of hers around the building in May or June of 1984 and they saw Dr. Turco practicing Away in a Manger for the record. When they commented on it not being the season, he told them, with a straight face, that he was a slow learner; when he relayed this to the choir the following rehearsal, there were no straight faces, including his.

There is so much to tell of history and of service. On June 14, 1967 the Treasure Chest was opened by a group of women on the ground level of the church with a loan from the church of \$200. By that December, they not only repaid the original loan, but donated an additional \$1,000 toward the building fund. By 2002, the ladies had donated of \$350,000 to the fund. In addition to being a resale shop, the ladies make and sell beautiful items, which have produced thousands of dollars for church mission, along with special facility needs like the elevator and additional air conditioning. It was a real heartbreaker to see the place destroyed in 2008, requiring lots of prayers, hard work, and donations to reopen three months after the flood.

The Rummage Sale put on by the church women for years continued to grow bigger each year and became more and more popular with the public. The work involved in these sales was gigantic and could only be accomplished through the work of many people, both men and women, and teens to seniors. Each year in October since its beginnings in the mid-sixties the Rummage Sale has reminded one of Macy’s or Bloomingdale’s basement sales. Large numbers of people have been involved in this operation, resulting in some marvelous relationships between them. In addition, substantial amounts of money have been raised for use in and beyond our church. It continued as a major church-wide undertaking, bringing in as

much as \$25,000 per year until 2003 when it was scaled way back in scope, partly for lack of available workers as more women had entered the workforce, and partly to not disrupt the Alpha program which was now held on Wednesday evenings. Much of the proceeds went to help the Church of the Master in the Herman Gardens area in Detroit and then Grandale Church of the Master Presbyterian Church of Detroit. This undertaking was a huge draw for the community and a major mode of recognition of the church; people who didn't attend this church still knew it by the Rummage Sale.

The church gave a sum of money to restore the Teen-Drop-Inn destroyed during the summer rioting in 1967. A hundred years before the Dearborn Presbyterian Church had many interesting items in their minutes – “Sent for Freedmen,” “To work for Freedmen,” etc. Thus history repeats itself.

In October 1967 an interesting documentary prepared under the direction of Elders Robert Wishart and Richard Martini showed on slides all the various activities of our church. Many members were amazed at the breadth of the church programs and the spiritual depth provided by many groups. A similar show would probably surprise the members in 2009 also.

In the Sunday bulletin early in June 1968, we found this most interesting news: “Dr. Mitchell is in Oslo, Norway, representing our denomination at the World Christian Communicators Assembly; and Uppsala, Sweden for the beginning of the Meeting of The World Council of Churches. He will be back in the Parish on the 7th of July. Mr. Wright has left to direct a work mission of young people from this country in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This work tour is under the joint sponsorship of the Patriarch of the Church of Ethiopia and the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations of our denomination. This is the first time in history that such an activity has been jointly sponsored by our two denominations. We are highly honored that Mr. Wright has been selected to lead this program.”

Both of these travelers brought back reports on their summer trips and all were proud that members of our clergy should be chosen to carry out such important missions. While Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Wright were away, the Rouge River rose to such heights that all the residents in the Brady Apartments were evacuated. Many of those living in these apartments were senior citizens. Mr. Beach took over the evacuation operation as the church became the temporary headquarters for all those flooded out. He made temporary arrangements with some of our church members for housing of those without friends or relatives nearby. The Rouge had not risen to such heights since the time of Henry Ford's death April 7, 1947, when the river had flooded out the powerhouse on the Fairlane Estate and the great man died with only the heat of fireplaces and the light of candles to dispel total darkness. His chauffeur, Mr. Rankin, a member of our church, had to drive to town to telephone for a doctor. In the early days of our church, before more and higher bridges were built, our people were often cut off from the village and could not get to church services. Even the Little Ecorse, which today is but a tiny brook, unobserved by most folks passing along south Monroe, was a bar to travel when the spring rains came.

Early in 1968 the church received a bus through the generosity of one of our members. The E. & L. Truck Company gave it sustained care, and it was of great help in taking groups to meetings, camps, and various service projects. Mr. Wright, as Chaplain to Protestant girls at Vista Maria, sometimes used it to take the girls to cultural events.

In October 1968 D. Frederic DeHaven came from his home in the East to be guest organist at the dedication of the new Walcker Organ which had been purchased for the Murray Wilson Chapel with funds from the Tribute Fund. Those to whose memory the instrument was installed in the balcony of the Murray Wilson Chapel were Mrs. Lucile DeHaven, Rev. and Mrs. John Newell, Mr. Harold Carnell, Mrs. Gertrude Grigg, and others. This organ was built in West Germany.

