

*Reflections on Our Heritage:  
A History of First Community Church*

By Jacqueline Day Cherry



## PREFACE

It would be impossible to write a complete history of First Community Church. There are too many programs – too many interesting tales – too many important facts – too many significant people who have contributed to making this one of the great churches in America. For nearly thirty years it has been my privilege to serve as the historian for this very special place. I never knew from one day to the next what fascinating story I might hear or what intriguing fact might be uncovered or whom I might encounter who had played an important role in our past. The historical records, archives and church newsletters have served to document this manuscript, along with individuals who have granted interviews and related stories.

Ever since I began working with our archives in 1978, I have known that someday I would try to record our history, but I did not realize just how difficult that would be. It could take a lifetime, but still there would be events and people and programs that were not included. For example, I have written about some of our mission projects, but it could take another book in order to tell about the work done by our Refugee Task Force, or the success of our giant garage sales to raise funds for missions, or the lives that have been touched by those who went beyond our walls to minister in Mississippi and Latin America and China and India and Appalachia. Eventually, I had to accept the fact that all I could do was to relate the main historical information and attempt to pass on the essence of who we are as a church and people of God. Thus, I chose to name my book *Reflections on Our Heritage, A History of First Community Church*, not *The History*. I will leave that for a future historian to record.

One of the things that has set us apart is that this church was established by the residents of the community who took the initiative to meet their own religious needs, and then made their church an institution that served the needs of the entire community. For the past century First Community Church has pioneered innovative ministries that have brought us national recognition. The history of any congregation is the story of how God worked through human lives to build a community of believers. Each minister who has served this congregation has made a unique contribution to our history. Throughout our first century, First Community Church has been a church of and by and for the people. Our story deserves to be remembered and recorded and retold to future generations.

Jacqueline Day Cherry  
August 25, 2009



## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my husband Don, son Eric, daughter Carla, and grandchildren Matthew, Lisa, Sierra, Skylar and Storie with gratitude for your patience and support while I have been engrossed in this labor of love.

I must also include all those who contributed to our heritage and left a path for us to follow, but especially Roy Burkhart, Lowell Riley and Eddie Rydman who contributed so much to molding me as a person.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Our First Century: 1909-2009

In the Beginning .....	1
Rev. Fred Brownlee .....	2
Rev. Oliver Weist .....	5
Transition to First Community Church .....	8
Our Creed .....	10
Building 1320 Cambridge .....	11
Lincoln Road Chapel .....	15
Tribute to Oliver Weist .....	16
Rev. Rufus Wicker .....	18
Dr. Roy Burkhart .....	21
Block of Wood .....	23
And the Church Grows .....	25
Counseling Ministry .....	26
Seven Keys .....	30
Legacy of Roy Burkhart .....	32
Dr. Otis Maxfield .....	37
Project Amigos .....	40
First Community Village .....	44
Maxfield Legacy .....	47
Dr. Arthur Teikmanis .....	49
Rev. Robert Raines .....	55
Dr. Harold Englund .....	61
Rev. John Cairns .....	69
Dr. Barry Johnson .....	73
Rev. Bruce Ingles .....	83
Dr. Richard Wing .....	85
Photographs .....	93

### Our Ministries

At Worship .....	115
A New Organ .....	118
The Women's Guild .....	123
Our Youth Ministry .....	127
Bar None .....	128
In Search of Faith .....	129
The Community Church Movement .....	135
Denominational Affiliations .....	137
Preschool .....	139
The Dream of a Camp .....	143
Akita Comes Alive .....	145
First Community Church and the Media .....	155
Radio .....	155
Television .....	156
First Community Books .....	159
Vaud-Villities .....	161
Tri-Village Trading Post .....	163
Pastoral Counseling Center .....	167
First Community Foundation .....	171
Christmas Customs Through the Years .....	173
What's in a Name? .....	177
Time Line .....	180



# *Our First Century*

## *1909-2009*



## IN THE BEGINNING...

At the dawn of the twentieth century Columbus, Ohio, was a bustling capitol city. Not only was it the center of government for the state, but also an important manufacturing and transportation center. In the preceding years wealthy city dwellers began purchasing land on the bluffs and high wooded banks of the land between the rivers northwest of town where they built spacious summer homes to escape the heat and grime of the central city. In 1901 Marble Cliff became the first suburb of Columbus to establish itself as an independent autonomous entity. The area became even more popular when the trolley line linking it to downtown Columbus was completed that same year. With the trolley came a surge of new development as businesses sprouted and more homes and mansions were built to the east of Marble Cliff. In 1906 this area incorporated as Grandview Heights.

By 1909 life was good in the growing communities, however, there were no churches in the area, so few people took part in religious activities. Anyone wanting to attend worship services had to ride the trolley into the city. Many parents were concerned about the lack of regular religious education for their children. During those long trolley rides to downtown churches, they agreed that a Sunday School in the heart of the villages would serve a decided need. A committee was formed to organize classes in the Harding School on Fairview Avenue.

*An Account of the History and Heritage of First Community Church* by T. William Taylor recounts one writer's description of that first session on April 18, 1909.

*"The morning of the Sunday School decided upon for the opening, found a number of anxious hearts wondering what success would attend the effort. At the appointed hour about forty children and adults assembled in the south room of the schoolhouse. The eager faces of the little ones, and the interested countenances of the older children, the hearty way they joined in the responsive service of song and prayer, and their attention to the lesson during the study period, proved conclusively that the effort would bear fruit."*

The experiment exceeded expectations. Soon all the classrooms were filled with both adults and children and some classes overflowed to porches

and yards of neighboring homes. A Methodist minister from downtown was invited to preach a few sermons. Conversations soon turned to the advisability of organizing a church. As the desire for establishing a church spread throughout the area, a community church was the ideal goal of these people. However, the prevailing opinion was that a church independent of one of the denominations could not be successful. Accordingly, they decided to conduct a canvass of the residents to determine their denominational preferences and willingness to join the church agreed upon by the majority. Postcards were mailed to each household asking these questions:

- 1) *Do you desire a church in this section?*
- 2) *What denomination is your first choice?*
- 3) *What denomination is your second choice?*
- 4) *If impossible to unite with either of these, will you cooperate with the one the majority agree upon?*
- 5) *Will you give your moral support to the church selected?*
- 6) *Will you give your financial support?*

Responses were received from 175 people representing 108 families who indicated twenty-one denominational backgrounds. All but two families indicated that when a church came, they wanted it to be a community church and only nine families would support a denominational church of any kind. It was the responses to the third question that eventually determined that a majority of nine favored the Congregational Church. Thus, from the very beginning, our congregational life has been based on the democratic process, and the wishes of the people that a church would serve were taken into consideration.

A committee met with ministers and lay members of the metropolitan Congregational churches on March 8, 1910, in the study of Dr. Washington Gladden, pastor of First Congregational Church. They discussed erecting a building that would be convenient to residents of both Grandview and Marble Cliff. A resolution was adopted to establish a church, and the Congregational Church Building Society promised to fund one-third of the cost of buying the land and constructing a building.

The following week on March 14, a meeting was called to organize the church. Committees on creed and doctrine, membership and finance were appointed. It was also decided to begin church ser-



vices at the school beginning on Sunday, March 20. Trustees were elected and asked to serve as the building committee. At a meeting on April 10, they took an option for \$1,000 on two lots at the corner of First Avenue and Lincoln Road (then called Paul Avenue).

The Ecclesiastical Council of Recognition of the Grandview Heights Congregational Church, ministers and lay delegates from the six Congregational churches in Columbus assembled at the schoolhouse on April 25, as eighty-seven persons united as members of the new church. Dr. Washington Gladden of First Congregational Church administered the rite of baptism. Two days later a charter was issued to the new church by the Secretary of State of Ohio and presently hangs in the upstairs hallway of the church on Cambridge Boulevard.

This is the covenant upon which our church was founded:

*"The covenant by which this Church exists as a distinct body, and which every member Accepts, is as follows: Acknowledging Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord, and accepting the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, and recognizing the privilege and duty of uniting ourselves for Christian fellowship, the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, the public worship of God and the advancement of His kingdom in the world, we do now, in the sight of God and invoking His blessing, solemnly covenant and agree with each other to associate ourselves to be a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as warranted by the Word of God. We agree to maintain the institutions of the gospel, to submit ourselves to the orderly administration of the affairs of the Church, and to walk together in brotherly love. And this we do depending upon the aid of our Heavenly Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for our salvation, and of Jesus Christ who hath redeemed us, and of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide."*

A church had been established by energetic, dedicated community leaders who saw a need, dreamed dreams, and worked to make them reality. And the church they established has been on the frontier of creativity since the very beginning.

#### REV. FRED L. BROWNLEE, PASTOR 1910 – 1914

Once Grandview Heights Congregational church had been chartered, it was time to find someone to lead the fledgling congregation. Reverend Mr. Paske served as a temporary pastor for a short time. In June Fred L. Brownlee, a student at Union Theological Seminary, returned to his home in Columbus for summer vacation. His friend, Dr. Washington Gladden, persuaded him to fill the pulpit of the new church during the summer. On September 3, the pastoral committee recommended hiring this enthusiastic young preacher as their first minister at a salary of \$1,200 per year. Fred Brownlee had planned to return to the seminary for his final year, but was encouraged by the trustees and Dr. Gladden to accept the call.

The Ecclesiastical Council and congregation met at the schoolhouse on October 4, for the "Council of Ordination of Fred L. Brownlee as a Minister of the Gospel and Installation as Pastor of the Grandview Heights Congregational Church." Following the service, the ladies served dinner to the council members at the home of Superintendent and Mrs. Bert Patridge.

The first task for the new minister was organizing and planning for construction of the building. The architectural firm of Howell & Thomas was hired. They were well-respected architects who also designed East High School, several churches and a large number of residences in the Columbus area. The bulletin cover for the ordination service depicts our earliest sketch of the proposed church. In November the building contract was signed with James T. Daymude to construct a church for the sum of \$9,772. Contracts were let shortly after the first of the year.

Laying of the cornerstone was scheduled for Easter Sunday 1911, but a week of rain caused a postponement. In those days sidewalks were dirt paths and First Avenue was the only paved street. Finally, April 23<sup>rd</sup> dawned bright and clear as the crowd gathered to watch Dr. Gladden pick up the trowel to add mortar to the block which became the cornerstone of what we now know as Lincoln Road Chapel. Among the items placed in the cornerstone were the church covenant listing the charter members, Fred Brownlee's ordination bulletin, prophecies for the future by Rev. Brownlee and other church leaders, a Bible, an enrollment list



from the first Sunday School, and a box of earth excavated by Brownlee.

W. E. Bovey, Pastor of North Congregational Church, wrote one of the prophecies placed in the cornerstone. Rev. Bovey predicted that in fifteen years *"the church will have been found entirely inadequate to the needs of a growing church and community. Her six hundred members, noted for their fidelity to high ideals, will call for an ideal, up-to-date church. This will mean the razing of the old and the emptying of the old cornerstone. Then they will remember the sainted Gladden. They will soon be in their new edifice, and with youth and vision renewed will face another twenty-five years."*

Another document from the cornerstone was "A Brief Prophecy of the Christian Church Twenty-five Years Hence" by Rev. Brownlee. In looking back on this document a century later, it is amazing how prophetic his vision of this church's future truly was. *"Music and a high moral form of drama will form no small part of the expressional entertainment. Suppers will be frequent where ties of friendship will tighten and men will learn to know each other 'in the breaking of bread.' Athletics and clubs for boys and girls in which the older people will take a cheerful part will function very largely. From the financial standpoint this school of moral and religious education will become an example of intelligent, honest, straightforward business methods. To this end the methods of raising money within the church will be put on a business basis. The general budget will be summed up at the beginning of each year and the members and friends of the church will readily respond to the best of their abilities. The missionary work will also be put on the same business-like basis. On Sunday the people will assemble for worship. To this end there will be a growing tendency toward a dignified ritualism and song will be of a high order of thought, poetry and sentiment. The music will be classic and inspiring. The prayers will be dignified and reverent. Into the sermon shall go prayer, truth, and the loving, humble, earnest personality of a true prophet of God whose heart yearns with the desire of fostering the friendship of God for man and man for God and his brother man."*

According to a letter from Lyman Markel, his father Arthur Markel headed the committee that bought the property, had the plans drawn and oversaw the construction. Janette Walcutt Gemeinhardt relates that family history indicates that the limestone used to build the church was provided by

her grandparents, Clifton and Jeannette Walcutt, from the quarry they owned on Dublin Road. The only cost to the church was the bill of consignment for transporting the stone to the building site. The church was dedicated on December 3, 1911.

Brownlee's views about a church's responsibility to its community were expressed in his first report to the congregation: *"I am convinced that a church maintained and executed as we mean to have this one will pay dividends in manly and womanly citizenship ... I am convinced that a church will meet a social need in this community. Every community needs at least one social unit where man may meet a man disrobed of all the artificialities of society ... I am convinced that a church will be a valuable intellectual asset to the educational problem of our village ... I am supremely convinced that we need an institution which will entwine about our hearts and consciences those cords which find their hold in an unselfish love, an abiding spirit in Jesus Christ ... These are my convictions which have been crystallizing in my mind and shall continue to be my strength."*

Fred Brownlee had received his A.B and M.A. degrees from the Ohio State University before entering Union Theological Seminary. In one of the first weddings in the new church, he married his childhood sweetheart, Ruth. Together they served the congregation and visited each family in the parish twice a year. While he taught the adults, she was superintendent of the children's church school.

On October 1, 1914, he left the church to complete his seminary studies. The congregation asked him to return after receiving his degree, but instead he accepted a position as assistant to Dr. Washington Gladden. Following pastorates in Ohio and New York, Rev. Brownlee became General Secretary of the American Missionary Association in 1920 and guided it for over 30 years. After retiring from the Association, he spent a year as an educational counselor and became Provost of Fisk University in September 1951. He was awarded honorary doctoral degrees by Oberlin, Howard and the Ohio State Universities.

Fred Brownlee was convinced that this church could meet the spiritual, educational and social needs for the community. His pastorate was very successful, especially with young people. It is a significant tribute to his example and ministry that on April 11, 1926, the youth groups of First Community Church were renamed "Brownlee Society"



and retained that title for many years. Brownlee Hall is named for him as well. This church was very special to him, and he returned through the years. In 1926 he spoke during dedication ceremonies for the new church, in 1943 he dedicated the Zell Chapel, on April 22, 1951, he preached as part of

the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary observance, and he participated in the installation service for Dr. Otis Maxfield in 1958. What a thrill it must have been for him to watch this church grow and mature through the years and to see that his prophecies for it had come to pass beyond conceivable expectations.



### **OLIVER C. WEIST: PASTOR 1915 – 1931**

Following the departure of Fred Brownlee, Rev. Dr. Newell L. Sims filled the pulpit for a few months. The man who succeeded him was destined to leave his mark not only on this church, but also on the community it served and the Protestant Church in general.

Rev. Oliver C. Weist was particularly well suited for the role he was to play in our history. His personal background had a bearing on what we, as a church, were to become. A broad denominational experience contributed to his strong belief in the concept of one church, which was non-denominational, to serve the entire community. At the age of twelve he made a profession of faith in an English Lutheran Church and then joined the church of his parents, which was United Evangelical. When that small country church was closed, they joined a Methodist Episcopal congregation in town. During his college days at the Ohio State University, he sang in Congregational and Presbyterian churches. For three years after graduation he traveled the Redpath Lyceum circuit as the baritone in a male quartet before deciding to enter the ministry.

While attending Union Theological Seminary, he became an assistant at a Presbyterian Church in New York City and was ordained by the New York Presbytery. He also received a master's degree from Columbia University. This diverse experience led him to become, in his own words, "a tremendously earnest Christian who cared little about denomination."

Oliver Weist accepted the call of Grandview Heights Congregational Church September 12, 1915, and began a ministry that was to last for sixteen years. Because of his own musical talents, he appreciated the importance of music in enhancing worship. One of the first needs that he identified was for a new pipe organ. He wrote, "The difference between now and when the organ is installed is the difference between a chapel and a church." In addition to the morning service that was informal and included Sunday School, hymns and a sermon, he instituted a formal afternoon vesper service to utilize a vested choir. One humorous note found in a worship bulletin stated, "The congregation will remain standing until the choir has passed out and sung the Amen." This was obviously a reference to the choir recessing out of the church, but pretty funny to anyone who has ever sung in a choir.

Rev. Weist was particularly anxious for the children to receive voice training in good music and believed that their participation in the choir with the adults was an effective way of teaching Christian service. For a number of years he directed the choir himself. Separate rehearsals were held for the children and adults who then sang together on Sunday. A 1921 report called attention to the small figure of \$500 in the annual budget for music. "This is due to the fact that all of the singers are giving their service voluntarily and the Director happens to be the Minister." In addition, he established and directed an orchestra and a men's chorus that were open to all in the community.

One of Oliver Weist's theories was that the church should originate and experiment with ideas and services for the community and then release them to whatever organization was willing to take over, allowing the church to go on to new endeavors.

Because there was no lending library in the growing village of Grandview, one was started at the church. An announcement in the worship bulletin of December 10, 1916, stated that the minister's library had received some new books donated by members as well as a consignment from the State Traveling Library. By the following month a library committee had been formed. They designated February 4, 1917, as Book Day when each member of the congregation was asked to donate one book. A total of 118 volumes were received on Book Day and each was signed by a donor and marked with a bookplate that had been designed for the church library by Ernest Zell. His wife, Ella, served as librarian and was on duty each Sunday after both the morning and afternoon services to accommodate borrowers. The collection grew with further gifts from members and consignments from the State Library. The church library served the entire area until 1923 when the Grandview Board of Education approved plans to put a levy on the ballot to start a public library in the high school until suitable quarters could be found.

In 1913 King and Ben Thompson had purchased the 1,000-acre Miller Farm on the north side of Fifth Avenue to build a well-designed residential community. Their plans were interrupted in 1916 when the National Guard commandeered the area for a training camp for 8,000 soldiers at the brink of World War I. Development resumed after that summer, and in 1918 the Village of Upper Arlington was incorporated. Thus, the three villages of



Grandview Heights, Marble Cliff and Upper Arlington became known as the Tri-Village area.

Field Day, possibly one of the most exciting and popular Tri-Village traditions, was originated by Grandview Heights Congregational Church in 1916. It was an idea proposed by the Teachers Council to replace the usual Sunday School Picnic with a whole "day of fun and frolic, carnival parade and continuous lemonade – an event that would involve the entire community."

The festivities began at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 17, with May pole and folk dancing. This was followed by field events of all kinds for the children. Notice of the dinner to be served at the church from 12:00 to 1:30 read: "You serve yourself. The cafeteria is especially designed for those who say they can't get enough to eat at a church dinner. Give the chef at your home one day's rest. Besides it is illegal to work on THE DAY, by order of the Mayor. The church will help you to keep from breaking the law."

The parade was led by the Hilltop Brass Band and began at 1:30 sharp. Groups of costumed men, women and children filed north on Lincoln Road to Third Avenue, Third to Wyandotte, then south on Wyandotte to First Avenue and east to Broadview where they countermarched back to the church amid much cheering from the sidelines. Rev. Weist dressed as a Keystone Cop. Approximately twenty cars, trucks and horse drawn vehicles of every description, adorned with bits of colored paper and bunting, were interspersed between the marchers. The village ice truck took an important place in the procession, as did the fire hose cart. First prize for the best decorated vehicle went to a Marble Cliff grocery truck.

A ball game between married and single men was next on the schedule, and after that came the field events for adults at the high school. Surely the most interesting contest must have been the 50 yard dash for men over 200 pounds! Next was horse-shoe pitching for "as long as we can see the peg." More entertainment was in store with a lawn fete at the church. The program read, "The Girls' Glee Club of the high school will sing and when they are not singing, the Boys' High School Orchestra will play. When both of these organizations are eating or resting, the Hilltop Brass Band will play." The first Field Day was declared a rousing success and became an annual tradition that drew spectators

from all over central Ohio to witness hundreds of villagers participating in this event that contributed so much to molding community spirit.

The announcement in the church bulletin for the second annual Field Day read, "This is like a circus – it gets bigger and better every year." And so it did. The Grandview mayor made Field Day a holiday by special proclamation. New events were added such as a baby contest, kite contests, and pushing cars down the Lincoln Road hill to see which would coast the farthest. A baseball game between Grandview and Arlington became a tradition in 1918 with Grandview the first winner. Events were planned so that everyone could be a participant. Residents of various streets united to design floats, present stunts, or don costumes as walking units in the parade. One year the men living on Wyandotte Road dressed as Indians, complete with face paint.

The patriotic fervor of the war years added another dimension when all residents were urged to decorate their homes and fly Old Glory. Floats carried uniformed Red Cross workers and displayed service flags. The Rainbow band and returning soldiers marched in the 1919 parade, which was covered by three Columbus newspapers. The crowning event of that day was a patriotic pageant, "On to Victory," in which the allied nations, war, peace, the Goddess of Liberty, and the spirit of Red Cross were represented.

Each year a queen was chosen to reign over the day's festivities. The age limits were nine to forty. For 25¢ one could place a name on the ballot and five cents guaranteed the privilege of casting 100 votes for your favorite candidate. The candidate selling the greatest number of tickets was selected queen. In 1923 Virginia Bullock Hughes sold 200,000 tickets to earn \$100 for the cause and take her place on the court. Margaret Markel Wheaton reported that she didn't remember being a candidate herself in 1924 and '25, but did vividly recall fainting from the heat inside her costume while she paraded as an ear of corn. She also remembered her sister Mary's reign as queen.

Parade spectators numbered 3,000 in 1920. A downtown newspaper reported that 1,500 people were part of the 1921 parade that was more than a mile and a half long. All events were filmed for later showing in Columbus theaters. This local tradition achieved national recognition when Pathe News



filmed the 1922 Field Day activities for screening across the United States and Canada.

Our church played an important role in the history of Field Day. Much of the leadership and planning came from the men and women in our congregation. The Women's Guild prepared and served the meals and Rev. Weist lent his enthusiasm to the entire undertaking and worked tirelessly for its success. Income from Field Day went to various causes within and beyond the villages. Proceeds during the early years helped to fund a day nursery for working mothers on the west side of Columbus as well as the Americanization program for immigrant families in Grandview who had come from Italy to work in the Marble Cliff Quarries. In later years the proceeds were used to provide playgrounds and pay the salary for a recreation director. The annual tradition of Field Day lasted only ten years, but there has been nothing quite like it since, and anyone who participated during its brief lifetime remembers those occasions with great fondness.

When moving picture theaters arrived on the Columbus entertainment scene, Tri-Village parents began to worry that their children might be exposed to films that were unsuitable. Broad Street Methodist Church was successfully showing movies, so a committee was formed to work out the details for a similar undertaking. The committee consisted of a representative from the Grandview Men's Brotherhood, the Scoutmaster, a Camp Fire Girls leader, two deacons, Rev. Weist, a member of the church board of trustees and several people from the community at large. Strict policies were established and no film would be shown unless it could be personally vouched for by at least one member of the committee. The projection equipment was provided by the Brotherhood and cost for installing a projection booth was estimated at \$150. The rental charge for feature films was \$15.00 plus a war tax of 75¢. At least one additional educational or comedy reel was rented for \$1.50. The operator, music and printing expense brought the total weekly program cost to about \$23.00. The price of admission was set at 15¢ and all profit over expenses went for charitable purposes. The first movie was shown at the church on Saturday, June 14, 1919, as the final event for Field Day. Subsequently, movies were shown every Saturday evening at 7:30. They proved so popular that a second showing was added and then a second night.

All those who have shared personal recollections of our days as a movie theater recalled what a treat it was and that it was truly a social event. That era ended when the Grandview Theater opened in the summer of 1926, but during a seven year period our church provided yet another service to the community. In the words of Oliver Weist when asked whether we should have movies in the church, "Many say 'No', but some said the same thing when the first organ was introduced into the church. The fact is that any power that can hold so many people as the movies do is a power that the church cannot afford to ignore."

Another example of how the church served the neighborhood was *The Community News*, a weekly newspaper first published on May 19, 1922, with Dr. Frank C. Furniss, a local dentist, as editor. A Community Press Club was organized to handle news and advertising. Within three months the paper was enlarged to metropolitan newspaper size. It was printed in the church basement, mainly by volunteers, and delivered by the children for an annual subscription rate of \$1.00. For six years the paper functioned under the direction of Oliver Weist. It constantly grew in size and influence, becoming an important factor in the life of the villages. In early 1928 Weist and church leaders decided that, as a ward of the church, the paper had reached its majority and the time had come for it to become independent. On June 11, 1928, after considering several applicants, the Board of Trustees voted to sell the paper that was to become *The Tri-Village News*, to Howard Rhoades and J. M. Mead, both experienced newspapermen who lived in the villages.

There was always a great demand for borrowing the church's folding chairs, so in order to serve the greatest number of people, borrowers were asked to notify the secretary of the number taken and to return them promptly. Use of the church for all sorts of community meetings was encouraged, but users were admonished to close any windows and doors before leaving, thus we became known as "The Church of the Open Door". Mabelle Cook, Rev. Weist's secretary, reminisced that at the end of each day she had to carry her typewriter to the Minister's Study because it was the only room in the church that was locked.

During the early years of our history, church services were discontinued for the entire month of August to afford the pastor time for vacation and



allow time for any redecorating or reorganizing. Even with the church closed, the library still remained open one morning a week. During August 1919 sunset services were held in Miller Park every Sunday evening. This was viewed as an excellent opportunity for everyone in the Tri-Villages to worship together in an informal fashion. The programs were largely musical, with a short talk and congregational singing. The speakers included William Oxley Thompson, President of OSU, and ministers from other churches. In 1920 a joint meeting of the Board of Deacons and Board of Women decided that the church should not be closed during the summer but that laymen from the congregation would fill the pulpit while the minister was on vacation.

A cornerstone of our church's philosophy was that it had been created to serve the needs of the community, whatever they might be, and to involve as many people as possible in doing so. Worship bulletins from 1917 included announcements of a Women's Guild concert series, lectures by prominent speakers brought in by the YMCA, first aid classes, and instruction in military drilling. Mr. Weist issued an invitation to boys under the age of twelve who were too young to be Boy Scouts, but wanted to do the same type of activities. He formed a club for them at the church and later took them camping at the Weist family farm. During the summer there were two weeks of camping at the farm for boys and two more for girls. In 1928 a plot of wooded land only three miles from the church was offered for use as a site for overnight hikes.

There was also an announcement of a community mixer. "It is the custom of this church to hold a reception in the fall for the new people who have come to our community. We are going to give an evening to simply getting acquainted on November 13th. No gilt-edge invitations will be sent, but whoever reads or hears about this is invited. Spread the news." The church held well-baby clinics, instruction on childcare, organized a kindergarten, and even opened a tearoom in the basement of the church during the summer of 1921. Because there were no public dining facilities in the area, there had long been a feeling that this was something else the church could do since we already had a complete kitchen that was only used once in a while. The Women's Guild took on this project and engaged the services of Miss Ruth White from the OSU Home Economics Department to manage

the tearoom and delicatessen service. Lunch was served from 12:00 to 1:00 and dinner from 5:30 till 7:00. It became such a popular place for dinner parties as well as regular customers, that frequently Miss White had to borrow dishes from Grace Irwin, a charter member of the church who lived next door, to accommodate the crowd.

### TRANSITION TO FIRST COMMUNITY CHURCH

The concept of our founders was to establish a church to serve the entire community. Of the 175 area residents who responded to the questions asked of them in 1909, twelve denominations were suggested with a majority of nine votes favoring the Congregational Church. Because of their high level of involvement in every facet of community life, the congregation felt that they were indeed the "community church." The report of the Board of Trustees at the 1915 annual meeting stated, "This church was organized for every person in this community. When you establish your residence here, we ask you to sever your ties elsewhere and join with us, your neighbors, for one good strong church; one where you can get acquainted, where you can attend easily, and where you feel you are part owner and for whose success you will work with all your heart." With the building of a Methodist church just a few blocks away later that year, Weist noted in his 1916 report that we could no longer claim to be "The Community Church." Yet the services offered to area residents were far more than worship alone.

There was a strong post-war feeling that Christians should get together and emphasize the things upon which they agreed rather than keep alive and magnify their differences. They had learned that they could do greater things when united than when separated. The war, with its emphasis on cooperation, community service, efficiency and economy, did much to show that differences could be submerged in the interest of a greater cause.

Oliver Weist's congregation came to the conclusion that one large church could accomplish more than several struggling parishes. Presbyterians had been meeting in the Arlington School, but had agreed to withdraw for one year in favor of a Community Church. On December 2, 1918, the Board of Trustees unanimously adopted a resolution to make overtures to Trinity M. E. Church for an amalgamation of the two churches and establishment of a



Community Church. The congregation enthusiastically received word of this resolution and unanimously adopted it on December 15. At a special meeting on January 24, 1919, it was announced that the Methodists had declined our proposal and substituted a complicated one of their own that was voted down. A motion was then offered on the Trustees' recommendation "that we establish a Community Church, undenominational in its relation, to take the place of the Grandview Heights Congregational Church." The vote in favor of this motion was unanimous.

A committee was appointed to make plans for the organization, creed and constitution for the new church. Many names were suggested, but the story goes that at the end of a lengthy meeting, Professor Wendell Paddock finally remarked that he had always wanted to belong to a "first church." All of his friends belonged to a first church, so why not become First Community Church, and so we did. On February 12, the recommendations of the committee were adopted, subject to ratification by the congregation. The Congregational Church called an Ecclesiastical Council on March 6, to review the action taken and to consider our request for dismissal from the Congregational fellowship. In a formal statement the council gave its blessing. "We say farewell with a realization that the loss of this church is not a loss to the Kingdom of God. We greet you as adventurers into a new and difficult type of ministry, one that has arisen as a challenge to the Christian church out of the deepening fellowship of American community life, which in the Great War became so heartening a spirit for a common task. Through all possibilities and promises of a new venture, we assure you of our continuous affection, and on sending you forth in your effort to serve the Kingdom, give you Godspeed."

Oliver Weist frequently wrote that nothing is so powerful as an idea whose day has come. That day arrived for the 350 members of this congregation when they met on February 19, 1919, to ratify the recommendations previously approved by the committee and to adopt the resolution to change the Articles of Incorporation so that thereafter the name of the church would be The First Community Church of Grandview.

When Rev. Weist returned here to deliver a sermon in 1943, he observed. "Looking back, it all looks easy now, but then we walked by faith, not by sight. We proposed giving up our divisions, our separa-

ting walls, proposing that God's children worship under the same roof. In order that this community might be different from older over-churched villages, these Christian people were willing to give up their denominations, forget their differences and magnify the things upon which they agreed, on the ground that what Christians have in common is far greater than that which divides. Did not Paul talk of the 'beloved community'? What were the churches at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Philippi? Not Methodist, not Baptist, or Presbyterian, but community churches – the people of the neighborhood gathered together in a blessed and visible Christian fellowship. If you want Scripture, the Community Church has it."

The new church faced criticism from other clergymen. Some said that it was not a real church, but a social club. Others accused it of not being spiritual. At first some churches actually refused to grant letters when their members chose to join the new congregation. The response to such criticism was, "Come and see. Let the work speak for itself."

By January of 1920 it was obvious that the community church concept was sound. During the first year 119 new members joined the fellowship that was made up of nearly twenty different denominations. The church was on a firm financial footing with all bills paid and a budget of \$10,000 oversubscribed. This made it possible to pay off the church debt of \$2,000. Another initial criticism had been that it would be impossible for a church without denomination to participate effectively in a missionary program. Yet benevolences amounted to nearly \$1,500 – more than a ten percent tithe – and two major projects were undertaken. A representative was sent to teach in a college in Constantinople, Turkey, and Americanization work was begun at home. It was a witness to the spirit of this church that rather than responding to the need for a public kindergarten for our own children, that we instead provided one for our neighbors in the Italian section where they could learn American customs and the English language.

The next educational effort was to provide a teacher of religious education in the Grandview and Arlington schools. The church paid for the teacher, supplies and a small fee to use the school. These classes were entirely elective and parents had to give written permission. They did not teach doctrine, but rather the things that Christians commonly accept. The philosophy behind this project was that



in an age of world war, it was more important for children to learn how to live than to learn how to make a living. Attendance was nearly 100 percent and this program continued into the 1940's.

There are three principal reasons behind the early success of First Community Church. First, this was a new, growing area populated mainly by young families. As Oliver Weist said, "It was almost unprecedented for a community to have a voice as to what kind of Churches would be in their midst, yet the wishes of the people were heard." Secondly the leadership, courage and vision exhibited by Rev. Weist galvanized not only the church, but also the entire community. Lastly, the congregation itself was vigorous and enthusiastic. Most of the men were in professional and business fields. An early Grandview mayor stated that when good men were needed in Columbus, they imported them from Grandview. With the encouragement and example of Rev. Weist, the members of First Community Church worked tirelessly as "doers of the word, not hearers only."

## OUR CREED

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Whenever any church will inscribe over its altar as the condition of membership, the Savior's statement of the summary of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and soul." Surely, that statement must have influenced the men who formulated the Creed of First Community Church. The lay committee that had been charged to write a creed was composed of John Pontius, Fred Nesbitt, and chaired by Arthur Markel. At an organization meeting held on February 12, 1919, Lincoln's birthday, the constitution and this creed were unanimously approved.

*I believe in the Living God; the Father of all mankind. I believe in Jesus Christ as He is revealed to me in the Scriptures, as the Lord and Savior of my life and of the world. I accept as the guiding principles of my life and conduct the teaching of Jesus who, when asked, "What is the greatest commandment" said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind. And the second is like unto this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*

Oliver Weist later noted that none of the things that had been stumbling blocks for Christian unity were even mentioned at that meeting. He said, "The best proof that Christians of twenty different denominations could agree on a statement of faith, is the fact that they did so." They accepted a short, working creed that clearly conveyed their sense of unity on basic Christian concepts upon which this new church could be built. In essence, our founders tried to express the faith of our church in simple language, intentionally avoiding theological terms, desiring rather to use the words of Jesus.

When people joined the church on confession of faith, they were asked whether they believed in the statements contained in the Creed. There was no other doctrine, discipline or covenant. Rev. Weist wrote that the church had no intention of antagonizing anyone's private beliefs. They might believe all they wanted to believe, but they must accept the Creed, at least. "The words and example of Jesus are set before you and you are expected to apply them to yourself. Is this letting down the bars of the church? We do not need to do that today. Jesus did it centuries ago when he gave us the only condition of discipleship, the invitation 'Follow me'."

For many years the Creed was used as the Call to Worship. It was a weekly reminder to put this statement of faith to work on a daily personal basis. Booklets on the faith and program of our church that were published during Dr. Roy Burkhardt's tenure as senior minister noted that it is not enough to state a faith or even to teach it. How one comes to a faith is equally important. What one does to act out that faith is the core of Jesus' teaching - losing one's self in service. "Our faith, as summed up in the Creed, embraces all of the experiences of life: our belief in God, in Jesus Christ, in man, in the sacraments, in the Bible, in life eternal, in the Church and in the family."

The cornerstone of First Community Church has been our Creed. It is the foundation upon which our beliefs rest and the example we are charged to follow. It is unique unto us. The early leaders of our church exhibited their faith in the future by writing a creed with simple words, but deep meaning. Oliver Weist said, "The place we give Jesus Christ makes this church not less, but more exacting on every member." Through the words spoken by Jesus himself, we are challenged to guide our lives and conduct by His teachings.



## BUILDING 1320 CAMBRIDGE

By 1922 the church on Lincoln Road was taxed beyond capacity. More than 700 members were vying for seats in a sanctuary with room for 250. Sunday School attendance averaged between 450 and 500 and classes were held in three locations. Preschool children met at 1179 Lincoln Road, first through fourth graders met at Blanche Field's dance studio on First Avenue, and the remaining classes overflowed the available space in the church. The time had come to erect a new building.

Three and a half acres of land facing Cambridge Boulevard were purchased. The plan printed in the Church Calendar that was suggested by the Board of Trustees very closely resembles the present building, though it included a covered passage running along the south end of the gymnasium that then turned to connect with the original church building on Lincoln Road. From the beginning, it was planned that the old church would be used for youth programs.

Appointment of the Building Committee was announced on May 21, 1922. Members included Dr. C. E. Silbernagel, Mrs. McKendree Smith, James Thomas, William Kern and Howard Dwight Smith. The church was very fortunate in having Mr. Smith as an enthusiastic and involved member of the congregation and of this committee, for his talents were generously given to the church through the years. He was a creative architect whose designs included Columbus City Hall, 25 central Ohio schools, and 50 buildings on the Ohio State University campus including the stadium, French Field House and St. John Arena.

All of the men of the church were invited to a dinner on October 2, to see and discuss plans for the new church that had been designed by architects Miller and Reeves. The women attended a similar dinner the following night. Miller and Reeves was a very prestigious firm whose other Columbus landmarks include Sessions Village, YWCA, State Auto Insurance, the Beggs Building and Winding Hollow Country Club. The plan that was unveiled was very ambitious indeed. It called for accommodations for 800 in the sanctuary plus 60 in the choir loft, dining room seating for 425 in the gymnasium/assembly room, and a capacity of 1,000 Sunday School pupils in 35 classes. The plan included a choir room, four offices, five club rooms, a ladies' parlor (Guild Room), three locker rooms, two shower rooms,

two bowling alleys, seven toilets, a caretaker's apartment, and an outdoor pulpit. It also called for a stage, dressing room facilities and balcony seating for the gymnasium/assembly room.