Staff changes were very frequent, but, largely due to the presence of Dr. Mitchell, the church moved on a steady course. After two years of service, Mr. Beach resigned his position in 1968, being replaced by Rev. Andrew Janssen from 1971-1975. Mr. Wright had a distinguished ministry here before accepting a call to Arizona in 1972. After an extensive search the church called Rev. William Hoffman to serve in the area of Christian Education and later Rev. Robert Timberlake was called to serve in the pastoral area of the church's life. In 1970 the church reached its peak communicant membership of 2500.

In the early 1970s Dr. Turco conceived of the idea of using our unusual layout of the sanctuary for a musical production, with the result of "Amahl and the Night Visitors" being presented for two to three years as a Christmas gift from the Adult Choir to the community.

Another women's group started in 1974 was the Sealarks, a group of women geared toward meeting the needs of those who were widowed or divorced, with a \$30 starting donation from Presbyterian Women and Alma Reith was the first president. This group disbanded during the tenure of Dr. Steele.

It was after a sermon on family life by Mr. Timberlake in 1976 that Dottie Ruskin got upset over the focus on couples and families to the exclusion of singles in the church. After going through the membership rolls and discovering that roughly a third of the members were single, they decided to start a singles group, Voyagers. It was purely a social group, giving singles a place to meet for fun and fellowship outside the bar scene and lasted about four to five years before interest began to wane. There were even a few marriages that came out of the group.

Mr. Hoffman and Mr. Timberlake both left the church in 1977, leaving Dr. Mitchell alone to handle their ministries. Fortunately, he was not totally alone because in 1973, in a move to manage the church in a businesslike fashion, Mr. Paul Elsenheimer was employed as Business Manager. By this time, when the church had only one minister on the scene, Mr. Elsenheimer had the business affairs well in hand until his retirement in the mid 1980's.

In the mid-70's the church purchased a five-octave set of handbells that have been enjoyed often over the years whenever there are enough interested ringers to form a bell choir. At first the choir was led by David Pulice, eventually being led by the current music director of the time.

The church kept faith once again in what have been called trying economic times in Dearborn where the population was diminishing. The music program continued to be outstanding under Dr. Turco. A Young Adult Group was organized and continued for a few years. The Men's Fellowship and Women's Association were going strong. The Hour of Excellence, begun in the mid-1960s, continued to have a major impact on the community. Presbyterian Players was formed and produced several plays during their years of existence. The zone plan for the Deacons continued with mixed success – for those living in Dearborn and adjacent communities it worked well, but those living in the outlying suburbs were not served as effectively.

In 1977, also, Dr. Turco conceived the idea of presenting a Christmas gift to the church and community of an Elizabethan Christmas pageant and soon the Madrigal Dinners became a reality, continuing until 1996 and his retirement. What began as a one night idea became two nights the first year and quickly grew to four nights each year. It was a huge undertaking that involved a cast of well over 100 feeding and entertaining about 250 visitors to the "Manor" each night with a seven-course meal, concert, brass, bells, skits, magic, and a glorious picture of authentic homemade costumes. Pipe Major Charles "McCherrie McBrady Mc-whatever-he-thought-of-that-night" finished off the festivities that flowed smoothly, thanks to the script of the Chief Steward, Alan Brailsford. More than ten years after they ended, members still talk longingly about the Madrigals being part of their holiday traditions.

By now, the Hour of Excellence was such a hit that families were staying for a second hour of worship. This meant the children were also present for the two hours and getting restless, so Sunday school was held at 10:00 and "enrichment hours" at 9:00 and 11:00, following the Chancel Chat. While that meant not every child attended Sunday school as such, the blending of the programs meant they got much of the lesson regardless of what hour(s) they attended.

Early in 1978 the congregation voted to call Rev. Dr. Carl Howie to be a Co-Pastor with Dr. Mitchell. This unusual relationship was to be an experiment in co-pastorship with a view to easier transition after a long term of pastoral service. Dr. Howie, who had been minister at Westminster Church of Detroit for a decade, was installed in office on April 16, 1978 in the regular Service of Worship. Dr. Howie's specialty was biblical research and the theology of Christian history and these areas were reflected in many of his sermons, but it was with the seniors at various Presbyterian Village services that he truly shined. A search committee continued to look for a third member for the ministerial staff.