There were still fears that other churches would move into the area if First Community did not take steps to overcome their inadequate facilities. John Pontius predicted that if we did not spend the money on our building in the next few years, that the same amount would be spent by other denominations on their buildings. One of the prominent non-members who pledged his entire support and assistance for the project was Samuel P. Bush, grandfather and great-grandfather of two future Presidents of the United States.

A newspaper account of the meetings stated, "Full of enthusiasm for what promises to be one of the greatest forward steps the three villages ever have taken, several hundred members of the Community Church, together with a strong sprinkling of non-members who are giving their support, are all ready for the drive for the new church building."

The financial goal was \$200,000. Teams of influential residents of Grandview, Marble Cliff and Upper Arlington were selected to collect the money. Everyone residing in the three villages was invited to contribute and a period of three years was allotted for payment. One hundred business and professional men under the leadership of J. Elmer Jones and John Pontius took part in the eight-day campaign in which \$204,287 was pledged. Local papers highlighted the fact that the new church was to be financed wholly by the community it was to serve. Because the church had taken the lead in meeting the needs of the entire area, residents were eager to contribute to the building fund for "their" church. A report of the oversubscription was read at a jubilee held on the site of the new structure in late October 1922. The architects were instructed to complete specifications as quickly as possible.

Construction did not begin at once, however. Following pre-war inflation, a sharp decline in building costs occurred, particularly in 1921; but during late 1922 and early 1923 there was a steady and rapid increase in costs. Consequently, the Building Committee continued to arrange for financing and carefully prepare the bids while awaiting cost reductions. The committee chairman, Dr. C. E. Silbernagel, pointed out that no bids would be



taken or contracts let for construction until the anticipated decline took place.

By June 1, 1923, \$65,000 had actually been raised and the payment period was increased to five years, but more immediate cash was necessary. Tentative plans for the building were revised. Some of the features that had originally been suggested were eliminated as being not primarily essential to church work. Plans for the outdoor pulpit, belfry, steeple and bowling alley were dropped and the exterior lines were simplified. They wanted to erect a building that would best serve the growing needs of the church and would also be a credit to the community. The planners believed that they must succeed because our church and the work it accomplished had attracted considerable interest throughout the country and its progress was being observed by the church world.

Finally in early January 1924, the firm of Knox and Phillips was awarded the contract for the excavation and foundation work. Committee members William Kern of Columbus Builders' Supply Company and James Thomas, a civil engineer, were both highly pleased with the selection of this firm because of its extensive background in building other churches. They were charged to proceed at once with excavation for the cellars, walls and footings, and the stone, concrete and brickwork for the entire building up to the first floor line.

The sophomore and junior high school boys of Arthur Markel's Sunday School class were charged with making arrangements for the groundbreaking program. Led by this enthusiastic group of young men, seventy-five people braved sub-zero temperatures for the ceremonies at 3:30 p.m. on January 21, 1924. Representatives from all organizations of the church, Sunday School and affiliated community activities took part. Dr. W. A. King, Executive Secretary of the Columbus Council of Churches, delivered the address. He pointed out that a church cannot be measured by dimensions or enrollment, but by length and breadth of service. "The church is the only social organization which requires a definite spiritual standard for membership and is based upon brotherhood with Christ. It must be a place of signs and wonders, for it must be the foremost social agency which attempts and has accomplished the impossible. It must attempt the fullest measure of service to its community." The assembly then adjourned to the building site where Dr. King turned the first spadeful of earth at

a spot which had been thawed out by a fire that the builders had kept going since early afternoon.

The cornerstone was laid on May 18, 1924, amidst the dignity and pageantry of Masonic tradition. The occasion was made more meaningful because so many of the Masons who took part were members or builders of the church. Ten of the fifteen officers who assisted the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ohio were Tri-Village residents. Robert Taylor was a member of the cornerstone committee and also led the Knights Templar Commandery that escorted members of the Grand Lodge from the Community Temple on Grandview Avenue to the church. William Knox, of the Knox and Phillips Company, directed the Westgate Masonic Lodge Chorus. Rev. Dr. McIlyar Lichliter who delivered the address commented on the significance of such a ceremony. "As a Mason, I am happy to serve in this capacity. We are not to forget that the Freemasons of today are the spiritual descendants of the cathedral builders of Europe. We feel perfectly at home in such a service as this and a church swings into line with historic precedents when Masons are asked to give themselves to this task."

More than a thousand people gathered to witness the laying of the cornerstone for the new church. The ceremony was performed in accordance with ancient Masonic custom. The Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ohio was assisted by men of the village who were Past Masters of the Masonic Lodge in proving that the stone about to be set was level, signifying quality, and plumb, signifying rectitude of conduct. Then the square of virtue was applied and finally the copper casket of relics was deposited within the cavity of the stone. After the cornerstone had been pronounced true and trusty and anointed with the corn of nourishment and plenty, the wine of refreshment and the oil of joy and peace, the Grand Master tapped it three times into place.

Contents of the copper casket included a list of members; 1924 coins; photos of building fund campaign chart and ground breaking; newspapers containing articles about the church; copies of *The Community News*, pamphlets entitled "The Community Church," "History of the Church in the Community" and "The Belief in the Community Church"; sermons by Rev. Oliver Weist; church calendars for 1923; roster of the Community Masonic Lodge; Directory of the Women's Guild; names of the church officers and Building Committee; first



columns of *The Norwester*; 1924 annuals; lists of teachers and members of the Boards of Education of the Grandview and Upper Arlington schools; and a complete set of blueprints and drawings of the new church.

In his address the Rev. Dr. McIllyar Lichliter, minister of First Congregational Church, spoke of the relationship between the community church and community aspiration. "There was nothing casual in the choice of the name for this church. The church was not imposed upon the community but has grown up out of its heart. It seeks to become the corporate expression of community; it seeks to meet in all its varied activities the social, intellectual and spiritual needs of the community. It is not a federation of established denominations; it is not a union church formed by the welding together of older ecclesiastical bodies; it is not a new denomination. It is simply what its name implies – the First Community Church. It is an institution entirely unique, separate from and yet cooperative with all other churches which seek to uplift and to help. The Community Church is the Church of the Infinite Quest."

At a special meeting of the Board of Trustees on August 11, 1924, formal action was taken authorizing the Building Committee to award contracts for the erection of the superstructure of the church. Knox and Phillips received the contract for general construction for the sum of \$137,023. Once they had completed the foundation walls, they began the new work without even a contract. Mr. Phillips explained that he had faith in the formal award of the contract and wanted to take advantage of every day of good weather in order to get the roof over as much of the building as possible before cold weather set in. Huffman-Wolfe Company agreed to do the heating, ventilating and plumbing for \$24,782 and the final contract for electrical work and wiring went to Northern Electric Company for the sum of \$2,265.

The Finance Committee reported that each day brought in pledge payments, but the need for prompt payment was urgent in order to meet obligations to contractors as the work progressed. Endowment policies were issued on 100 men in the community, insuring their lives in favor of the church. The assignment of this amount of insurance to the company was one of the conditions connected with the temporary construction loan made by Missouri State Life Insurance Company.

The premiums for these policies were to be paid from the Building Fund, thus accumulating a paid up or cash surrender value to liquidate the construction indebtedness in five years, if the Building Fund pledges were paid with reasonable promptness.

A congregational meeting was held on September 14, 1924, to seek approval to borrow an additional \$100,000 for construction purposes. It was necessary to increase the church budget for 1925 by 40% to \$25,000 because of the need to include interest on temporary construction loans to finance the rapidly progressing new building.

Even though finances were becoming critical, God still provided help through generous donations. A letter from Lyman Markel related that his father personally requested a donation from Sylvio Gasparis, the Catholic owner of Marble Cliff Quarries, and he donated all of the stone for the church building. When the time came for the stone to be delivered and they were not at a place in the quarry to produce stone that our architect would accept, they went to a competing company and bought the stone and gave it to us.

An article in the October 24, 1924, issue of *The Community News* illustrates the on-going interest of the local citizenry in the progress of construction. "Many persons who have passed the site of the new church during the past two or three weeks while the exterior stone walls have been going up so rapidly have expressed considerable curiosity over the fact that the west wall of the church has been left completely open in the middle. Mr. Phillips of the general contracting firm explained that the large pieces of Indiana limestone that are to be used for the finish about the main entrance doorway have been delayed in delivery. In order to erect all the stone walls and have the building under roof before cold weather begins, the contractors have ordered much of the Indiana stone for trimming the doors and windows to be shipped here in blocks to be cut, trimmed and fitted by stone masons at the building instead of waiting for shipment of finished pieces from the quarries. Masons have made such progress in building the rough ashler walls, which are of Marble Cliff stone, that they had to leave rough openings for doors and windows. However a large shipment of stone arriving last week permitted a rapid closing of the walls."



In her recollections of the early days of the church, "As I Remember," Evelyn Silbernagel Weist wrote the following story about the carving over the entrance to the narthex. One morning the architect called Mr. Weist and said, "I will give you 15 minutes to give me an inscription to cut in the stone over the front door." Oliver replied, "I do not require 15 minutes. You may have it at once. 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' And I want it carved so large that it may be seen from a moving street car." But the architect said, "Oh, no, you don't. You want people to say, 'What the heck is that?' and then they will come closer to see and read." And so he had cut into the stone the verse that Oliver had asked for, but his own way in which it should be done."

The last regular worship service was held in the Lincoln Road church on Sunday, December 27, 1925. The Church Calendar stated, "We would all leave this building with heaviness of heart were it not for the fact that we are entering one beautiful for situation and more adequate to meet our needs."

The initial service in the new church was the annual Christmas pageant presented for the first time on Christmas Eve. One of the considerations in designing the new edifice was the ability to adapt it for such events. *The Community News* reported "Hundreds of shoes of all sizes clattered up the wide board walks leading to the church. About four times as many were in the new church as the number that can comfortably be seated in the church on Lincoln Road." The permanent pews had not yet arrived, but there were chairs enough for all. An added feature following the pageant was the singing of Maunder's cantata "Bethlehem" by the choir. Because of the larger choir loft, the director, Mrs. Evelyn Silbernagel, had increased the choir to seventy voices. The new Esty organ was in place with its two consoles – one in the sanctuary and another in the area near the gym so that it could be played from either location and heard all over the building.

The Dedication Committee chose to spread the special ceremonies over the entire month of January rather than to try to squeeze them all into one week. A reception was scheduled on New Year's Day to which all members and friends were invited. Events were planned for every Wednesday and Sunday. Many denominations were represented in the list of speakers and leaders, as the committee

felt that this was in keeping with the all-embracing church membership from 22 denominations.

On Sunday, January 3, 1926, the dedication services filled the church twice with nearly 1,000 people. Dr. John Ewers of the East End Christian Church in Pittsburg preached at the morning service. Oliver Weist's brother, Rev. Carl Weist of First Congregational Church in Mt. Vernon, New York, gave the dedicatory prayer and also delivered the sermon at the evening service when new members were also received. A special First Community hymn was written for the occasion by member Samuel R. Scholes.

The Sunday School rooms were dedicated on the following Sunday, with a Lutheran minister from Dayton preaching. Dedication of the organ by Henry Ditzel of Dayton took place at the afternoon vesper service and recital. The young people's rooms were dedicated that evening. John Pontius, who was the General Secretary of the YMCA, early church leader, and author of the First Community Church creed, was the principal speaker for that event.

Announcement was made at the annual meeting on January 13, that membership had reached 1500. Rev. Fred Brownlee was the speaker for the first Fellowship Night dinner held in the church before the annual meeting. Happy in his return to the church he had served in its infancy, he spoke in glowing praise and tribute of the church which was the fulfillment of so many dreams. "Only a few years ago it was growing bravely out of adolescence," he said. "Today this magnificent church stands on the threshold of maturity – ready now to undertake its great spiritual work with capacities for much larger service."

Dedication activities continued on January 17, with an organ recital by Miss Mabel Poppleton who had served as organist for six years. This preceded the first communion service in the new building. Other ministers from various denominations in neighboring states preached during the remaining Sundays of the month. One of the final events in the long list of special activities was a daylong program by the Women's Guild which emphasized their mission activities and featured the official presentation of the Guild Room and its dedication.

Mrs. Harriet Kirkpatrick who was a church member, noted artist (and grandmother of Sally Kriska),



commented on the building following her return from studying the great cathedrals of Europe. "The church has been so well planned and built that I felt as though it had stood there for ages. This achievement is the result of architectural style and the manner in which the material was made to meet the requirements. The features and the sturdy oak need no decorations. The walls are restful and time will add its decoration of light and shade. If the church is so satisfying in its present state of incompleteness, how much more so will it be when the pulpit, chancel furniture and pews are installed?"

### LINCOLN ROAD CHAPEL

The grand new edifice on Cambridge Boulevard was now dedicated and in use, but what about the old church – the Church of the Open Door on Lincoln Road?

Rev. Weist expressed the mingled emotions with which members of First Community Church left that building for the new church in his final sermon there on December 27, 1925. "Many cross this threshold with the same feeling toward this old church as folks have toward the old home place. Because it was home for so many years it has forever endeared itself to our hearts. It has a place that nothing else can quite fill. Here we have had many happy times. Here we have laughed and cried together. Here many of us have given our hearts to God. Here we have learned to pray. Here we have been baptized and many of us married."

Hundreds of meals had been served and fellowship shared. The names of sons who had gone off to serve their country in World War I were memorialized on a bronze tablet mounted near the Lincoln Road entrance. The dreams of the early organizers of this congregation had been fulfilled and expanded. It was time to move on to the new and larger "home," but this building would continue to serve in a very significant way. There was never any intention to refer to it as the "old" church. Continued use of the building was part of the original scheme. Several thousand dollars were saved because comparable space did not have to be provided in the new building. It was to be known as the Junior Church Chapel. Plans were underway to study and implement this new concept in youth worship.

One of Rev. Weist's concerns was cutting down the barriers in the dual system within the Protestant church – the Sunday school and the church. He believed that the two institutions were not coordinated, but that children and parents often had to choose between the two. Usually the children attended Sunday School rather than worship services and grew up knowing little about worship. He noted that Christian truths were being well-taught in the public schools by the religious education teachers whose salaries were paid by First Community Church. Therefore if families chose not to attend both church and Sunday school, the emphases for children should be on the side of worship as provided by the Junior Church. Thus, in addition to an excellent Sunday school, this program developed and expanded over the years. By the late 1930's a ministerial assistant was delivering a weekly sermon and supervising a program that included even a board of trustees for the Junior Church. The chapel provided a perfect setting with its organ and pews intact for youth worship. Still later the Church of the Block of Wood played an important role in shaping the spiritual life of our young people.

Eventually the pews were removed to provide more space. In 1978 the organ was dismantled and the entire building refurbished, brightened and given a new look. Better kitchen facilities in the basement made it useful for many groups. Homeless families were housed here for brief periods in the 1990's and beyond. Recently it has undergone another face lift to make it bright and cheerful for our current generation of children. It is also destined to be a repository for the church archives, a fitting function for this venerable edifice where our history began.

Stones and mortar alone do not make a church, but the lives that have been touched, the fellowship shared, the moments of inspiration witnessed within these walls give it a special place in our heritage. Here the fledgling congregation met in celebration of their new covenant as a church. Here the programs grew which impacted upon the entire community. Here the decision was made to risk breaking denominational ties to become First Community Church. Here the foundation was laid for our future. Here young people's lives have been molded for nearly a century. This building is part of our heritage, but the church's heritage lies in the young people who have passed through these doors.



## A TRIBUTE TO OLIVER WEIST

In June 1921 a reporter for a downtown newspaper observed, "When residents of the three small villages northwest of Columbus began several years ago to talk about establishing a 'community' church which would subscribe to no denominations, city residents put their tongues in their cheeks and smiled to themselves. 'It won't last,' they whispered. But they reckoned without Rev. Mr. Weist ... believing as he did that the church should work seven days a week for the salvation of mankind."

Indeed, he was a visionary who put his faith to work and proved that his ideas were valid in this place at that time in our history. The First Community Church News referred to him on the occasion of our fortieth anniversary as "the founder and father of our church in a very real sense." His former financial secretary, Louise Stoner, declared that he laid the base for all that we became. Mabelle Cook, who twice served as his secretary, observed that Oliver Weist started the things that made our church great. "Everything he emphasized during his time is still emphasized – good music, camping, youth work, reaching out into the community."

When Weist's name is mentioned to those who knew him, everyone comments on his beautiful bass voice. He sang the part of one of the three kings in the Christmas pageant and frequently performed solos during the worship services. At age seven, Jane Silbernagel, who later became his daughter-in-law, joined the choir that he directed and remembers being in awe of him. Elma Rains, another of his choristers, declared that she learned more about music from him than she ever did in school. "He had the ability to make us do what he wanted us to do. We were expected to be there and no nonsense was tolerated." She also remembered that the choir went to Chillicothe to sing at an army post during World War I.

Mabelle recalled that he belonged to a group of ministers who met regularly and prided themselves on their futuristic ideas. He was not only visionary, but also courageous. He pursued his dream of an undenominational church in spite of the fact that the Columbus ministerial association refused to recognize him. When he left the Congregational Church, he gave up all benefits. Jane Silbernagel reminisced about the great consternation when the decision was made to utilize the new medium of moving pictures. Some thought that movies were

sinful and others that they should not be shown in church. Yet the movies proved not only to be entertaining, but also useful as tools for religious education.

Rev. Weist wrote, "I know of no better definition for the church in any community that this, an organization to do what needs to be done. There are certain things that apply to every community and every church, and first and foremost is this, the church must serve. It is to minister and not to be ministered unto. She (the church) must cease all this twaddle about the people serving the church and begin to talk about the church serving the people. In short, the church herself must practice what it preaches."

The laboratory for his dreams was the church and the community his proving ground. He worked tirelessly to extend the mission of the church into all aspects of community life. He was successful in molding a proud community spirit in the villages through the Men's Brotherhood, the weekly newspaper, Field Day, both Boy and Girl Scout troops, the community orchestra and men's chorus. Our library served all the residents. Religious education was extended to the public schools with First Community paying the salary for the teachers. There were those who suggested building a fence along First Avenue to keep the Italian families segregated in the northern part of Grandview. His actions refuted that idea. He strongly supported the Americanization program of the Women's Guild which paid for the kindergarten teacher who taught the children English. Classes in cooking, sewing and gym were begun in the church for immigrant children. Mabelle Cook recalls how happy Rev. Weist was when asked to perform an Italian wedding. "The one thing he believed was that the church should serve the whole community no matter what religion."

Approachable, kind, hard working, honest, intelligent, wonderful at getting everyone to work – these are some of the terms used to describe Oliver Weist. His financial secretary said, "Everyone gave 150% of their effort for him because he expected it. They were as dedicated to the Community Church ideal as he was." In the style of those days, he was a dignified figure in his swallow-tailed coat. Mabelle Cook reminisced, "He treated everyone the same whether they were rich or not. He was involved in every facet of the church. He drove himself and others." She recalled his sense of humor and how



he liked to joke. His son, Robert, confirmed the story that his father had been christened Clyde Oliver, but when he decided to enter the ministry did not want his initials to spell COW, so he reversed the names. How fortunate for First Community Church that this dynamic, but very human man did not pursue his boyhood dream of becoming a locomotive engineer. According to Mabelle, his wife, Carolyn, also did much work for the community. "Even with three children, she was always there to cook and set the tables for the many dinners served at the church."

Dr. Charles Silbernagel and his wife, Evelyn, were good friends of the Weists. In her recollections, "As I Remember," Evelyn wrote, "I was singing in a quartet in a large city church, and when I had two weeks vacation, Mr. Weist came to my home and asked me to direct the choir, which he had been doing, but as the church grew he found the work too time consuming. I declined, as I loved quartet work, but he asked if I would come the next Sunday and give him a chance to get someone else. That I agreed to do and remained for twenty years." Jane Mylander Silbernagel, who later became her daughter-in-law, remembers her as a tough director who wanted as near perfection as possible. Jane said of Oliver Weist, "He was sweet, kind and generous, but he would fight for what he believed in. The new church was one of his greatest contributions. The planners didn't envision such a large one, but Oliver did. He fought hard for promises, pledges and money."

Oliver Weist and his congregation continued to pursue the community church ideal throughout his ministry. They were convinced that a single Protestant church unhampered by rival creeds and doctrines could serve the community as importantly as did a public school system. In 1927, they even obtained legal sanction against additional churches through the passage of a zoning restriction in Grandview Heights limiting the community to its existing churches, First Community and Trinity Methodist. The Roman Catholics got around the building restriction by holding services in a large house. The Lutheran church successfully sued to break the building restriction in 1934, and soon several denominations established churches.

In 1926 a national conference was held at our church for lay workers who were interested in the community church movement. Church families and their neighbors were all asked to provide lodg-

ing and breakfast for the several hundred people who attended. By 1930 the Reverend Mr. Weist was acknowledged as a leading authority in the community church movement. As the concept spread, Rev. Weist was asked to serve as president of the local group of Community Church Workers of the United States of America.

Evelyn Silbernagel, whose husband had been a member of the Building Committee, recalled the sleepless nights and months of anxiety during the Depression wondering where the money would come from for the huge debt on the new building. Several of the men had their lives insured for \$1,000 each as equity for the large loan. "We scrimped along and then one day word came that the bank was calling in the loan. Those were dark days indeed, but then word came that they had reconsidered and would not call the note. After all, what could they do with a church? They would let us pay it out as best we could."

Jane Silbernagel observed that money was possibly the root of Oliver Weist's decision to leave First Community. "We could not do some of the things he wanted to do, and so in November 1931 he resigned his pastorate and took a position in Evanston as Field Secretary of the Community Church Workers in America." Robert Weist vividly remembered the disaster that befell the family enroute to their new home. A train struck the moving van at a crossing in Lima, but the church came to their rescue when the Women's Guild collected household items to replace their losses. With the acceptance of this new challenge, Weist traveled throughout the mid-west merging and organizing the churches of small communities into single, community churches.

Later Rev. Weist served Congregational churches in Bronxville and Sherburne, N.Y. After his wife's death, he returned to Columbus and married Evelyn Silbernagel who was then a widow. On several occasions he preached again at First Community Church. No one who heard him at the church's 50th anniversary celebration will ever forget his eloquent admonition, "Go on, go on, go on." Oliver Weist died on July 19, 1961, but his legacy endures. When he came in 1915 there were 209 members. During his sixteen-year pastorate, 1,956 people joined the congregation. Upon his departure, twenty-six denominations were represented. More important than numbers were his dreams that became reality. He pioneered revolutionary



concepts in molding a non-denominational church that served everyone in the community. His vision and leadership laid the foundation upon which succeeding generations have built. Our debt of gratitude to him is great indeed.

#### RUFUS E. WICKER: PASTOR: 1931-1935

The pulpit committee appointed to select a successor to Oliver Weist was composed of nine representatives from the Board of Trustees, three from the Board of Deacons, two youth members from the Brownlee Societies, and one each from the Welfare Committee, Board of Women, Education Committee and Women's Guild. There were also six members-at-large. John Pontius presided as chairman. At a meeting held on November 30, 1931, each candidate was judged on his qualifications of spiritual quality, intellectuality, application and capacity, personality and leadership, appeal to youth, tolerance and sympathy, and vision for the church. In a field of six candidates, Rev. Rufus E. Wicker of Ortego, Florida, received a rating of 93%. A night letter was sent inviting him to return and fill the pulpit on Sunday, December 6, bringing Mrs. Wicker with him and arriving in time for a turkey dinner on Friday evening. Following the service on Sunday morning, the Board of trustees voted to accept the recommendation of the committee and extend a call to Rev. Wicker at the special congregational meeting that night.

As a young man Rufus Wicker had enlisted in the army as a private and rose rapidly to the rank of Captain. When he decided to enter the ministry, he applied for admission to the seminary at Vanderbilt University, but was denied because he did not have the prerequisite college courses. Finally, he secured provisional admission and the story is told that his scholastic record was such that the rules were changed so that one student could not receive all of the scholarships and prizes in a single academic year.

He came to First Community Church from the Methodist Episcopal Church South. He was soft spoken, but proved to be an excellent preacher. In the historical sketch Professor Wendell Paddock wrote for our 25th anniversary, he stated that Rev. Wicker "brought to the pulpit a simplicity and depth of thinking which is his particularly strong characteristic." He was scholarly and inspiring. Irene Brown remembered that he knew the con-

gregation well and was good at public relations. "His ministry was very personal and meaningful to my family. We remember him with grateful hearts. I don't think we ever had a minister with more integrity."

Numerous people spoke of his wonderful sense of humor. Howard Dwight Smith described him as being fearless, warm hearted and sympathetic. Mr. Smith continued, "I never found out much about Rufus Wicker from what he said about himself. It was what he said and what he did in his quiet sincere way that told his story in this community."

His integrity and business sense were essential in the dark days of the Depression. The church was in deep financial trouble with the huge debt for the new building. Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church wanted to buy our facilities. It became necessary to institute another bond issue to stay afloat. By the time of the annual meeting in May of 1934, it was reported that only 242 families out of the 460 families comprising church membership had been able to pay their pledges. Half ownership in a downtown building had been deeded to the church, but the taxes and interest payments exceeded the rent received. Finally when the lessee went into receivership, it was necessary to find a buyer for the building to relieve the church from the financial burden of this "gift."

Things looked grim indeed in early November 1934 as the church prepared for Loyalty Sunday on November 11, when pledges would be accepted for the following year. The Financial Statement dated November 1, 1934, indicated liabilities of \$149,199.40 and cash on hand of just \$711.28, leaving a debt of \$148,488.12. A brief overview of the \$17,000 annual church budget showed that \$7,200 must go to pay interest on bond debt, leaving the whole church program to run on a total outlay of \$9,800. The minister's salary was \$4,000; secretary and janitor \$1,200 each; organist, \$500; choir director \$400; leaving only \$2,500 for insurance, taxes, utilities and other needs. Within a few days we would be in default on our bond interest with the choice of paying it immediately or of turning over the church to our bondholders. However, the Finance Committee, chaired by Dr. Link Murphy, managed to come up with a plan that just might save the church. Five of the bondholders held a total of 74% of the outstanding bonds. These men issued a challenge to our church members and friends "that they would put



up, in escrow, one-quarter of their bondholdings, approximately \$22,000, and agree to retire these bonds both as to principal and interest, provided the church now raise \$20,000 in subscriptions payable over the next forty months to pay off the loan from Columbus Mutual Life Insurance Company." The goal set by the Finance Committee was \$50,000: \$6,000 cash to be raised by December 20, \$22,000 bondholders' challenge, and \$22,000 for note and interest.

The campaign slogan was "Every member CARING – Every member DARING – Every member PLEDGING – THE SUCCESS of this financial campaign will depend upon YOUR prayers – YOUR cooperation – YOUR support - Give them all fully!" The brochure prepared for this campaign contained some interesting material, including the following information that is even more interesting to contemplate in light of the cost of living in 2009. "Someone has figured that in America we spend our average dollar in this fashion:"

Amusement and luxuries	\$ .45
Living costs	.29
Savings	.11
Cost of crime	.08 1/4
Taxes	.04 1/2
Education	.01 1/2
Religion & benevolences	.00 3/4
	<u>\$1.00</u>

Dr. Murphy wrote, "This is not a campaign, but our opportunity to see that the physical needs of the First Community Church are maintained at the same high standards that we as members of this

Church and citizens of these communities have established for it. We must not fail! The sincerity of this Loyalty Program must fill the hearts of all who are working toward the goal that has been set for us this year. The challenge is ours to meet and I believe we will do it." And they did!

Rufus Wicker's pastorate drew to a close on November 30, 1934. Irene Brown thought perhaps he did not feel comfortable without a denominational tie. However, there is no doubt that the severe financial strain of the church's huge debt contributed to his decision to leave.

He served churches in Florida and Georgia after departing from Columbus, and returned to preach here on several occasions, including the church's Homecoming Service in 1951 for the 40th anniversary of Lincoln Road Chapel and the 25th anniversary of building 1320. While minister of a Methodist Church in Atlanta, he died unexpectedly on October 20, 1952.

His successor Roy Burkhart spoke of the keen insight and sensitivity to the social gospel that Rufus Wicker brought to his ministry. In January 1955 at the dedication of the Wicker Room, which was furnished and decorated by the Women's Guild in his memory, Dr. Burkhart gave the following tribute. "Rufus Wicker was my predecessor and after I came I was aware immediately of the clarity of his vision and vitality of his courage. He belonged to that rare elect of the ministry who had the courage to attempt to preach the whole gospel. This church never was lost from his affections. He loved it and was devoted to it."



The first part of the document discusses the importance of preserving our cultural heritage. It highlights the role of museums and historical sites in educating the public and fostering a sense of identity. The text emphasizes that heritage is not just about the past, but also about the present and the future. It calls for a collective effort to protect and promote our shared values and traditions.

In the second part, the author reflects on the challenges we face in maintaining our heritage in a rapidly changing world. The influence of globalization and modern technology is discussed, along with the need for innovative approaches to heritage management. The text suggests that by embracing change while staying true to our roots, we can ensure that our heritage remains a vibrant and relevant part of our lives.

The final section of the document offers practical advice for individuals and communities. It encourages people to engage with their heritage through various activities, such as visiting museums, participating in cultural events, and supporting local heritage organizations. The author concludes by expressing a hopeful outlook for the future, believing that with our collective efforts, we can create a more inclusive and culturally rich society.



**DR. ROY A. BURKHART: PASTOR 1935 – 1958**

The ministry of Roy Abram Burkhart began on January 13, 1935, and continued until the end of his earthly life on December 9, 1962. First Community was the only church he ever served as pastor. He retired as Senior Minister on May 1, 1958, becoming Minister Emeritus. Under this arrangement he continued on a full time basis for two more years and then part-time for the rest of his life.

His influence on First Community Church and on the thousands of lives he touched was profound, yet he had not entered the ministry to pastor a church, but rather as an aid to his youth work and counseling. According to an article in the August 11, 1947, issue of *Time* magazine, his father wanted Roy to be a fertilizer salesman, while his mother prayed that he would go into the ministry.

Roy Burkhart was born on August 28, 1895, near Newville, Pennsylvania. His parents were Pennsylvania Dutch farmers and devout Mennonites. Usually education for Mennonite children ended after the eighth grade, but Roy was encouraged by one of his teachers to go on to high school, and he became a teacher there immediately following graduation. Two years later he started classes at Shipensburg Normal School, graduating in 1917. He was then appointed principal of Blouserveville High School, his alma mater.

Religious problems for both families arose because the girl Roy wished to marry, Hazel Shover, belonged to the United Brethren Church. They proceeded with their wedding, however, on August 24, 1917, but he was immediately expelled from the Mennonite Church. Shortly before the wedding, he had enlisted in the army, which was another cause for expulsion. He served as an ambulance driver in France, and was discharged as a sergeant in July 1919.

Following his war service, he accepted a position as a high school principal. Two years later he became superintendent of South Middleton Vocational High School and took courses at Dickinson College. His daughter, Jeanne Selby, recalls that he organized the high school's first football team and frequently came home with grass stains on his only suit, which Hazel would then have to work all night to clean. In 1924 he joined the staff of the Pennsylvania State Sabbath School.

In his doctoral dissertation Rev. Gabe Campbell wrote of the next phase in Roy Burkhart's career. "Through this period of his life, he also had been active in the local Sunday School of the United Brethren Church which he and his family attended. His success in attracting students in the church school program and his popularity as a youth leader and speaker led to an offer to become national director of young people's work for the United Brethren Church. In 1925 he moved to Dayton, Ohio, to begin this new job. He was able to arrange to take courses from Otterbein College, while working full time, and received his A.B. degree in 1927. His work with the denomination brought him into contact with many national leaders and with members of the staff of the International Council of Religious Education. After finishing his academic program at Otterbein, Burkhart accepted an invitation to join the International Council as Associate Director of Youth Work."

During this time he also was taking courses at the University of Chicago leading to his Ph.D. in psychology. He did not attend seminary as a pastoral candidate, although he studied at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. He was ordained by the Congregational Christian Church to aid his youth work.

Five young people from First Community Church had attended a meeting where Roy Burkhart shared his belief that the shades of doctrine among Protestant churches were not important to spiritual growth. With the imminent departure of Rufus Wicker, they recommended Roy to the pulpit committee. They knew that members of the church had agreed that they wanted to pursue the community church ideal, as it had been fostered by Oliver Weist, and they believed that Roy Burkhart was the right man to do just that. Thirty candidates had been considered and twenty had been contacted, but the committee recommended calling Burkhart. At a congregational meeting held on January 6, 1935, a formal vote invited Dr. Roy Burkhart, along with his wife Hazel and children Bill and Jeanne, to come to First Community Church. "And so," stated Gabe Campbell, "Burkhart, who had decided to dedicate his life to working with youth, became the minister of First Community Church because of those very youth he sought to serve."

The installation service took place at a 4:00 p.m. vesper service on Sunday, January 13, 1935. It was an ecumenical occasion with the pastors of



First Congregational, Boulevard Presbyterian, and Grandview (now Trinity) Methodist Churches participating. The president of Otterbein College delivered the meditation and prayer.

When the Burkhart ministry began, the church was near bankruptcy with a debt of \$146,000. He later recounted that his success in revitalizing the congregation and increasing attendance came about through his efforts to attract a core of leaders among the youth of the community. If he could attract the leaders, other students would follow. Their enthusiasm, in turn, would draw their families to the church. In retrospect, this tactic worked exceptionally well. As we annually honor church members of forty or more years, it is obvious that the parents often joined the church a year or two later than their offspring.

Rosemary Weimer first met Roy Burkhart when he visited Columbus as a candidate for the pulpit. Three years later he asked her to leave college and work as his secretary. As she reminisced about the quarter of a century she spent in that capacity, Rosemary wrote about those early days. "Burkie, as we knew him, was pal as much as pastor. The church was small and seemed like a big family. He had spent twenty years working with young people and it was with young people that he started to rebuild the foundation of this, his first and only church. I saw him enlist the leaders in my high school senior class by deliberately seeking them out, spending time with them – at school, in bull sessions, in work projects, at camp, in creating dramatic worship services, in the first Bar None dances. As the young people were attracted by his ideas and idealism, their families began to return to the church. Tragedy served to draw us to him. On the first weekend camp at Indianola, near where Camp Akita would some day be built, a group left and went to Old Man's Cave. Later that Sunday afternoon word came that one of the boys had been killed in a fall from a high ledge. Out of the grief-stricken days that followed came the resolve that Buddy Evans' death should not have been in vain, and so was born the kind of dedication that was to continue to mark the youth groups of the future."

Camping was very important to the young people of the church and everyone worked to raise money to send representatives to Protestant leadership training camps. Most attended the Ohio Council of Religious Education camp at Indianola while others went to the International Council camps out

of state. A very special treat was in store for those who were invited to Burkie's cabin at Blackstone Lake in Canada. Joan Neese Jackson recalled the wild bus ride and good times there, but her cherished memories are the mood and atmosphere of Burkie's Bible sessions by the lake. He and Hazel also hosted planning sessions for the church staff and their families during summers at their Canadian home.

The impact that Burkie had upon the youth of First Community Church can be illustrated in the service of tribute they held to celebrate his fifth anniversary. Articles in the January 11, and January 25, 1940, editions of their newspaper, *Youth-Edit*, described "the feast of appreciation, a service of love for an advocate of God, the beloved leader of this church. A man who has given to all of us a magnificent friendship – the man we call Burkie. No one could have known that in five years this blue-eyed minister would more than double the membership of his church; that he would be the instrument through which two fine young men were inspired to enter the ministry; that he would help innumerable people, young and old, to find a more abundant way of life; that he would make of his church one of the most vital and progressive institutions in this city. As the young people of Burkie's church it is up to us to see that his good work has not been in vain. As testimony to his faith and inspiring labor, may we do all in our power to aid him in his struggle to help his people find the best way of life through the church."

From the congregation many expressed what he and the church had meant to them and each mentioned a fervent desire to pass on to others what they had gained. "Burkie and Mrs. Burkie came forward and the young people of the congregation gathered in the form of a cross around them. A chalice of silver, inscribed with the words, 'To Burkie, From the Young People, January 20, 1940' was placed in his hand, 'in grateful appreciation and as a token of our future loyalty and devotion to the work of this church.' The service of tribute was over, but the reality of Burkie's teaching and inspiration will never end for us." And so it has not; for many of those present that day went on to skillfully and faithfully nurture and serve their church, their communities and the world in positions of leadership and trust.

Roy Burkhart was already recognized as a prominent youth leader when he came to First Com-



munity Church and was much sought after as a speaker. Within a short time of his arrival he had addressed the Federated Churches of Franklin County, the Baptist men's retreat, county and regional state conventions of the Ohio Council of Religious Education, adult educational programs sponsored by the YWCA, and the League of Women Voters. He was one of the speakers for the noon Lenten series at Trinity Episcopal Church and was one of four pastors to occupy that pulpit during Holy Week services. He preached the sermon for Arlington's baccalaureate service and delivered the invocation and benediction for Grandview's commencement exercises.

By fall his involvement with radio had begun. He was the first speaker in a series of broadcasts over WBNS sponsored by the State Youth Council of the Ohio Council of Religious Education that featured youth leaders and young people. During the last week of December, he was in charge of a morning devotions program on WBNS.

Dr. Burkhart was a major contributor to an interdenominational Christian Youth Day on June 6, 1936. Sponsored by Methodist youth organizations in connection with the General Methodist Conference, it attracted young people from all over the state. More than 1,000 youth marched in a parade from Central High School to Memorial Hall after attending sessions of the conference. There the day's events were climaxed by presentation of a pageant written by Burkie, entitled "Christian Youth Building a New World" with over 100 participants.