Dr. Howie and his wife Jean settled in Dearborn for what appeared to be an untroubled and secure time of ministry, but this was not to be. Soon after his return from a period of vacation in northern Michigan, Dr. Mitchell was stricken with a heart attack on August 11, 1978. After extensive care at Oakwood Hospital in Dearborn and at the University of Michigan Hospital in

Ann Arbor, Dr. Mitchell returned home in early November. On November 20, 1978 he died in his sleep at home. This was a monumental blow to the congregation which felt a great sense of loss.

On November 22, 1978 a solemn and beautiful worship service was held in a sanctuary filled to capacity. It was a fitting tribute to Dr. Mitchell, who had served this church with such distinction since 1957. That service represented the triumphant theme that actualized his life, and was in truth a celebration of resurrection. Of Dr. Mitchell it was said, "John K. Mitchell is a name that causes all to rejoice even when our celebration is edged with sadness . . . Jack was a Christian not in some definitional or doctrinaire sense. His life was a constant process of defining the meaning of the word Christian." Some days later his mortal remains were deposited on the grounds of the church to which he gave so much and which he loved so well. With his death, an era ended. To show appreciation and to memorialize his name, the Fellowship Hall was renamed Mitchell Hall by the congregation at the Annual Meeting in January 1979.

In memory of Dr. Mitchell, Barbara Hosmer put her new interest of stained glass to use by designing the wheat and grapes medallion, representing the communion elements, that hangs in the sanctuary. Over the course of several years, members commissioned her to make several more in memory of their loved ones and it was with great anticipation that the members awaited each finished medallion. Today her medallions hang in the Turco Room and parlors in addition to the sanctuary.

The church, always aware that its head is Jesus Christ, continued its life and work. With the death of Dr. Mitchell, Dr. Howie automatically became pastor of the church. There was an obvious need for help in the ministry as the pastoral task was too large for one man. In 1979 Rev. Ronald Wilson was called to be an Associate Minister and later the same year Rev. John Carroll came to be an Assistant Minister until his resignation in 1982 to continue his training at Princeton Theological Seminary. Because the congregation felt that it was continuously searching for a minister, Mr. Wilson was hired with the understanding that he would become the pastor upon the retirement of Dr. Howie. However, after the merger of the various divisions of the Presbyterian Church into the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the rules changed and promoting from within the ranks was no longer permitted. Mr. Carroll was replaced on a part-time basis by Rev. John Musgrave in 1982 and in 1983 he was called to be an Associate Minister in the church.

About this time Dr. Howie started a Bible study class that met on Sunday evenings. Over the years various Associate Pastors have led the group until the death of Rev. John Sefcik in February 2004, at which time it became a member-led group that continues to meet.

In 1978 the adults combined with the children's choirs to stage "Noye's Fludde" as the first of many multi-generational Biblical musicals presented under Dr. Turco.

The Women's Association became First Church Women. The ladies would meet four times a year for their "gatherings" in addition to having smaller groups known as circles which met monthly.

At the Congregational Meeting of Jan. 18, 1979, Alan Brailsford gave a speech entitled "Thanks for John" as the congregation renamed Fellowship Hall as Mitchell Hall.

Around 1980, the Worship and Fine Arts Committee agreed that women should be included in the usher roster for worship services. Jose Brailsford and Mary Martini were the first to accept, with others following their lead over the years.

In 1980, also, Dr. Howie requested Jose Brailsford to organize a 40-hour Prayer Vigil. Sign-up sheets were available for members to have individual, round-the-clock prayers in the Chapel during the forty hours of Easter. The participants were asked to enter and leave in silence according to their sign-up times, and they were never to leave the Chapel empty. This program lasted for a couple of years before disbanding.

The Men's Fellowship was established by the Long Range Planning Committee of the Session on October 28, 1980, and subsequently at the next meeting of the Session. It is open to every man in the church and its motto and purpose is to "Serve Christ and His Church." It operates with two major functions – the Tuesday Work Crew and the Stephens-Currie Bible Discussion. Since its inception, the Work Crew has undertaken the planting of a 105-tree Memorial Arbor, the Memorial Garden, the Memorial Glen Cross, a church-wide inventory of assets, and routine and special maintenance of the building and grounds. Special programs have included a "Kirkin' O' the Tartan" and a series of Burns Suppers, led by Johnston and Shirley Cummings. The Bible study group meets twice a month with about 20 men enjoying the discussion.