"You've got to have a little showmanship if you would be a successful minister," commented Dr. Burkhart in a newspaper interview in 1936. The writer of the article noted that Burkie not only believed that theory, but also put it into practice. The interviewer also attributed that as the reason why nearly 500 new members had joined the church in such a short period of time and why First Community's youth groups were among the most active in the city of Columbus. He went on to observe that Dr. Burkhart's training in psychology was put to use in his ministerial work as he conducted interviews with 30 to 40 persons of all ages each week. "Conferences with young folks who seek his advice of their own accord are daily occurrences." Burkie believed that psychology provided an excellent medium for working among church members. By talking with them in their natural setting and then

working with them, he could help them without their knowing what he was doing.

He was able to accomplish much with his innovative methods. The Young People's Forum for post college age youth was established early in his ministry here. Its three-fold program was to act as a clearing committee to assist Burkie in all activities of church work, to launch an extensive social service program, and to meet each Sunday night to discuss subjects of vital interest and hear speakers of authority. One of the first ways in which they served was to telephone or personally visit church members to encourage them to attend church on Loyalty Sunday. They also helped with a project that led to the founding of Central Community House. Tri-Village merchants had agreed to donate \$2,000 for the establishment of a recreation center in the south central section of Columbus if some outside agency raised \$500 for the same purpose. The forum sponsored a revised version of Beggar's Night and took charge of nearly 100 children who donned their Halloween costumes and "begged" at area homes for contributions to the settlement house fund instead of candy or cookies for themselves. He also encouraged the young people to stage dramatic presentations to finance their camping fund.

An added insight into the character of this man can be gleaned from the newspaper quoted earlier as he recounted one of the reasons for his entry into the ministry. Throughout his young manhood he was torn between a desire to enter the business world and a yearning to go into the work of the church. It was an incident that occurred during World War I that decided his course. While serving in the Argonne drive, he became ill. A fellow soldier who was studying for the Methodist ministry obtained permission to replace him and was killed a short time later. "I've always felt an obligation to carry on in his place." Dr. Burkhart said. "I like to think that I've been living both of our lives.

#### THE BLOCK OF WOOD: A SPECIAL SYMBOL

"After Jesus was crucified, those who loved Him most and were closest to Him, came to ask about the place where the wood was secured for the cross. One among them who intimately knew wood as perhaps Jesus and his father knew it, searched far and wide and by some strange miracle found the stump of the tree from which the wood of the cross



was taken and it became a place of sacred meditation. The meaning of it was intensified by the fact that a new shoot was discovered to be growing up from the root of the tree . . . a little tree was coming up from the root of the old one. All were inspired by it because they said, as the spirit of Jesus lives on, so the tree has its own immortality. The place became increasingly sacred for worship and for those who knew Jesus intimately to meet to think of Him and remember Him, and to find the strength to bear the crosses that the troubled times had laid upon them. At 100 A.D., they did an unusual thing. They agreed to cut down that tree and made the wood into little crosses which were distributed among the churches, and the wood that could not be made into crosses was formed into blocks of wood which were to be given to young Christians. The meaning was shared with them with the understanding that they promised never to convey it to any other person by spoken or written word, but to live so that in due time others would know the meaning."

So goes the Legend of the Block of Wood, the symbol that has been the cornerstone of First Community Church's youth program since the early days of Dr. Burkhardt's ministry. Sally Dawson shared the story of how it all began. Because she had a background in psychology, Burkie would often discuss his ideas with her. "He felt that the junior high level was the best age for making kids understand reality. He wanted something permanent that they could earn, and so adopted the block of wood as the symbol. Each side of the block has a special meaning and personal message." Because of the part she played in listening and helping him to crystallize his thoughts, Burkie gave the very first block of wood to Sally. She was a member of the church's prayer chain and said that she used her block of wood as an adjunct to her prayers for others.

The block of wood was offered at the conclusion of a young person's period of study and preparation for church membership. When they joined the church they had the privilege of accepting or rejecting the block of wood. They accepted it only if they were willing to live so that others would come to know its meaning.

When he was asked what was so special about the block of wood, Burkie responded, "The wood itself has no mysterious meaning. It is not a jinx or a good luck piece. But it stands for some wonderful

ideas that help any boy or girl if they are used in ordinary life."

The wood itself has a story. Tom Jones, a senior member of a Columbus lumber company, brought back walnut from Wales which was cut into hundreds of half-inch cubes for the first blocks. Later one of the ministerial interns on the church staff took a parish in California and he sent back redwood to be made into blocks. In recent years the walnut has come from the Hocking Hills. Before his recent retirement from the church staff, former Akita Director Joel Hawley completed his last batch of 800 blocks. Over the years since he first took on the task of making them after he came to Camp Akita in 1964, Joel has made literally thousands of blocks from walnut trees at camp, which makes them even more special.

Some people have chosen to wear their blocks of wood on a chain, others to carry them, but always it serves as a reminder. Often if someone felt unfit to wear the emblem, it was given back to Burkie to keep until that person was ready to accept it again. During World War II many of the young men from our church believed that the block of wood they carried with them gave an extra measure of protection.

A youth program based on this symbol has been a part of First Community Church for nearly three-quarters of a century. Former Youth Minister Rev. Rick Sebastian described it beautifully in October 1979. "It weighs less than an ounce . . . a little piece of walnut from the Hocking Hills. Legend has it that the tree from which the cross of Christ was hewn was cut into small blocks and distributed to His followers. It is therefore a heavy symbol and is not to be taken lightly. Monetarily it is virtually worthless. Put on a chain and worn around the neck it makes an interesting pendant, though it sometimes gets in the way. Its significance depends upon the wearer, for it is a symbol. Like all true symbols, it points to a reality beyond itself . . . otherwise it becomes an idol or a charm. To pick up the Block is to accept God's freely given love and to commit oneself to a life of sharing that love with others. The Block of Wood is a symbol of one's identification with Jesus Christ and His particular way of life."



### ... AND THE CHURCH GROWS

During the Burkhardt era, the church grew tremendously in both membership and the scope of its ministry. Upon his arrival, membership stood at 1,410 with an annual budget of \$19,000. At his retirement in 1958, the budget was \$365,000 and there were 5,915 members. He shared the dream of Oliver Weist that one larger church with a bigger staff could do a better job of meeting the needs of the community than several small churches. Beginning in December 1939 two Sunday morning worship services were scheduled. Richard Fuller, one of the church's outstanding young men, became the associate pastor in June 1940. He assisted with the youth work, preaching, visiting, and during the summer had complete charge of the church. Also in 1940 Helen Osborn became Youth Director. Lowell Riley was hired in May 1941 to form a youth choir and a men's glee club. Within a short time he was named as choir director and organist. With the outbreak of World War II and the departure of many young men to the service, the youth choir became the Cloister Choir of high school girls. Lowell's talent and charisma attracted many new members to the choirs and membership in the Cloisters, who sang every Sunday at the early service, reached 150. In 1942 Rev. Richard Norberg became associate pastor and soon was joined by Richard H. Bell as director of Christian education and minister to children. Richard Henry Bell was named as director of religious press and radio in 1945. Edward Rydman joined the staff as an assistant to Dr. Burkhardt in 1946 and later became minister of youth. By 1954 the position of chairman of the department of ministry was created. And so the staff grew to meet the needs of a growing membership.

Surely one of the red letter days in the life of our church was the mortgage burning ceremony on April 17, 1944. When Burkhardt came to First Community Church in 1935, the debt stood at \$146,000, but by 1940 was shrinking at the rate of \$15,000 a year and was completely retired just nine years after his arrival. In a dramatic evening service lay leaders John Ryder, early Grandview mayor; Dr. Link Murphy, and John Galbreath detailed the church's early history and financial struggle. Then after a hymn of thanksgiving, Ray Fenner, Jerry Montgomery and J. T. Edwards spoke of the future.

During the war, the church developed a program to maintain close contact with more than six hundred military and Red Cross personnel. Burkie

met with each one before they left town. Church bulletins and sermons were mailed to them each week along with a newsletter entitled "Beyond the Gates." The newsletter always included a note from Burkie and passed along news of where friends were stationed, what was going on at the church, and generally helped to keep them in touch with the church and with one another. There was a time when the church was sending out so much mail that it was using two tons of paper per month. The church also worked with parents and wives while their loved ones were gone. Whenever a serviceman came home, Burkie arranged a luncheon date or office appointment with them. The 1943 Annual Report noted that four weeks of his vacation plus four other weeks scattered throughout the year were devoted to traveling to visit our servicemen at their stations. One of our precious archives is a scrapbook of letters from our military personnel saying how much this correspondence and personal contact had meant to them.

Burkie's daughter, Jeanne Selby, provided a glimpse of the Burkhardt's family life. When Roy's father died, his mother came to live with them and remained for the rest of her life. She died while Jeanne was in high school. This was one part of the Mennonite tradition that had deep roots, so there was probably never a thought of doing otherwise. During her childhood, and especially during the years when her dad was in graduate school, Jeanne recalls that her mother worked, so Grandmother Burkhardt was there to care for Jeanne and her brother, Bill. She remembers her as a loving, but rather strong-willed woman, so sometimes it was not easy for Hazel with two women trying to run the same household. Being a farmer's wife, Grandmother had a green thumb and always had a garden. She loved flowers, and that love was memorialized in the two brass flower urns that adorn our altar each Sunday morning. They were a gift to the church from Mother Burkhardt's friends after her death. In looking back, Jeanne thinks that perhaps her mother did not receive enough appreciation for all that she did in support of her husband's total dedication to the church. She was always there in the background, attending Guild meetings, helping in the kitchen, standing beside Roy as he greeted parishioners after church, doing whatever needed to be done. She believes that he could not have accomplished all that he did without Hazel's loving support. His family was important to him and he knew that he had their support, and they knew he was happy working and helping others.



His children were involved in work at the church as well. During the early years of Jeanne's marriage to Paul Selby, she worked at the church as membership secretary from 1946 to 1950. She and Paul also frequently served as leaders for the Brownlee youth groups. Jeanne contracted polio in the fall of 1952 while pregnant with her youngest son. In later years Burkie said that one of the factors that led to his discovery of the Key of Acceptance, was watching Jeanne learn to crawl as a step in her recovery from polio.

According to his widow, Cathy Burkhart Nichols, Bill Burkhart was a member of the Army Service Training Program during the war, where he received his medical education. Bill graduated from medical school in 1945 and following discharge from military service, completed his medical internship in Cleveland. Cathy was the daughter of missionaries and had grown up in China where she graduated from high school in 1941. The Japanese occupied the area where her family lived, but she and her sister were able to make their way to a summer home near Hong Kong to await passage home. After being stranded in Shanghai and enduring a harrowing voyage back to the States, she lived with relatives in Washington while attending Swarthmore College. However, when her father died in China, while her parents were interned by the Japanese, her scholarship to Swarthmore was terminated, so Cathy then moved on to Columbus to live with another uncle and attend Ohio State. In Columbus, she met Jeanne Burkhart and soon became involved in activities at First Community Church where she worked part time on the staff, served as a camp counselor, and eventually met and married Bill Burkhart. The Burkhart legacy of service to First Community Church continued into the mid-1970's when their son, David, served as a counselor on the Akita staff.

### COUNSELING MINISTRY

Pastoral counseling was practiced at First Community Church from the time Roy Burkhart began his ministry here. After focusing on religious education for his master's degree at the University of Chicago, he specialized in sociology, psychology and religion for his doctoral studies and earned his doctorate in Clinical Psychology. Excerpts from an interview in the June 1952 issue of *Pastoral Psychology* are indicative of his strong belief in the relationship between religion and pastoral psychology.

"I don't see how anyone could study the life of Jesus and not be interested in psychology and counseling. The great changes that came over people through his ministry took place in his personal and small group contacts. He spoke to the multitudes but those who caught his spirit and were changed by him had either a personal or a very intimate relationship with him. For many people, insight only grows when they begin to talk and someone returns their feelings and thoughts. They only come to understand themselves as their feelings and thoughts are returned to them objectively by another person. When I came to First Community Church, I committed the church to a program of counseling and to a ministry of counseling, and the longer I am in the ministry, the more I am sure that real lives are changed in counseling situations and in small groups."

As knowledge of this aspect of his religious philosophy spread, many people in the community who felt a need to talk out their problems came to Dr. Burkhart. In the later years of his ministry, the reputation of the church as a place where anyone could go for help grew to the extent that he had to assign several staff members to this pastoral function. Finally in June 1957, he hired a counseling specialist, Robert Brees, who worked on a part-time basis. Within three months he became a full time member of the staff with the title Minister of Counseling and Group Therapy. His background included seven years as a clinical psychologist at Columbus State Hospital where he specialized in group therapy and research. Bob had previously conducted a class in role-playing for our staff. "Let's Communicate!" became the motto of the three role playing groups which formed that fall to provide training in interpersonal relationships. Bob specialized in the group approach to counseling, a guidance method that aims at helping people toward self-understanding and developing the ability to communicate more freely with others.

One of the concepts at the heart of Roy Burkhart's ministry was his philosophy that became known as the "full guidance ministry." In his doctoral dissertation Dr. Gabe Campbell wrote, "The full guidance ministry represented Burkhart's attempt to define a new ministry which incorporated his belief that a church should accept people 'where they are' and provide programs for every age and interest. He considered himself an educator and envisioned the church as a university for life. Religious education was one of the major emphases of his ministry. He



believed that all knowledge contributed to one's personal growth and awareness. In a sense, he viewed all of life as a process of religious education for he could not separate religion from life. This view permeates the entire full guidance ministry which remains his heritage to First Community Church. Burkhart sought for meaning in each event of life and attempted to teach others that lessons learned from living led to union with God." In his *Account of the History and Heritage of First Community Church*, Rev. T. William Taylor wrote, "The full guidance philosophy believes that a church has a responsibility to each person from birth across all seasons of life, for the church is the only institution that serves an individual throughout his lifetime. Moreover, it is the only institution that works with all the members of the family."

Roy Burkhart was dedicated to a person-centered ministry. He averaged thirty home calls weekly, scheduled four hours for counseling interviews every day, and made daily rounds of the hospitals. Often he would invite a young person to drive him on these visits, thus creating another opportunity for a personal contact. He knew the name of every adult and youth member of the church and most of the children as well. His success as a counselor was largely due to the fact that he was so well acquainted with the people of his parish. He went to great lengths not to neglect anyone and attempted to minister to all those who needed comfort. He accomplished this by writing notes, making phone calls, or by personal home or hospital visits. So many people have told stories of how at a time of illness or crisis in their own or a family member's life, they would look out the window to see Burkie approaching their house. Somehow, he always knew when he was needed. Such a ministry required a great expenditure of time and energy, yet he also found time to write eighteen books and numerous articles, and to lecture extensively across the country.

The program of the church sought to serve children and adults of all ages, the married and the single. The daily pre-school was begun in 1945 to provide creative play for young children and classes for their parents. Weekday classes supplemented Sunday School for elementary children. The junior high students took over Lincoln Road Chapel and ran their own Church of the Block of Wood. There were separate Brownlee Groups for each grade from eight through twelve, plus a very large and active college group. Cambridge Club for those be-

yond college age was the first singles group in the country. A chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous was formed, as well as the Village Little Theater. There were pre-marital classes and pre-natal classes, study groups and prayer groups. Dr. Burkhart believed that it was important in such a large church for each person to belong to a small group within the church. In 1952 he initiated the idea of Couples' Circles where ten couples could meet in homes and become part of a small, closely-knit unit. A birthday party for his mother was the beginning of the Sweetheart Luncheon for women in the church who were past 65. The Women's Guild and Men's Brotherhood offered other opportunities for fellowship. When a man in the congregation remarked that he would find it helpful to meet with a few other men for breakfast and a few words of prayer, Burkie started the Men's Breakfast in 1952 and 57 years later men are still gathering on Wednesday mornings for a light breakfast, prayer, singing, support and fellowship. There was indeed, something for everyone of every age.

When people are asked to describe Burkie, they nearly always mention his eyes, blue eyes that seemed to penetrate into your very soul. Physically, he was a commanding figure - over six feet tall, with broad shoulders and erect posture. His presence conveyed self-assurance, strength and security, yet he exuded an aura of quiet gentleness. He had a strong bond with young people that enabled him to draw them out so they expressed thoughts that were usually locked away from other adults. They felt comfortable with Burkie and instinctively knew that he understood them. They also knew that he accepted them as he sought to call out the very best in each person with whom he came in contact. He seemed to see the potential of what each person he encountered might become and he gradually drew that potential into being. As Otis Maxfield wrote after Burkie's death, "It was his genius to be powerful and able, and yet to let another person find his own uniqueness. I believe in so much that he believed in....because his beliefs became mine. Much of what he stood for has flowed into all of us."

An article by Hartzell Spence in the February 5, 1949 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* reported that First Community Church included 5,000 of the 15,000 residents of the Tri-Villages and 96 per cent of the high school students. "The church is beyond doubt the center of community life. Five Sunday morning services, three for adults and two



for youth, are required to accommodate the worshippers. Most preachers preach to congregations, but Roy Burkhart ministers to individuals. This is the core of First Community Church's success. Every member is a beloved individual whose physical, psychological and spiritual needs are looked out for. Care is taken that in a congregation so large, no one is forgotten 'We rub elbows with many people, but hearts with very few,' Burkhart says. He supercharges his ministry with friendship, surrounding his members with group associations at birth and following every step of their development." The article also noted that the schools, courts, police and social agencies worked hand in hand with Dr. Burkhart. All juvenile cases in the Tri-Villages were automatically paroled to him by the Franklin County Juvenile Court. Church members worked with the Court of Domestic Relations in guiding unmarried mothers and patching up broken homes. Through his efforts many troubled individuals received assistance until welfare agencies could be mobilized. His counseling ministry operated citywide with organizations and physicians. He encouraged lay workers to establish a church labor forum and a church management council that were credited with mitigating labor-management frictions throughout the city.

Such publicity, along with Burkhart's travels, lectures and pulpit exchanges with other churches, led to national recognition and prominence for First Community Church as well as for its philosophy and senior minister. In *The Christian Century's* 1950 poll of 100,000 ministers, First Community Church was selected as one of the twelve great churches in America. The special publication describing each of these churches stated: "First Community Church cannot be understood unless its central principle is made explicit. Its secret of success is this: Everything that is done here is designed to lead the person to an experience of God, in all His love, mercy and power, through Jesus Christ. It is in the personal life of prayer, in family devotions, in all sorts of group fellowships. Training in the life of prayer is the heart of this church. It is this conviction that has cemented former members of 36 denominations into the fellowship of First Community Church. Youngsters develop spiritual confidence and are encouraged to grow to their highest capacities and to develop the kind of life Jesus would approve and to build the kind of church Jesus wants it to be. Roy A. Burkhart is one of the most successful practitioners of the art of Christian counseling as a means of salvation in the American

ministry. It is his conception of the ministry that is being carried out in First Community Church. The church is doing a remarkable job of pioneering. Several of its methods are unorthodox today, although they may be commonly accepted tomorrow. A major reason for the success of this church is its sense of mission. Neither its ministers nor its people think of it as just another church. Instead they think of it as having a high Christian mission to its own people, to its community and city, and to American religious life."

With the increase in church membership and programs, the confines of 1320 Cambridge Boulevard were being outgrown just as we had outgrown the original church on Lincoln Road. When the building committee started planning for a new church in 1922, some thought that it would serve our needs for all time, while others doubted that the congregation would ever require so much space. However, the faith of the visionaries was verified. By the late 1940's membership had grown to 3,700, church school enrollment from 150 to 1,200, and young people's enrollment from 100 to 800. The congregation voted in 1945 to make a cash purchase of the house on First Avenue (where parking for the Trading Post now exists) and the corner property south of the church. The primary department was moved into the house, freeing the basement of Lincoln Road Chapel for an expanded nursery program. Later the house was used to accommodate the weekday nursery school and overflow activities throughout the week. Even the garage was utilized to provide extra classroom space.

The church was trying to provide ministry for 2,000 families with facilities built for 400 families. A new area for the choir that included rehearsal space was a must. There were five choirs, including more than 120 high school girls in the Cloister Choir, yet the choir room was barely large enough to hold their robes. The Guild Room was the only meeting room spacious enough to accommodate small wedding receptions, committee and board meetings, informal gatherings, and the Brownlee and college groups. On Sundays there was not adequate space for children or youth to meet for joint worship. The need for expansion was evident.

In 1947 a campaign to raise \$550,000 was launched to build an addition on the south end of the church building and to develop a camp on the Hocking Hills farm that had been given to Dr. Burkhart by John Galbreath. The proposed addi-



tion would include a social hall, kitchen, chapel, offices and classrooms. The plans that were unveiled also provided for remodeling Lincoln Road Chapel as well as some changes in the existing building at 1320. The gymnasium was to become two large rooms with an interesting configuration. The northern half was to be a parlor to be used for wedding receptions and meetings and as overflow seating for the sanctuary. The southern portion of the gym was to be raised so that it could serve as a stage to be viewed from the social hall in the new addition or from the parlor area that was later named the Weist Room. It could also provide more overflow seating. One plan that was not carried out included enlarging the balcony in the sanctuary and constructing a new balcony in the north transept. The old kitchen was to be transformed into a parlor and choir robing room. The room that had served as a stage when not partitioned off from the gym was also to become a parlor, what we now know as the Wicker Room.

Not all of the necessary funding was pledged, but Camp Akita was built and three rooms for children's work were created in the church. Extensive remodeling in the basement turned the area originally intended as a bowling alley into two church schoolrooms known as Youth Center North and South. At the Annual Meeting held in May 1950, the congregation voted to finish the plan that had been started two years before. This time a music room was to be included. The estimated costs were \$25,000 for the music room, \$40,000 for remodeling Lincoln Road Chapel, \$350,000 for new construction and \$45,000 for remodeling the present church building.

A worship service held at the Palace Theatre on October 1, 1950, kicked off an ambitious campaign to raise an additional \$300,000. This was the first time in Burkhardt's ministry that the entire congregation had the opportunity to worship together. Three choirs, all of the ushers, the 75 deacons, members of all boards and committees, and everyone who looked to First Community as their church were invited to be present on World Communion Day to face the challenge and opportunity of participating in this new venture in the life of the church. The first group to accept the challenge was the Women's Guild Board. They assumed the task of completely furnishing the new kitchen and set a four-year goal to reach their pledge of \$20,000. Howard Dwight Smith, William Welker and Kiehner Johnson served on the building committee. As

chairman, Mr. Johnson acted as liaison between the Board of Trustees, the architectural firm of Benham, Richards and Armstrong, and the contractor, H. W. Boyajohn & Associates. Ground was broken and construction was begun in mid-November. The cornerstone for the new wing was laid during the Annual Meeting on May 14, 1951. By early October the keystone over the chapel entrance was placed in position.

Features of the new building included five classrooms and the senior minister's study on the second floor. The new kitchen and Brownlee Hall were equipped to feed up to 400 persons. Pre-kindergarten and nursery rooms were designed to accommodate pre-school classes during the week and church school classes on Sunday. The Walter Whissen Memorial Library was established by a gift from his widow, Orpha, and the income from this memorial gift provided library books for many years. The Children's Chapel was designed as the place where children through the first six grades could come together for corporate worship. The 3/4 size pews could accommodate 150 children.

The symbolism of the stained glass windows in the chapel is described by Mary Miller in the booklet she compiled in 1979 on the symbols of First Community Church. "The windows depict the full-guidance philosophy of First Community Church from birth until death as follows: the Child; the Baptismal Font and the Rose; the Bible which has two bookmarks representing the Old and New Testaments; the Cross; the Block of Wood; the Keys to the Kingdom; the Bread and the Cup, elements of communion; the Tools of Work; the Open Doors; the Community and our ministry there; the World and our kinship with it; the Sunset of our days on earth. Several discrepancies exist between the symbols on the chancel cross and the symbols in the windows of the chapel. There are only five keys shown in the chapel instead of the seven on the cross. At the time the Children's Chapel was built, we only had four keys. Instinctively, we knew there would be more. The builder said, 'We'd better put in an extra key; you may think of another one.' And so you see five keys, four of them named - Prayer, Faith, Love, Acceptance, and one without a name. The open doors in the chapel window remind us that once we were called the Church of the Open Door. They symbolize openness toward all and the seven day search for a more abundant life. The concept of a Sunset, at a later date (when the chancel cross was designed) seemed inappro-



priate to our Christian Faith. For that reason, the end of the span of life as it is carved on the chancel cross reveals doors opening on the sunrise of a new day, eternal life. "

The service of dedication for the new building was held during the 11:00 service on December 7, 1952. Throughout the open house and reception, the children's choirs provided music in the chapel and the Cloister Choir sang from the new stage in Brownlee Hall.

#### ANOTHER SPECIAL SYMBOL: THE SEVEN KEYS

Prayer – Faith – Love – Acceptance –  
Commitment – Forgiveness – Healing

How did these seven keys to eternal life within become a unique and beloved symbol for First Community Church? Why are they carved on the wooden cross in our sanctuary? How did the study of these keys become an integral part of our youth program?

It is recorded in Matthew 16:19 that Jesus said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Roy Burkhart was intrigued by the mystery of these keys. On June 4, 1944, he preached the first of many sermons on this text. Jesus never revealed what the keys were, but in that sermon Burkie issued a challenge. "Let a central purpose of your life be to find them."

He later recounted that suddenly during a service of ordination, as he was pondering the question of the keys, the answer seemed to come to him that surely the master key was prayer. Jesus himself possessed this key and the disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray." It also seemed clearer to him at the same time that the second key was faith. In Burkie's words, "God is ever trying to reveal Himself to us and prayer is our response to Him in faith. As we come to God in faith, we are aware of His love. When we respond to that love, it overflows to other people. So love is the third key." As we use the master key of prayer, we grow to a more vital faith and we grow in love.

During the next few years, the meanings of more keys became evident. He described the fourth key of acceptance in these words, "As we come to God in love, we can accept ourselves as we are, others as they are, life as it is, and move on from there." It

means surrendering our will to God and seeking His will. It is taking things as they are and making the most of them. It is changing what can be changed and accepting with grace what cannot be changed. A central theme of his ministry had been that God accepts people where they are. This philosophy was rooted in his own childhood experience when his fifth grade teacher, Silas Orris, had intercepted a note Roy had written that contained "bad words." Expecting to be punished, he fearfully waited after school, but nothing happened. Near the end of eighth grade, when Silas Orris asked him to remain after school, he was sure that punishment would finally come. Instead, his teacher encouraged him to further his education by attending high school. As we have noted, that changed the course of his life. In later years he asked his former teacher about the note, but he had no memory of it whatsoever. Burkie often recounted this experience as an illustration of compassion and understanding - that he had been accepted where he was, with no conditions and no recollections of the "bad" things he felt he had done.

After completion of the Children's Chapel, someone at a retreat asked Burkie about the unnamed fifth key in the stained glass window. He replied that it must be commitment, giving ourselves to the will of the Lord saying, "Here is my life; take it and use it fully." Commitment means giving your daily work to God and dedicating it to glorify His holy name. It is giving your love and relationships to God and letting them bear witness of His love and grace.

The sixth key of forgiveness is the grace to forgive and be forgiven. It is the quiet determination to hold nothing against another, but to put others in God's care, refusing to hold spite, forgiving and loving all persons. Dr. Burkhart determined that the seventh key must surely be healing. "If we have searched and found the other keys, we can become instruments of God's peace and healing. We can become witnesses of the saving power of our Lord. We can become a channel of healing by which the power of God can flow to others." It is the key to the wholeness of life.

And finally, according to Roy Burkhart, there is the key ring symbolizing eternal life within. "These, then, are the seven keys to a creative and dedicated life. As we seek to possess and use, through the gift of our Lord, the seven keys, we know life that is eternal."



A very significant event in the Seven Keys story unfolded on Christmas Eve 1954. Dr. Burkhart had spent the day delivering Christmas roses, but had saved until last his visit to Marjorie Willock. Marge had been a first grade teacher when she was stricken with polio in September 1952. Now, at age 27, she was almost totally paralyzed and was confined to a respirator. She had wondered just what special gift she might give to Burkie and so her nurse had helped to make arrangements with a locksmith for a key ring with seven ordinary house keys, each engraved with a single word. As Burkie gave her the rose, Marge said, "I have a present for you, too." When he opened the small box she said, "You gave those keys to me because the Master had given them to you. No one will ever know what they have meant to me. Now I want to give a symbol of them back to you."

For once Roy Burkhart was nearly speechless. Then he said, "There is no gift you could have given me that I would treasure more. Tonight there will be four thousand people at the Christmas Eve service and I haven't been able to decide what I should say to them. You have settled that for me. I will offer them this key ring." And he took it into the pulpit and told about Marge and how she had found the strength to live, through the message of the keys. Then he described all seven of the keys and how the ideas for them had come to be formulated. On that night the keys became a tangible symbol for much of the faith of this church. The meaning of the various keys had come from experiences within our church family and also from study and searching with others. Dr. Burkhart described how groups all over the state with whom he had shared the keys met together on retreats and tried to figure out the meaning of a ring to hold the keys. Finally every group had reached the same conclusion, eternal life now.

The Biblical foundation for each of the seven keys can be found in these scriptural passages:

**Prayer** – "Men ought always to pray. . ." (Luke 18:1)

**Faith** – "And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matthew 21:22)

**Love** – "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God . . ." (1 John 4:7)

**Acceptance** – ". . . for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (Philippians 4:11)

**Commitment** – "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

**Forgiveness** – "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6:14)

**Healing** – "Thy faith hath made thee whole." (Luke 8:48)

A church member, Louise Freeland, designed the keys as a piece of jewelry. She explained, "I had heard Dr. Burkhart preach on the separate keys and then on them collectively. I felt a personal need for something tangible that I could hold on to – that exemplified the Christian way of life as described by the meaning and use of the seven keys." One Sunday while listening to the sermon, she drew a design on the back of an offering envelope and in the center of the ring added the words, "Eternal Life Within." A newspaper article quoted Louise, "I was motivated or inspired to design a piece of jewelry for my own personal need. Those who have seen mine have expressed a desire to have that something tangible – 'The Reminder.' It has filled a need for me, and I hope in sharing it with others, they, too, may know and experience the same significance and power to the secret of life the seven keys hold for me."

The jewelry design was patented and a corporation, 7 Keys, Inc. was formed to manufacture and distribute it. Marjorie, Mr. and Mrs. Freeland, and Roy Burkhart were the officers. The reminder pieces also went on sale at Lazarus and Argo & Lehne Jewelers in March 1956. The visible reminders of the keys were available as cuff links, necklaces, bracelets, key chains, tie clasps and pocket pieces. Marge and Louise consulted with each other several times a week on the project. A part of Marge's work was to send 500 letters to organizations that were interested in the keys, and she personally signed each one. Her letter stated, "During the months which have been spent in a respirator, I have had many great experiences. I have found that the seven keys have opened for me the door to a richer and fuller life. Since the symbol of the seven keys has had such great meaning to me and to many others, I hope that it will be helpful to you and your friends." Thus, the visible symbol of the seven keys to eternal life within came into being. The original keys given to Burkie by Marge are mounted on the wall at the south end of Heritage Hall at the church on Cambridge Boulevard.



The keys did not belong to First Community Church alone. They were discussed in groups all over the country. The ministers of a Chicago church preached on them for two years. Among those who had expressed the need for some kind of tangible reminder that would help to visualize the keys, were groups of industrialists in Pittsburg and Chagrin Falls.

For individuals and groups within the church, the keys became a guide in seeking spiritual awareness and personal growth. There had been both high school and college prayer cells for a number of years. Young people in these groups came to the sanctuary for a half hour of silence, meditation and prayer, then met for a simple supper before discussions with Burkie or one of the other ministers. The college prayer cell became known as "The Keys" in September 1956. It was a fellowship where young people sought to perfect their philosophy and to develop a working faith. Research groups for men, women, high school and college students concentrated on the master key of prayer in a quest to find the remaining keys.

A letter from Rev. Terry Smith states, "To give some content and local significance, we designed the Traveling Freshmen program which used the Seven Keys as their symbol of content and achievement." Dr. Gabe Campbell's doctoral dissertation notes that participants in the ninth grade confirmation class were awarded Seven Keys medallions when they joined the church. In a letter he further indicated that the Seven Keys Club, based on the symbol of the keys, met at Old First Avenue House and was started in 1964 during his tenure as Youth Minister. Later the study of the keys became a two-year program for ninth and tenth graders and at present it forms the basis for the sophomore youth program.

To honor Lowell Riley's 25 years of service as music director of the church, the Governing Board in 1967 commissioned him to write a major composition, but left the choice of subject matter up to him. It was not until the following year that he decided to write about the Seven Keys and to dedicate his effort to the memory of Dr. Burkhart. Before leaving on their vacation that summer, Lowell asked his wife, Beth, to provide some of her poems for each of the keys which might be suitable for setting to music. Then amidst the scenic splendor of the West, he wrote most of the music for *The Seven Keys Cantata*. Because there was no piano

available, Lowell never heard his composition until they stopped to visit a relative in Colorado who was a professional violinist. She was so impressed that she volunteered to come and play when the cantata was performed. The date chosen for the performance was December 8, 1968, with Rev. Richard Conrad leading the morning worship service. Since then, the choral setting of Dr. Burkhart's benediction has been heard in our sanctuary many times.

In a series of radio meditations broadcast on WTVN in 1972, Beth Riley described the keys and how they could be used in our daily lives. "It is a way to make our religion practical, usable, livable. The concept throws new light upon the great spiritual truths and makes them clear to us, perhaps as never before. Life has a way of forcing us to face up to the great spiritual values which we prefer to avoid, and against our wills sometimes, we learn to exercise faith, to use the key of acceptance, to practice forgiveness. But no one can do this for us. We must do it, each one for himself or herself. We must practice over and over again. We must do research to find our own answers, the old answers and new ones, too. We might want to add another key or two of our own, the result of our own exploring and discovering and growing. For life, and the eternal life within, is ever fluid, ever growing, ever expanding. As long as change has its roots deep in Truth, and is not merely change for the sake of change, it can only enlarge our spiritual understanding, and the joy of the kingdom within us."

Dr. Otis Maxfield preached a series of sermons on the keys in the fall of 1960. During the entire Epiphany season of 1976, Dr. Harold Englund preached on the keys. Dr. Richard Wing has also used them as sermon topics. The Lenten study series in 1994 were based on the seven keys. Various rooms at the North Campus building on Dublin Road are named after the keys, and the reminder medallions are once again available for purchase at the church through the Women's Guild.

#### THE LEGACY OF DR. ROY A. BURKHART

The ministries of Oliver Weist and Roy Burkhart have been particularly significant to the history of this church for two primary reasons. First, they were of long duration, 16 and 23 years respectively. Secondly, each initiated bold new directions



and programs for First Community Church, some of which were highly controversial when they were instigated.

The innovative methods that characterized Burkhart's ministry were first evidenced at the age of sixteen when he introduced new approaches to children's work as Sunday School superintendent in the Mennonite Church. His ideas were considered revolutionary by the staid congregation. Later as a high school principal, he organized the football team and school paper, formed a Hi-Y Club and wrote the ritual that is used nationwide. He also introduced student government which was not common practice at that time.

To meet the needs of First Community's rapidly growing congregation, it became necessary to enlarge the staff beyond an associate minister. Burkhart did not use traditional methods of recruiting church workers. He believed that it was more important to choose specialists from outside the seminaries for their professional skills, provided they were centered in a liberal Christian philosophy. Edward Rydman, who was YMCA Director in Florida at the time he joined the staff in 1946 wrote, "Staff members were chosen because of their training and experience in their professional fields outside the church. They were then encouraged to translate skills in their respective fields within the framework of the church. Their own theological positions could be enriched and enhanced by study and participation in the larger religious community." Thus, his own experience with young people was tapped when he became youth minister, as was Richard Bell's as an educator when he became director of Christian education and minister to children. Both were later ordained at First Community in 1952.

Rev. James Ray's doctoral dissertation noted ways in which Dr. Burkhart continued his experimental approach at First Community Church. "Examples include the Research Groups for men and women, his program of marriage counseling, the resourceful design in working with youth, including the Block of Wood and Bar None Dance. The organization of the International Council of Community Churches is a manifestation of that spirit. In the spring of 1952 another instance of this pioneering spirit was to be made manifest. Asked by U. S. Representative Walter Judd and others, he became the leader of a movement to channel non-government help to underdeveloped peoples at the village lev-

el. World Neighbors was organized and became a vital organization for world peace and welfare."

Burkie seemed to have an innate feeling for the talents hidden within people and he often inspired them to do things they hadn't even considered. It was as if he had no doubts that one could achieve his expectations. If he believed something was possible, then surely it was. Gabe Campbell wrote, "His faith in youth was inspiring to those young people whose lives he touched, and his confidence in their ability often encouraged them to take risks and accept challenges which they might otherwise have passed by. Burkhart was not an ivory tower theorist. He practiced his ideas ... to accept young people where they were and to encourage them to grow from that point." Burkie played a major role in Gabe's own entry into the ministry and Gabe was later a beloved youth minister on the church staff. Countless others from this church were nudged into God's service through Burkie's influence. He believed in the divine in everyone and could convince many persons to excel in ways they did not think possible. He brought out the best in people. *The Christian Herald* stated in its March 1945 issue, "He works on the theory that there is a great person inside you if you will only give him or her a chance."