In the early 1980s Dr. Turco approached Church School Superintendent Alan Brailsford to see if there was interest in presenting a series of Bible-related musicals which were being published then. Each year a format of six weeks of Saturday morning rehearsals plus workshops where the children and/or adults learned their roles and the children studied the Bible passages that formed the basis of the production, culminating in the production itself. These proved to be very popular and most of the younger members of the Adult Choir went through this program with many fond memories of "Gospelanimals", "It's Cool in the Furnace", "A Hundred Percent Chance of Rain", "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" (put on by the Adult Choir), and "Sammy", a play written by Alan Brailsford. Unfortunately, so many children subsequently became involved in local sports programs that it drained our talent base and this Music Department/Church School program became no longer viable.

By unanimous voice vote on Sunday June 15, 1986, with over 700 in attendance, Rev. Dr. William Steele was elected to be the new senior pastor, the first such election of a pastor in twenty-nine years. Dr. Steele joined associate pastors Rev. John Musgrave and Rev. Ronald Wilson in August of 1986. Mr. Musgrave had continued to serve during the period that the

Ministerial Search Committee was seeking a new senior pastor following Dr. Howie's retirement, as it was decided not to hire an interim pastor. Rev. William Stryker of Cherry Hill Presbyterian Church presided as Moderator of the Session and lay leaders of the Personnel Committee and Board of Trustees worked with the staff and church boards during the transitional period between senior pastors. With the coming of Dr. Steele, Mr. Musgrave went to First Presbyterian Church of Flint and Dr. Wilson to a church in Eau Claire WI (he'd gotten his D.D. while at First Presbyterian).

Dr. Steele and his wife Jane brought a new dimension to the First Church family in the form of three active young boys. He soon was recognized as an outstanding preacher and the church grew under his leadership. Dr. Steele was also instrumental in the oversight of several new programs that were started during the next few years and continue today in 2009. His involvement in the Dearborn community of churches and civic activities helped expand the role of First Church in both religious and secular areas in the almost ten years he served as senior minister.

One of the most successful and meaningful groups that was formed was the Ambassadors, organized as part of the Worship and Fine Arts Committee. This involved recruiting couples as Calling Teams, with 21 couples comprising the original group. Their assignment was to telephone and/or visit frequently absent members or non-members who had recently attended two or more worship services.

On March 25, 1987 forty senior citizens met in Mitchell Hall with Dr. Steele to determine if there was enough interest in forming a new seniors group that would provide the opportunity for Christian fellowship and a period set aside for devotion. This group would provide an alternative to, but not be in competition with, the two City of Dearborn Pleasant Hours Clubs that were meeting weekly at the church. It was the consensus of those present that such a group should be formed and meet on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Under the inspired leadership of newly hired Parish Associate, Rev. John Sefcik as the staff representative, approximately 95 members participated in one or more of the activities during the critical first nine months. With synonyms such as sharp, eager, quick-witted, acute, ardent, intense, and vigilant, the word "KEEN" was adapted into the name KEENAGERS. This group continues to meet for informative in-house meetings and one-day trips in the metropolitan Detroit area. Tours of historic Detroit churches of multiple denominations have been popular each year, while extended trips have provided the opportunity to visit many points of interest in twenty eastern and midwestern states as well as Alaska and Hawaii, plus numerous trips across the border into Canada. The Keenagers continue to play a vital part in the congregational life of the church in 2009 and is open to anyone old enough to belong to AARP – 50 years and older.

Dr. Steele celebrated his 40th birthday with help from the choir singing Happy Birthday slowly in a minor key while the youth group displayed black "over the hill" balloons and "helped" him walk up to the pulpit. We don't know who was behind that idea, but Dr. Turco got paid back on his

60th when a group of teens filled his office with balloons 3-4 feet deep, someone put pennies on 60 of the organ keys, and 5 dozen roses appeared on top of the organ.

In 1988 First Church Women became Presbyterian Women, continuing with the gatherings and circles for their meetings, in addition to all the special activities they hosted over the years. Since the early 50's, a group of women would meet monthly in the Parlor as Cancer Pad Sewers. In 15 years, the ladies made over 20,000 cancer pads for the cancer society. The group disbanded in the late 1980's.

Erin Cox-Holmes joined the staff in March 1988 as a part-time educator and then became an Associate Pastor following her ordination, leaving First Church in the mid 1990's. During this time also, Helen Morrison became director of Christian education for several years.

An addition of another staff member occurred in January 1991 when Rev. Richard Danielak came on board to handle several of the Associate Pastor's responsibilities in the growing church.. Originally a Catholic priest from Roseville, he left the priesthood to get married and then became a Presbyterian minister; he was a pastor in Florida when he was called to become our Associate Pastor. His wife Rose was at one time a singer with a band which had Jonathan Winters as the opener; whenever he talked about "Rose," it was Rose Danielak he was referring to.