In a paper presented at the Pacific School of Religion, Roy Burkhart shared his philosophy that a minister's work had two directions. The first was preaching, group guidance and personal ministry. The second was directing the growth of persons so that they might carry on a reciprocal ministry with each other, growing as they shared and finding freedom in creative relationships with one another and with God. He further described how his counseling ministry was carried out in sermons. He used preaching as a form of large group experience in which his listeners were led through a process of thinking, giving them a chance to share in the situation and set up alternatives to deal with it. Often individuals received the stimulus to face their own problems because they became caught up in the fellowship created by the sermon scenario. If a problem listeners viewed as very personal was so important that it was discussed in a sermon, they could then feel comfortable in seeking individual counseling if sufficient help was not provided in the sermon itself.



Dr. Burkhart relied on a committee who read his sermons in advance. They advised him as to whether or not a particular message touched them where they lived and whether the language was meaningful. This committee also kept him aware of various points of view in the congregation, which was particularly helpful when controversial subjects were discussed. His sermons also reflected a personal view that the church was a place where people could grow in faith, where teaching was done and leadership developed, and where the presence of God was practiced. Many sermons emphasized a "how to" approach: How to learn to pray – How to grow in creative human relations – How to grow into happy marriage – How to read the Bible. James Ray noted that his theological ideas were expressed in practical terms of daily life.

One of Roy Burkhart's strongest convictions was the importance of providing small group experiences for each member. These provided a loving, caring fellowship in times of crisis and joy, and a relationship that he characterized as the "true church." He believed that religion involved much more than Sunday worship or even the many programs that were offered by the church. Consequently, his ministry took him throughout the city and across the country. He met with downtown businessmen and worked with social agencies, courts, schools and all the healing professions. He played a role in founding Central Community House, organizing the Near Northside Neighborhood Council and building a black Methodist church. He was also a frequent visitor at OSU where he held discussions with students. Dr. George Norris has related how he was drawn to First Community Church through such campus contacts with Burkie. He worked diligently with other churches and played an important role in the community church movement, helping to found the National Council of Community Churches and then serving as its first president. He lectured at leading seminaries and committed a portion of his time to what he termed "outside work."

In his travels, Burkhart encountered some ministers who expressed a need for counseling and others who sought relevant ideas for leading their own congregations. Consequently, in 1952 First Community Church extended its ministry to aid other clergymen by starting an annual Ministers' Seminar during the week after Easter. Ministers came from across the U.S. and Canada for this dynamic event. The entire church staff was involved in offering

personal counseling or group therapy, and providing an overview of the full guidance program and philosophy of First Community Church. Evening speakers included some of the finest scholars and teachers from leading seminaries, plus outstanding theologians, physicians, psychiatrists and other resource leaders. For weeks before each seminar, members of the Board of Women were busy planning meals and making phone calls to recruit host families who would provide breakfast and lodging for seminar participants. The evening programs were open to everyone, so it was an invigorating and exciting time for the entire congregation.

During his years at First Community Church, probably no one experienced greater spiritual growth than Roy Burkhart himself, especially in the life of prayer. Through the philosophies expressed by Gerald Heard and Paul Brunton, he was introduced to a whole new dimension of prayer. First Community was often described as a church of "pray-ers," for there were research groups and prayer cells that actively sought to study approaches to prayer so that it would become a way of life. In *The Symphony of Prayer* Burkhart wrote that Heard gave him the idea of prayer as a symphony, but the interpretation of four movements was his own. "Prayer is a lifting of the heart to God. Prayer is a voicing of the self to God or listening to Him. It is conversation in words or thoughts, but strictly it is directed to God. The first movement of the symphony of prayer is the outward response to God's revealing; the second movement is silence. The third is the fellowship of worship and the fourth is action."

As Dr. Burkhart began to think of partial retirement, a committee was selected by the Board of Trustees and charged with the responsibility of finding his successor. The Board accepted the committee's recommendation of Dr. Otis A. Maxfield and presented the call to him in December 1957, which he accepted.

April 27, 1958, was designated as Roy Burkhart Day when he preached his last sermon as Senior Minister. All the couples whom he had married were invited to attend one of the services or the reception that evening. The Children's Chapel was renamed for him by the Board of Trustees as a "living and constant reminder of the great love that Dr. Burkhart has for the children of the parish and they for him." A monetary gift from approximately 3,000 individuals in the congregation was presented to Roy and Hazel with the stipulation that the gift was



personal and to be used on their mortgage and not be given away to the church or any of his projects. During his 23 year ministry, Burkie preached nearly 1,000 sermons; conducted 2,200 weddings, 2,550 baptisms, 500 services of memory; and had brought 5,500 new members into the church.

The agreement approved at a congregational meeting in December 1957 outlined his position as Minister Emeritus (Active). He remained as a member of the staff and served in an advisory capacity to Otis Maxfield on a mutually agreeable basis from May 1, 1958, until his 65th birthday on August 28, 1960, when he became Minister Emeritus. A portion of his time was spent in speaking and working beyond the church and he gave all honoraria outside of expenses back to the church.

In January 1960 Dr. Maxfield recognized Burkie's 25th anniversary at First Community. "When I think of the ideas that have been set in motion, the thousands of lives that have been touched, the way in which the face of Protestantism has been moved by the force of Roy Burkhart, I feel that it is a good thing for those of us who so often are concerned with the difficult things in life to pause and acknowledge our healthy respect for something so good. The striving of this one man ought to make us stop and have new appreciation for the worth and significance of the individual."

Many concepts initiated during Roy Burkhart's tenure continue to flourish, including Couples' Circles, Camp Akita, pre-school, Sweetheart Luncheon, Men's Breakfast, and personal counseling. The Block of Wood and Seven Keys are still the foundation of our youth program. Our involvement in public broadcasting has expanded beyond 1320 Cambridge through the magic of our own television broadcasting facilities and the miracle of the worldwide web.

His ministry reached far beyond the walls of First Community church, particularly in retirement. A July 1960 memo to the Board of Trustees outlined his work to date that year. He had organized a conference on growth of personality and a seminar on the full guidance church, lectured at seven seminaries, conducted intensive training seminars with ministers in five cities, met with executives and business leaders across the country, worked with ministers and troubled churches, and wrote several articles for publication. He worked tirelessly for his beloved congregation, the Church at large and the dream of world peace until his final illness. Many of his visions became reality during his lifetime, including First Community Village, which was under construction at the time of his death on December 9, 1962.

According to his long-time secretary, Rosemary Weimer, "In all the years I worked with him I was never able to determine just what it was that accounted for the tremendous influence his life would have on the people in these Tri-Villages and far beyond. The gratitude most often expressed in the hundreds of letters which came to him during the last eight weeks of his encounter with pancreatic cancer was gratitude for the gift of faith in God."

Roy Burkhart looked upon death as "graduation to the next dimension." Beth Riley eloquently wrote of his faith. "When he knew for certain that his own death was not far off, he asked that the Hallelujah Chorus be sung at his memorial service. His asking was an expression of the kind of anticipation with which he approached the spiritual journey ahead. And we who sang it . . . with unsteady voices . . . were celebrating with him his exciting entry into the larger life, the greater joy, the ongoing Eternal Life which was already so strong within him."



The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the plane was the humidity. It was a warm, sticky embrace that felt like a giant hand reaching for me. I had heard that the weather in the South was unbearable, but this was something else entirely. The air was thick with a sense of history, a feeling that I was about to witness something truly remarkable.

As I walked through the terminal, I noticed the way the people looked at me. There was a mix of curiosity and respect in their eyes. I felt like I was a guest in someone's home, and they were eager to show me the best of what they had to offer. The staff members were friendly and helpful, making me feel like I was part of the community from the moment I stepped off the plane.

The first thing I did was to go to the local market. It was a vibrant place filled with the sights and sounds of a bustling town. The vendors were shouting out their wares, and the air was filled with the scent of fresh produce. I bought some of the local specialties, and I was amazed at how delicious they were. It was a true taste of the South, and I knew that I was in for a great experience.

After a few days of exploring the city, I decided to visit the local historical sites. I started with the old plantation house, which was a beautiful example of Southern architecture. The grounds were well-maintained, and the house was a masterpiece of design. I was fascinated by the stories of the people who had lived there, and I was struck by the way they had managed to preserve their heritage.

Next, I went to the local museum. It was a treasure trove of information about the region's history and culture. The exhibits were well-curated and informative, and I learned a great deal about the lives of the people who had lived in the area. I was particularly interested in the exhibits that dealt with the early settlement of the region, and I was struck by the way the settlers had adapted to the new environment.

One of the most interesting things I learned was about the role of the church in the community. The church had been a central part of life since the first settlers arrived, and it had played a key role in the development of the region. I was struck by the way the church had helped to build a sense of community and shared purpose among the people of the South.

As I continued my journey, I was struck by the way the people of the South had managed to preserve their heritage while embracing the modern world. They had a deep respect for their history, and they were proud to share it with others. I was struck by the way they had managed to find a balance between tradition and progress, and I was inspired by their commitment to their heritage.

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**DR. OTIS A. MAXFIELD: PASTOR 1958-1966**

A number of significant events transpired in early 1957 that had far reaching implications for the future of First Community Church. The congregation approved purchasing land at Reed and McCoy Roads, plans for a retirement home were discussed, and Roy Burkhart met Otis Maxfield. At the May Annual Meeting Dr. Burkhart made several proposals including recommendations that the Board of Trustees study uses for the new property, authorize a search for his successor and investigate the wisdom of becoming related to a denomination while remaining community in nature. Individually, each of these items was significant.

Three years previously a group of young laymen had suggested that the church consider investing in property. A Land Procurement Committee was appointed to study and survey the idea. When an opportunity arose to purchase 20.4 acres on the northeast corner of the intersection of Reed and McCoy Roads, the committee recommended this action to the Board. On April 17, a special congregational meeting was called to consider the proposal. Several possible uses of the site were discussed, including someday building a retirement home or a branch church. Assurance that the \$30,000 down payment was available in accumulated savings helped to secure a positive vote to complete the purchase. This plot of land and what to do with it claimed First Community's attention for twenty years until it was finally sold in 1976.

On March 1, 1959, during ceremonies at Veterans Memorial Auditorium marking the 50th anniversary of the church, Dr. Burkhart recalled how he had first met Otis Maxfield. "Two years ago this March, I was in Springfield, Massachusetts, and all day long men talked to me about a minister who ministered to persons, and I said, 'I've got to see him.' The minute I met him, I knew he was the one to lead all of us into the new destiny of this great church. I was sure of it. Never once doubted it; haven't since. And so Otis Maxfield, minister to persons, is your minister and mine."

It took very little time from that initial meeting until Burkie arranged a way for Dr. Maxfield and the First Community congregation to become acquainted. Dr. Viktor Frankl, noted psychiatrist, Holocaust survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, was coming from Vienna, Austria, as the featured speaker for the annual Ministers' Seminar

in late April. He was scheduled to give two of the evening open lectures while Dr. Maxfield delivered the third and also shared in leadership of the seminar. The following Sunday Maxfield preached at First Community Church while Dr. Burkhart occupied his pulpit at Old First Church of Christ in Springfield.

Otis Maxfield was not yet 30 years old when he and Roy Burkhart met. Yet he had already earned impressive credentials and was considered to be one of the most outstanding young ministers in the Congregational Christian Church. He was born on June 3, 1927, in Malden, Massachusetts, where he received his public education. His B.Sc. in Education was awarded by Boston University in 1947. While still an undergraduate, he accepted the pastorate of the Lake Shore Park Methodist Church in Lynn, Massachusetts, where he met and married Virginia Reed, a member of his church. In 1950 he earned a degree in Sacred Theology from Boston University School of Theology. The following year he enrolled in the Boston Graduate School and received his Ph.D. in Pastoral Psychology in June 1957. He served as minister of Wilmington Methodist Church for six years before being called to historic Old First Church in 1954. In addition he held the post of Supervising Chaplain in the Council of Churches of Greater Springfield from 1953 to 1954 and later served as president. He was also a visiting lecturer in Pastoral Psychology at Andover Newton Seminary, on the Board of Directors of the Institute of Pastoral Care, and preached regularly on radio and television programs sponsored by the Massachusetts Council of Churches.

During the summer of 1957, the Long Range Personnel Committee was bringing glowing accounts of Maxfield's work in Springfield back to Columbus. Arthur Shepard reported for the committee that members of his church were certain that he was one of the country's exceptional young ministers. When Dr. Burkhart asked the Dean of Harvard's School of Theology for the name of the most outstanding Congregational minister in the nation, Maxfield was recommended without hesitation. After Dr. Burkhart proposed that a search committee begin looking for his successor, several ministers were added to the preaching schedule for the coming year, including Maxfield who was slated for September 1. He was also invited to participate in the program for college camp at Akita that weekend.



In the October 16th issue of the *First Community Church NEWS* Dr. Burkhart shared his hope that a new Senior Minister could arrive by May 1st of the following year. A letter was sent to the congregation announcing a special meeting to vote on calling a new senior minister. If the candidate won approval, Dr. Burkhart would remain full time as Minister Emeritus (Active) from May 1, 1958, until he reached retirement age on August 28, 1960, after which he would spend part of his time at the church. Constitutional amendments were necessary to effect this change. By unanimous action, a call was issued to Dr. Otis A. Maxfield on December 1, 1957, and he preached his acceptance sermon the following Sunday.

Upon becoming the second senior minister in First Community Church's history (that title was created by constitutional revision at the previous Annual Meeting), Maxfield wrote about the factors contributing to the significance of First Community Church. "One factor is found in its emphasis on people rather than things. I sense a deep concern for the inner self and the development of that self in such a way that it can increasingly become a channel rather than an object of God's love. Another characteristic that attracts me is the concern that religious values be related to the whole of life. This brings physical and emotional factors as well as spiritual values into the life of the church. It requires a ministry that considers all of life."

Since Dr. Maxfield would move into the Senior Minister's Study, a new office was prepared for Burkie on the third floor. An unused attic storage room was converted into attractive, comfortable office space.

Otis Maxfield's official installation was scheduled to follow the Annual Meeting on Monday, May 19. Among the distinguished clergymen who participated in the service were three former ministers of First Community Church. Rev. Fred Brownlee gave the invocation, Rev. Oliver Weist led the choral prayer, and Rev. Richard Porter represented the Council of Community Churches as minister-at-large. Dr. Burkhart delivered the installation sermon. By mid-June Otis and Ginny were settling into their new home with daughters Lois, Susan and Janet.

In his first sermon as Senior Minister, Otis reminisced about his New England childhood. Family vacations spent on a small island off the coast of

Maine instilled a love of the sea, and sailing became his favorite hobby. As his ministry began here, some of his thoughts and dreams were shared via the church newspaper. "I'm coming to First Community because I feel impelled to come. . . . because of the experimental nature. Religion is seen as a dynamic force rather than a static force. The quality rather than the quantity of staff and lay people has also drawn me here. I am almost overwhelmed by the creative leadership potential. No one person really directs the church; the senior minister is a sort of catalyst that helps unlock the tremendous energy and creative will of the people who make up this congregation. The past is a guidepost to point the way in shaping our future. As we face the rising sun of a new day, may it be bright with promise even as the past has been rich with meaning."

Maxfield's training in education and pastoral psychology was similar to Dr. Burkhart's, yet his experiences within the Methodist and Congregational Christian traditions contributed to his more traditional viewpoint regarding the nature of the church, theology and worship. He did not seek changes that would conflict with the heritage and freedom of First Community, but he asked for examination and reappraisal of some of the things the church was doing. For example, upon joining the church a person had been allowed to accept the Great Commandment as their creed for membership or write their own. Dr. Maxfield believed that a self-authored creed should be approved by the Board of Trustees. Lay committees were created to study his requests and in most cases made adjustments or corrections. There was more congregational participation in Sunday worship, more theological and biblical content in sermons, and a trend was established toward a modern orthodoxy and away from a Unitarian philosophy.

At his suggestion a Constitution Committee was appointed to revise the constitution in order to improve coordination and communication between the many committees and the large number of specialists who made up the church staff. The committee finally recommended that all boards, committees, and groups be assigned to one of five commissions that would coordinate all activities and report monthly to the Governing Board, formerly known as the Board of Trustees. The five Commissions were Commission on Worship and Pastoral Services, Commission on Outreach and Missions, Commission on Christian Education,



Commission on Fellowship, and Commission on Finance and Administration. The new constitution was accepted by congregational vote at the Annual Meeting in May 1961. The reorganization led to closer harmony between various departments of the church and better communication with the congregation helping to better inform members of programs and committee actions.

Building on the foundations laid by Roy Burkhart and his predecessors, Otis Maxfield developed even more avenues for ministering to our large congregation. His emphasis was on the "power of the personal." He observed that the power and uniqueness of a single individual stood at the core of this effort. "There is a ministry to groups but the individual alone holds the key to the kingdom. Ours is to help him on his pilgrimage. Our ministry, lay and professional, is to call other persons into being." Maxfield's preaching, teaching and ministry were designed to equip and strengthen individuals to carry their religious witness into every aspect of life seven days a week. Seminars were held at downtown locations for businessmen who were challenged to witness through their work. Daytime research groups for women likewise challenged them to realize their individual power in God's world.

Under this philosophy, the staff was greatly enlarged. By the time Dr. Maxfield concluded his tenure at First Community Church, a staff of seventeen diversified specialists was in place with each having an area of responsibility within the total framework. Each was recognized as a minister of the congregation rather than as an assistant to the senior minister. He wanted every person on the staff to spend a large segment of time as a resource leader for the various groups and programs.

Among the many talented and creative ministers who joined the church staff during that period were Donald Smith and Arthur Sanders. Otis, Don and Art had been colleagues in a hospital visitation program in Springfield, Massachusetts. When Burkie had initially met Otis and decided that he was the man who should succeed him as senior minister of First Community Church, Art had been present during their conversations. In fact, Burkie also invited Art to join the staff, but he was content at the church he had been pastoring for the past fourteen years. In June 1957 Otis, Don and Art had traveled to Omaha, Nebraska, as representatives of the Springfield Conference of the Congrega-

tional Church at the historic merger that created the United Church of Christ. After Otis had settled into his new position in Columbus, Art received a phone call from Burkie, asking what he was waiting for. Art again declined, but his wife told him she thought he should go, so it was really Vi's advice that influenced his decision to come to First Community in June 1959. How blessed we have been by their presence in the ensuing years.

Members of the congregation ministered to one another in a variety of small groups. Some prayer groups studied the life of prayer and others shared in intercessory prayer to uphold persons who were ill, grieving or needing support. Many groups utilized role playing and others were analytic groups. In addition to the youth program, many teens were involved in the Five-Fifteen program where fifteen young people met together for five weeks to study how they could make a meaningful witness to the world. Out of this evolved "Youth-On-Call," a select group that was on call 24 hours a day to be of service however they were needed. Personal ministry was also accomplished through the fellowship and sharing which occurred in Couples Circles, the Women's Guild Groups and the Men's Breakfast.