After the demise of the Mariners in the late 1980's, there was no opportunity for mature but still young (and young-at-heart) adults of our church to meet and socialize on a regular basis. To remedy this, an ad hoc group of former Mariner members, under the pastoral leadership of Mr. Danielak, organized a series of social events open to any and all members who might like to attend. This group called itself the LAFFSeekers, LAFF being an acronym for "Love Among the Family of Faith." Events included, among others, a games night, a social dance, a cross-country skiing outing, a talent show, and a participatory stage show called "Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes", written and directed by Jose Brailsford. The group eventually disbanded through lack of sustained support by the congregation.

Dr. Steele's secretary, Pat Houck began a White Christmas Ministry with donations from church members and her friends. This idea morphed into the Touch of Hope Ministry as a subcommittee of the Deacons with a formal budget and reflects the year-round nature of its programs. In 2009 it is headed by Margie Johnston-Mauer, Angela Saylor, and Sharon Francis. It now includes not only Christmas presents for needy families, but the Palm Sunday food offering, back to school backpacks for the children, and Christmas food baskets in addition to the gifts from members who adopt the angels during Advent. Groceries on a monthly basis and sometimes emergency needs are met with the assistance of dedicated family sponsors and other church members. In 2009, there are 13 families with 30 children in the Ministry.

The idea of a juried art show for multiple mediums was thought of by Dr. Turco and for about ten years the church was treated to paintings, sculpture, music, drama, and many other genres of high quality religious art.

Dr. Turco celebrated 30 years at First Presbyterian Church with a Gospelfest of pioneer hymns on September 25, 1994. Much to his chagrin, there was also a surprise reception following the worship service that the entire choir and congregation were able to keep a secret from him. By this time the choir had reached its zenith with 50-60 singers on any given Sunday.

The Women's Bible study grew out of the Presbyterian Women's purpose which states in part that "this organization commits itself to nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study". As awareness grew that a new focus was needed, in 1994 the weekly format of Bible study emerged. The group is faithful in using Presbyterian Church (USA) Bible studies that are written every two years by women pastors especially for women.

In December of 1995, following almost ten years of service, Dr. Steele accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church in Oceanside, CA, preaching his final service in Dearborn on Christmas Eve.

Following the 1996 Easter services, Dr. Turco took a permanent medical leave after providing First Church with 32 years of outstanding sanctuary music and musical events.

On a happier note in 1995, Mr. Danielak and several Elders on a rotating basis began taking communion to shut-ins on a monthly basis. This outreach was a highlight for many of our homebound members.

On July 1996 Rev. Eldon Beery joined our church as Interim Minister and brought some much needed healing to a congregation reeling over the events of the previous six months. It was also at his suggestion that Scott VanOrnum was contacted as a replacement Music Director, a suggestion that brought much joy and wonderful music for the next eight years.

On November 16, 1997 Rev. Dr. Douglas Barranger joined us as Pastor, being installed on his first Sunday in Dearborn and hitting the ground running. It was with great joy that we enthusiastically welcomed Dr. Barranger, his wife Donna, and their son Nathan into the active life of the church.

In 1998, it was decided to add a Parish Nurse to the church staff, the position being created to help meet the "whole health" needs of the church (body, mind, and spirit). At a time when the members were aging and the health care system was getting more complicated, this seemed like a tangible way to demonstrate more fully the "love of Christ" to the members. Chris Mayer, RN, was hired to meet that need, having a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing and completed a Parish Nurse Preparation Program at Concordia University in Ann Arbor. She sees her call to ministry as based on John 10:10b where Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life and

have it abundantly.” Her position on staff is part of Pastoral Care and works with members and their families, in order to help them live “full” lives, even in the midst of difficulties.

April 1998 saw the retirement of Mr. Danielak as he left First Presbyterian Church to become a supply minister for Detroit Presbytery. He was replaced in September by Rev. Gabor Lassu as an Interim Associate Pastor until January 2000 when he moved his family to California. In February 2002, Rev. Gerald Voie came to us as Associate Pastor for 16 months before he decided to leave the ministry for awhile.

In 1998 Chris Mayer had the idea of creating handmade greeting cards for her to send as Parish Nurse and for the Deacons to send to various members of the church as the need arose. She asked Bonnie and Emily Kutt to start a group who would make the cards and in February 1999 the Card Ministry was started. It is an opportunity to express our love and caring for members of the congregation while those interested were able to learn the craft of stamping. The Deacons had a small budget available to use for buying the startup supplies in addition to the donated items. In 2009, cards are being sent 5-6 times a year to shut-ins by the Deacons.

Starting in 1999 with Christian Education Director Paul Ytterock and two high school graduates, First Presbyterian Church has sent a mission team of adults and youth to Peru every year. Working with Scripture Union out of Great Britain, our congregation has sent teams of between 3 and 21 individuals to labor, teach, and share God’s love to the rescued “street boys” of Peru. Team members plan fund-raisers to lower the personal cost of airfare, room and board, building materials, and school supplies. Many team members have been a part of the mission trip for a number of years by 2009. In 2006, collecting used soccer uniforms and equipment has become an integral part of the supplies that are brought down as gifts to the boys.

ChristNet started with a handful of downriver churches meeting the need for emergency food and housing for the homeless in 1993. By 2004, the movement had grown considerably and First Presbyterian joined the network. People, including families, are bussed to the church where they are provided shelter, a hot dinner, breakfast, and a bagged lunch. The people stay overnight at a church for one week during the winter months before going to another church. Mattresses, linens, and some supplies are provided by Christnet and transported by volunteers and Boy Scout Troop 1131 to the next church. This has become so popular in the five years it has been at First Presbyterian that volunteers of all ages contact the coordinators to find when it is coming again so they can help as time permits. In 2007 a shower unit was purchased so guests could shower at the church instead of being transported to another location first and not eating until quite late, and logistics for adding a washer and dryer were worked out for their visit in 2008.

At some point about 2000, the idea for a contemporary worship service was conceived and the New Harvest Praise Band was formed to provide the music. The early service was designated the contemporary service and moved into the Sanctuary so worshipers at this service would not feel inferior to those worshipping at the traditional late service. Feelings about the new format

varied, from total commitment to total dislike and everything in between, and creating two distinct congregations under the one roof.

A dinner and talent show put together by Scott VanOrnum was great fun. The Schloffs having enough children to do the So Long, Farewell song from Sound of Music was terrific, Jay Moon as a Korean Elvis is something not to miss, and we thoroughly enjoyed Donna and Nathan Barranger's rendition of Yakety Yak which was just hilarious. The show stopper came at the end with Jon Sogoian and his friend Karl performing a unicycling routine, wowing all who saw it. Dennis Neubacher was the capable and often funny emcee for the evening.

On July 22, 2001, the Memorial Garden was dedicated by Dr. Barranger to the beloved members of our congregation who were called home by God. This garden is symbolic of the congregation's faith, representing the basis of what every Christian believes in the design and materials used to create the garden.

SonSounds Christian Music Festival originally started when youth group leader Mike Hoffman and a group of the teens of the church drove across the state to attend a Christian rock music festival in 2002. On the return trip, the youth asked, "Why couldn't our church do such a festival?", hence the birthing of SonSounds. Originally a Christian rock music fest, SonSounds has morphed over the first seven years into a family festival that in 2008 included inflatable bouncers, art activities, great food, pony rides, a petting farm, and the Dearborn showmobile stage with a variety of musical acts, dancers, and storytellers for all ages. Each year the congregation supports the cost of the festival while they designate 100% of all monies raised to be put toward various charities.

In the winter of 2002, Rev. Gerald Voie, at Dr. Barranger's behest, started organizing an Alpha program at First Presbyterian Church; Angie Saylor took over the program with Mr. Voie's resignation. This ran for seven series of ten sessions each as participants met in small groups to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed, non-threatening environment. Dinner was provided, followed by a film before the groups broke off for discussion led by two leaders from the congregation and one or two helpers. Group members became very close friends and the church gained several new members through the program, while many others found their faith refreshed and revitalized.

The Agua Viva Coffee House was an outgrowth of the Second Saturday Coffee House, hosted by the youth group of the church and Director of Student Ministries, Mike Hoffman. Originally housed in Mitchell Hall over a three-year period, it was finally decided that the space was not intimate enough and the hard surfaces of the room were not conducive to music. Session approved the renovation and furnishing of the lower-level Youth Lounge as a cozy room for acoustical youth concerts, middle school education hour meeting place, and the meeting place of the youth group every Sunday afternoon. The room is lined with artwork produced by our own teens, has a sound system, and has a raised, high-top table and chair area with a working coffee bar. The room has become such a favorite that Lansing Christian musical performer

Rachanee asked to use the room over an offer to use a Starbucks for filming a short segment of a TV special aimed at budding young Christian artists.

With Scott VanOrnum's resignation in October 2004, Marshall Dicks took over the reins of the music program as choir director and a search was started to fill the organist position. After several months of various guest organists, Mary Ann Crugher Balduf took over until a new permanent organist could be found; in October 2007 the church was pleased to hire Dr. Timothy Huff, president of the local chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Dr. Huff loved to use the louder pipes when he would substitute for us prior to his being hired, and Mr. Wright would comment that the dust was being blown out of the pipes on such occasions.

In the fall of 2005 Dr. Barranger was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and by November he was no longer able to preach on Sunday mornings. About this time, Mr. Wright moved back into the metro Detroit area and was hired by the Session to be a supply minister until Dr. Barranger got well enough to come back. On December 27, 2005 he died and Rev. Donald Wright became our Interim Minister while the members once more went through the Pastoral Nominating process – something we'd gotten quite good at over the years. One of the highlights for many people was Mr. Wright's convincing Dr. Turco to come back and play one final service; for many, this was the closure that was needed after Dr. Turco's abrupt leaving without the customary send-off party for his retirement.

In 2006, Dearborn Woods Presbyterian Church lost their building and Mr. Wright, with Session's approval, invited them to meet in our Chapel and coffee hour in the Youth Lounge downstairs until they found a new home the end of June 2008.

In September 2006, First Presbyterian Church became chapter 504 of the international outreach quilting ministry Prayers and Squares, with the motto "It's not about the quilts; it's all about the prayers." Mentored by the First Presbyterian Church of Northville chapter, a former upstairs classroom was made available to the group for sewing and the donation of fabric, supplies, and funds by members enables the work to be done at no expense to the church. By 2009, approximately 15 women participate in the quilt construction and the congregation offers their prayers as they tie the quilting knots joining the layers together. The quilts are then given to those in severe ill health or to celebrate special events such as a baptism or ordination.

There is no accurate count of how many items over the years have been sewn for the mission sewing projects or articles that have been knitted or crocheted.

There have been many different names assigned to the Presbyterian Women's circles over the years, some coming from headquarters and some from combining various groups. In 2009 there are two circles – Rebekah Circle meets the first Saturday of each month and is involved with programs at the Vista Maria School; Lydia-Martha-Mary Circle meets the fourth Thursday of each month and since the early 90's has sponsored the November cookie walk with the proceeds going to Touch of Hope Ministry. Both are open to all women of the church.

Presbyterian Women continues to sponsor a weekly Bible study, led by Lorraine Lamkin, which meets every Thursday morning. This group also purchases memorial books for deceased women of the church for the church library. Ruth Stewart and Faye Peckham hosted the funeral luncheons for many years and in 2009 the tradition continues under the direction of Jane Gibbs, Jane Currie, Nellie Lepard and Margaret Richards. This group also hosts welcome and farewell receptions, teas, and special dinners.

In alternating years, Presbyterian Women sponsors a weekend in the fall for the Morris Fork Craft crafters of Kentucky to bring their projects here, with the proceeds going directly to their organization. Some of the non-Morris Folk years have seen craft sales by members of the church with proceeds going the Presbyterian Women.

There are no accurate counts of the number of banquets, mother/daughter, mother/son, father/son, and father/daughter, but they proved popular when they were held.

Over the years, members of Boy Scout Troop 1131 have given of their time and strength to help with various projects around the church. These range from washing dishes after the Madrigal dinners to pick-ups and carting of items for the annual rummage sale to helping with the beds for ChristNet. They sell greens and popcorn in the autumn to raise money for the Troop and any items not sold are donated to the Touch of Hope families. In 2007 the idea came to sponsor a soup-and-salad luncheon after church on Scout Sunday. This has proven very popular with the wide variety of homemade soups and plenty of salads and desserts for a reasonable price.

In October of 2007 the Brass Roots Trio were invited to perform a Saturday Evensong service and provide the music for the next morning's services. This group was so well received that it has become an annual event.

The Pastoral Nominating Committee's search was shorter in duration than expected and it was with great joy that Rev. Dr. David Bleivik was elected to take over the pulpit on December 2, 2007. Since he was in the middle of some delicate negotiations at the Washington Presbytery where he was General Presbyter, he did not arrive until January 27, 2008 with installation services being held on March 30, 2008 after the Easter season was over.

The following Sunday Dr. Bleivik and his wife Anne were returning home from Pittsburgh when they received a call that the church building was flooded. Three hours and thousands of gallons later, the water was finally able to be shut off and the "repairing of the ark" started. The Treasure Chest was totally destroyed and there was concern for the plumbing, electrical, heating/air conditioning systems, and the blowers for the pipe organ, in addition to the general cleanup that needed to be done on the entire lower level and much of the main level. June 29th saw a beautiful service of appreciation for the workers who did so much to bring the building back in such a short period of time, including an indoor picnic and concert to celebrate the completion.

God does move in mysterious ways, and in the heartache of seeing our beautiful building “ruined,” the congregation came together for a combined Service of Worship in Mitchell Hall for several weeks until the sanctuary could be redone. The congregation has melded in ways not seen in earlier attempts at combined services and truly enjoyed getting (re)acquainted with the “other” congregation. Thankfully the sanctuary was restored enough for worship services by June 1st as the congregation had a farewell service for Paul Ytterock as Christian Education Director and the following Sunday he was ordained a minister as he left for First Presbyterian Church of Flint, whose senior pastor is Rev. John Musgrave, who also was at First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn for three years in the 1980s.

In 2008 some members of the church began learning to become Stephen Ministers as part of a nationwide program designed to equip volunteer laypersons to provide Christian, one-on-one confidential care for individuals who are experiencing a wide range of life needs or crises. The Pastors and Parish Nurse prayerfully arrange for a trained Stephen Minister to come along side of a person in need to provide regular, dependable care as needed, such as listening, support, encouragement, and prayer as an extension of the pastoral care provided by the staff.

In late 2008 the DNA Task Force was formed from the Mission Dearborn Task Force with a focus on reaching out to the community, especially young families, in whatever way is needed to let them know we are here. Almost immediately Halloween was upon us and the idea of a Trunk or Treat was planned. This included bouncers and pumpkins, cider and donuts, candy and crafts on the Saturday before Halloween with about 300 children taking part. On Halloween, members handed out candy from their trunks, a movie was shown on the side of the Chapel, and some members dressed up themselves and their trunks to the delight of about 500 children and their parents. This looks to become an annual event and was a great success for a fledgling group to start off with.

Noel is a dinner and concert presented in Mitchell Hall for the first time in 2008 to help bring in the holiday season in style.

There are other groups which have come and gone over the years, and some are still active in 2009, but no information was given to the compiler to include in this overview of our church’s history.

In looking back over the first one hundred seventy-five years of our history, there are many things that our founding fathers would find utterly beyond their understanding. Can you imagine Mrs. Margaret Sloss’s and Nathaniel Ladd’s bewilderment over the size of our church building and the extent and beauty of the landscape? What could they make of such terms as “Food Handler’s Cards,” “Hour of Excellence,” “Chrismon Project,” “Continental Breakfast,” “Rummage Sale,” “Eagle Scouts,” “Sermons by radio,” “Women’s Bowling League,” and a hundred other strange, even outlandish things. They would be more addled than was poor old Rip Van Winkle. How little did those founding fathers know of the great future which God had in store for their

church. Often their little group came near to dissolution and yet through pestilence, war, and depression, this church has stood as a symbol of our Christian faith, always with faith that the future would be brighter.

Ecumenically the church has reached out to neighboring churches in cooperative endeavors. The Cherry Hill Presbyterian Church, Christ Episcopal Church and First Methodist Church joined with First Presbyterian Church for many years for a joint Good Friday service, continuing until the mid-2000's when each church reverted back to their own services. These same churches also united to form the Dearborn Pastoral Counseling and Consultation Service in 1984.

The church continues to be in the world but not of the world. Members are involved and busy in community leadership with volunteer effort seen as a fulfillment of Christian calling. Study and discussion groups help people to discern the will and purpose of God for their lives.

While the names of many have been reviewed in this document, still there are many nameless people who have contributed much to the work of the church, both within the church and in the world. The lead actor in this drama of First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn has been and still is God Himself. But for His grace, nothing could endure. The Chief Minister of the church remains Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We now reach a major milestone of 175 years, grateful for a past in which God has been faithful and ready for the future in which that same faithfulness is assured. This church has been blessed with experiences of worship, music, study, fellowship, stewardship, and service. Today we look forward to the future as a time not of dread but of promise. Today's Christians at First Presbyterian Church are not just spectators to history, but are the makers of history, gathered in one congregation, rejoicing to be coworkers with God in a future as bright as the Divine promises. To God alone be the glory.

It is with much gratitude that I have been able to garner much history from Kathleen Parr, whose forebears were among the founding members of our church, Rev. Dr. Carl Howie, who brought our history up to 1984, and to Rev. Donald Wright for his gathering of all the various parts of our history to make this booklet possible. Thanks also go out to the various persons who contributed histories of the various groups within our church. Thank you!