One of the major events during Otis Maxfield's ministry was the celebration of First Community Church's fiftieth anniversary. Commemoration of the Golden Anniversary began with the opening of the Lincoln Road Chapel cornerstone on February 18. A sizable crowd of church members witnessed the opening and heard a brief address by Dr. Maxfield. Honored guests at the occasion included the mayors of Grandview, Marble Cliff and Arlington as well as twelve charter members of Grandview Heights Congregational Church. Relics of the original founding ceremonies were examined and then placed in a glass display case in Brownlee Hall. At the end of the ceremony everyone was invited into the church for refreshments and to sign a new commemorative scroll that would be resealed with the original contents after March 8. The climax of the anniversary festivities was a dramatic worship service held on March 1, 1959, at Veterans Memorial Auditorium. The *First Community Church News* of March 8 reported attendance figures of 3,300 adults, 600 elementary age children and 450 pre-schoolers. The Chancel and Women's Choirs joined with the men of the Tri-Village Men's Glee Club to provide majestic music accompanied by tape recordings of our church organ. The children, "our congregation of tomorrow," sang as they



streamed down the aisles from all directions. A dramatic pageant written and directed by Mike Vance, "Fifty Years and Tomorrow," presented the story of our past, present and future. Dr. Oliver Weist spoke, admonishing the congregation to "Go on, go on." Dr. Burkhart recalled his early days at the church, and Dr. Maxfield looked into the challenge of our future. The service concluded as the entire congregation stood at the first strains of the Hallelujah Chorus.

As a strong adherent of the Gestalt philosophy that includes content and experience as necessary requirements for learning, Otis Maxfield deepened the theological and Biblical content of church programming. Prayer research groups were generally more involved on the content level than on the sharing level. They operated on a quarterly basis with a curriculum comparable to that of a university or seminary. Some studied the Bible while others studied current affairs, understanding teenagers, or the writing of various theologians. The professional staff leader served as a resource person with members of the group sharing in the presentation each week. Many men who were attracted to the serious study involved in the Layman's Academy gave a portion of their time to lay preaching, teaching and witnessing.

These were all forms of what Dr. Maxfield referred to as "ministry outside the pew." In addition to the experiences that were available each day of the week at church, noontime courses were offered to businessmen at convenient downtown locations. Akita was also vital for its impact on people of all ages, but especially for our young people. In a 1963 questionnaire administered to high school students, 80% said that their most profound religious experience came at camp and not sitting in a pew.

Since the earliest days of our history, First Community Church has maintained an active involvement in overseas mission work. Not only have we financially supported various projects, but also many of our members have served as teachers, missionaries or technical advisors in countries around the world. In 1951 Roy Burkhart worked with Dr. John L. Peters to found World Neighbors and served as its first president. The goal of this international development organization is to provide training and leadership to people living in remote and fragile regions of Asia, Africa and South America so that they can acquire the skills necessary to solve prob-

lems in their areas. Rather than give away food or material aid, World Neighbors focuses on education and teaching people how to work for change and find lasting solutions for whatever challenges face them. With its people-to-people impact, World Neighbors claimed much of our attention and energy. First Community provided both financial resources and leadership, with our people filling numerous key positions in the organization. More than half a century later, World Neighbors continues to be a project supported by our church, and our members continue to serve on its board.

### PROJECT AMIGOS

Perhaps the most unique and ambitious mission project undertaken by our church, however, was Project Amigos. The Board of Missions had been discussing what we could be doing overseas. Dr. Maxfield wanted some kind of project that would spark real interest and appeal. In early 1962 he met with Dr. Mervin Smith, a member of the board who was chairman of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at The Ohio State University. Dr. Smith had served as U.S. agricultural attaché in Mexico and had also assisted many Latin American countries as a consultant in agricultural development. His many contacts in those countries included individuals he had met on previous visits and foreign students he had advised during their studies at Ohio State. From this meeting and an exchange of letters between the two men while Dr. Smith was helping the Dominican Republic to develop land reform and an agrarian program, came the seeds that ultimately produced the imaginative concept Maxfield sought.

The minutes of the Board of Missions meeting of March 13, 1962, reported Dr. Maxfield's interest in a big project, such as the proposal that First Community Church dispatch a group to South America for the purpose of studying the problems of poor and needy countries. "Unstable government and poor economic conditions in combination mean trouble, not only to the country internally, but also in its relations among a community of nations. This is our concern. What can we, the concerned at FCC, do to help our myopic friends see beyond Franklin County - for our own good? 'Do something dramatic, even with a bit of glamour,' says Dr. Maxfield. 'Get a number of persons involved in a big project. Spell it out, so that even the conservatives are challenged. This involvement should



be big enough to match our local church growth and doings.' Maxfield continued, 'Not \$50,000, but \$200,000 could become our annual mission budget.'"

All board members present heartily agreed to the idea of a visit to Latin America. Mervin Smith was appointed to chair a committee to study and report on the possibility of a First Community sponsored study trip. At the April meeting a recommendation to the Governing Board was approved to explore a Latin American program suitable for continual development over a long period of time. This was to include study by various groups in the church beginning in September, and the special Thanksgiving and Christmas offerings were to be used to further the project and finance an exploratory trip by a small group, including Otis and Mervin, early the next year.

It is interesting to note the concerns about the region that were expressed in those minutes. "The critical need for understanding the so-called Latin culture in our international relations and in view of Christianity's confrontation by Communism, challenge us to action. We are painfully aware of our lack of understanding of the temperament and appreciation for the vicious circle of socio-economic circumstances that hamper our western hemisphere brothers south of the border."

Another man added to the survey party was Mervin Smith's friend, Herbert Evans, who was the president of People's Broadcasting Company and had been president of the International YMCA the previous year. He, too, had many South American contacts. On August 25, they embarked from Miami for a ten day whirlwind tour that included stops in Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico. The purpose of the trip was to contact the national governments and agencies of several states, to inspect recommended locations for later visits by a larger group, and to talk over the possibilities of setting up an orientation center in a promising area that could become an exchange center between our church and Latin American visitors.

Dr. Maxfield reported the findings of the survey team's Latin American visit to the congregation in sermons on two consecutive Sundays following their return. Minutes of the Board of Missions meeting of September 25, 1962, reflected the view that what the church needed was not so much a

project of giving money for a specific cause, but to select strategic long-term program areas. Suggested approaches were exchanges of youth and businessmen, financial aid to projects already in progress by established missionaries, seminars at the church using Latin American authorities, and a study visit to enable as many of our people as possible to get a first hand look and understanding view of conditions there.

The study group finally submitted several recommendations in February 1963. The first to be implemented was providing a jeep for Dr. Donald Dilworth, a medical missionary who worked among the Indian tribes of Ecuador. Funds were allocated for social work and student activities in Brasilia, and for support of teachers and advancement of young leadership in Ecuador and Peru. A program of student exchanges with the American School in Quito, Ecuador, founded by that country's former president, Dr. Galo Plaza, was explored. The Governing Board approved an eighteen-day tour of four countries as the next step in the people-to-people mission program. The itinerary planned by Mervin Smith and Herb Evans included meetings with high government officials, business executives and other Latin American leaders, as well as U.S. State Department personnel. In addition to gaining knowledge of the area, participants were asked to make a personal appraisal of the initial projects undertaken by the church.

By early May the State Department granted approval for the Project Amigos trip and congratulated the church for its initiative in endeavoring to create a higher degree of mutual understanding between countries. The Brazilian and Peruvian Ambassadors to the U.S. also conveyed their hearty approval.

Otis wrote in the May 12, 1963, issue of the *First Community Church News*, "Our effort in South America is not designed to be competitive but to be complimentary. For us to simply give money is not enough. We must involve our people and ourselves. Project Amigos is the beginning of what we hope will be a long-term relationship in which men, women and young people of our church will be tangibly involved in one of the most explosive and potentially significant areas of our world."

On June 14 thirty-one members of the First Community delegation, including two youth representatives, embarked for Miami on airplanes provid-



ed by Nationwide Insurance and John Galbreath. Their journey took them some 12,000 miles via plane, ferry boat, railroad and auto through squalid slums, historic cities, tropical jungles and the high Andes Mountains. The group participated in nearly 60 seminars and many hours of informal conversations. They met with presidents and peasants.

The July issue of the church newspaper quoted Dr. Maxfield, "One of the preliminary feelings the group expressed is that an investment in education of Latin Americans is perhaps one of the best long-term investments we can make. Another preliminary conviction that we have come home with is to support bonafide going concerns which are attempting to help Latin Americans help themselves, rather than to do something for them."

The impact of the Project Amigos trip to Latin America was felt throughout the church almost immediately. There was an increased interest in missions, particularly in this area. The Mission Board expanded the budget for Latin American projects from \$4,000 to \$18,000 and the entire mission budget was increased by \$30,000. Our ambassadors were eager to share their experiences, observations and photos, and were much in demand as speakers for various groups within the congregation. Key Ecuadorian contacts also visited the church during the fall of 1963. Nicholas Patinos, National Secretary of the YMCA, spoke from the pulpit in September and Dr. and Mrs. Donald Dilworth came in October to report on the progress of their medical mission work since our group's visit in June. By the end of the year the Mission Board began discussing the desirability of encouraging a second Project Amigos tour during the following summer.

Genuine people-to-people exchanges ensued in several forms. Perhaps the most notable was instigated by tour participant Donald Newkirk. As executive director of the Ohio Hospital Association, he recognized the great needs of the Hospital San Juan de Dios during his stay in Quito. Founded by the Spanish in 1565, it is the oldest hospital in service in the Western Hemisphere. Don Newkirk was haunted by thoughts of how welcome even our outmoded equipment would be in South America. He contacted Washington and learned that an airlift was permissible if arrangements could be made with the Ecuadorian government. His plea for surplus items of medical equipment and supplies that were not being used but were too good to discard went to all Ohio hospitals and to every hospital

association in the country. In addition to all the materials that were donated, time and facilities for shipping were also volunteered. After two months of organizational work, U. S. Air Force planes delivered 21,000 pounds of medical supplies.

During the summer of 1964, using his accumulated vacation time, Don Newkirk returned to Quito for several weeks to lend his administrative skills and management expertise to San Juan de Dios and other hospitals. He also distributed eleven sets of Spanish translations of books pertaining to hospital administration. Meanwhile, twelve more FCC ambassadors under the guidance of Herb Evans departed for Project Amigos II, and three young people worked with Dr. Dilworth at his medical mission in the Andes for several weeks.

The *First Community Church NEWS* of November 8, 1964, noted that several convictions had emerged regarding our mission support. The first was the belief that our energy and funds should be committed to places where what we do and give makes a difference and is not just a token gift. Secondly, we ought to support and significantly encourage people who are and will be leaders of their society and who can help as many people as possible. Finally, our funds and efforts should be concentrated rather than scattered too widely.

The student exchange program grew out of Dr. Galo Plaza's challenge to Otis Maxfield on his initial trip, that we would be willing to send money but not people. The first exchange occurred following the initial South American trip in 1963, when four of our high school juniors went to Quito to attend the American School, while four of their young people, including Plaza's daughter, came to Columbus for a year. Dr. Plaza had founded the American School in Quito to educate a middle class society, who were neither wealthy nor poor, to become a stabilizing influence in the life of Ecuador. Dr Plaza had served as president of Ecuador (1948-52), ambassador to the U.S. and official of the Organization of American States. Most of the students found the exchange to be an enriching experience and formed lasting friendships. One group witnessed a revolution during their stay in Ecuador, while a vivid lesson in American democracy was demonstrated to our visitors with the smooth and stable transition of government following the assassination of President Kennedy. By 1969 forty-two young people had participated in



an exchange, making it one of the most successful aspects of our mission effort.

Like a snowball rolling downhill, Project Amigos gathered momentum and the caring concern of our congregation found expression through many diverse avenues. College youth spent summers working with various projects in Latin America. At the conclusion of the 1965 trip, several members of the group remained in Ecuador to contribute their time and talent. A member of OSU's nursing faculty spent several weeks sharing her skills and public health knowledge at a mission, while two other women assisted in the programs of the Quito YMCA. Still others contributed individually to projects in several countries that they visited. At home our young people sponsored a dance to raise money in support of the work being done by Dr. Dilworth.

In 1967 as Dr. James Knapp neared the end of his ophthalmology residency, he decided to spend a month sharing operating techniques with Quito's San Juan de Dios Hospital. Not only did he convince eye surgeon Dr. James Andrew to accompany him, but he also obtained donations of drugs and equipment from pharmaceutical and medical supply houses. First Community Village residents underwrote the major portion of their expenses.

Meanwhile Don Newkirk continued to solicit medical supplies. When the U. S. Air Force was no longer able to deliver them, due to the Vietnam conflict, he contacted the Direct Relief Foundation which agreed to provide transportation if someone would assume the cost. The used equipment donated by Ohio hospitals went to DRF for distribution all over the world. In addition San Juan de Dios Hospital received credit for everything sent by the Ohio Hospital Association, so that an equal amount of medicine and equipment was then shipped to them in Quito. Church members and residents of First Community Village donated transportation charges for two shipments. Thus, for a mere \$740, nearly \$50,000 worth of badly needed medicine and supplies reached South American hospitals.

Many college students as well as adult members of the congregation have spent time working in South America. Individuals and groups within the church have made it financially possible for hundreds of youngsters to attend high school. Periodic visits to Columbia and Ecuador by Eldis Reed, Glen Tamplin, and staff ministers Harold Englund, How-

ard Huntzicker and Tom Mozley included contact with many students sponsored by the Save the Children program. The most recent Project Amigos trips were in August 1980 led by Eldis Reed and Howard Huntzicker, and another to Ecuador led by Tom Denune in 1985. Since his first summer in 1967 volunteering for the YMCA in Quito, Tom has made over twenty-five trips to Latin America. He was the church's primary Project Amigos volunteer liaison from 1980 to 2005, maintaining our contacts and bringing back beautiful examples of Ecuadorian handcrafts and selling them in Brownlee Hall to raise funds for Project Amigos.

In one project Tom worked twenty-five years with the villagers of Cotacachi, high in the Andes Mountains, providing student sponsorships from church members. Known as "Sponsor A Student," up to sixty Quichua Indian students a year received our help to continue their studies in high school and university. Those whom we supported were from poor peasant families. The results of the sponsorships on this small community have been wonderful, providing teachers, lawyers, nurses, engineers and businessmen who have become community leaders. In fact, Cotacachi's mayor for the past eight years, Auki Tituana, is one of our sponsored students. He has turned this sleepy town into a "colonial treasure," preserving its historical architecture and greatly improving its infrastructure with a cultural center, museum and numerous public art works. Cotacachi is now a preferred retirement center for Americans and Canadians.

In a second project, Tom worked on agricultural and community development for Quichua Indians in an isolated high mountain area called Llangahua near Ambato where there were no roads and travel was on horseback. Our aid brought electricity, built a small dairy to make fresh cheese, improved the cattle and sheep herds, and trained local teachers by establishing the region's first elementary school and high school. In addition, a conservation program was also begun to preserve and restore a rare Andean cloud forest. As of 2008 there is now a small town in Llangahua that surrounds the dairy with a community center, church and schools. Work that was begun by Project Amigos in 1985 has continued to the present with a lasting benefit to the local community.

Additional funding for these projects came from former FCC minister, Dr. Gabe Campbell, and First Congregational Church of Akron where he was se-



nior minister. In 1992 Gabe's congregation sent a \$5,000 check to help fund the work of Dr. Cesar Tixilema in Llangahua. He was the only Quichua Indian from his region to receive a degree in veterinary medicine, and this check allowed him to develop and continue training programs in his village. Gabe and his church have worked with Project Amigos for a number of years, supporting scholarships and funding the construction of the community center, student center and a community store.

While Project Amigos currently is not active in Ecuador, there are countless friends and contacts who remember fondly the work of our church. These individuals have guided and helped us over the years. Among them is Dr. Carlos Mario Crespo, a Catholic priest who was a minister in residence at First Community in the 1970's. Another friend in Quito is physician Dr. Lucho Cueva, who along with his family has appreciated Project Amigos from its early beginnings. In the town of Cotacachi and the village of Llangahua the list of friends whose lives have been changed and enhanced by our church's aid is long indeed. When Project Amigos ended its sponsorships in 2005, the reserve funds were transferred to World Neighbors to support rural radio schools in Ecuador. In the late 1960's we had originally helped to finance this project that enabled students to listen to central teachers by radio.

To our knowledge, no other single church has instigated and maintained a mission program to rival the concept, scope and longevity of Project Amigos. Hundreds of First Community members have been personally involved over the years and they have ingeniously multiplied the results of their efforts. In a statement quoted in the *First Community Church NEWS* of January 5, 1969, Herb Evans eloquently summed up this mission's philosophy. "Our approach has been to render service and understanding, to touch the leadership of the country, to join hands with Christian forces." Lives have been changed and Project Amigos has made a difference.

### FIRST COMMUNITY VILLAGE

One of the most significant achievements during Otis Maxfield's ministry was the creation of First Community Village. The vision of a retirement center had begun with Roy Burkhart many years earlier. Beth Riley wrote in her 1962 *Short History*

*of First Community Village* that as he visited with older church members, he discovered that more were suffering from loneliness than from old age. "Believing that a church exists to serve its people throughout all the seasons of their lives. . . the people of First Community Church dreamed of a retirement center which would be not only a place to live, but also a way of life. They envisioned the kind of living in which people could remain spiritually and mentally alive, finding companionship, dignity and fulfillment that would give meaning to Robert Browning's words, 'Grow old with me, the best is yet to be, the last of life for which the first was made.'"

After the land at Reed and McCoy Roads was purchased, a committee had been appointed to determine the best use for it. Church member Todd Tibbals knew that although some people wanted to locate the retirement center in the country, Burkie believed that it should be accessible and close to where people presently resided. Therefore Tibbals suggested that the Miller property adjacent to his home seemed to be a logical place for what Burkhart had in mind. This site consisted of the last 28 acres of the original 1,000 acre farm of Henry Miller, which had stretched from Riverside Drive to Star Road, and from Fifth to Lane Avenues. In 1913 real estate entrepreneurs King and Ben Thompson had purchased 840 acres of this land to develop the community of Upper Arlington.

Through Todd's talented fingers, the dreams for a campus-type setting began to take form. His architectural drawings of long, low brick buildings that nestled in the gentle contours of the terrain were shared with the church's Long Range Planning Committee. Next he approached members of the Miller family and Frank Howard, trustee for the estate, who agreed that such a venture would be an ideal use of the land. Together, he and Dr. Burkhart talked with some of the neighbors and found further support for the plan. Committees were formed and, through the efforts of the John W. Galbreath Company, an option was granted for a period of eight months, expiring on January 31, 1961.

The June 1960 *First Community Church NEWS* announced that the firm of Tibbals, Crumley and Musson had been selected as architects and John W. Galbreath Company as builder. The First Community Village Committee was chaired by John V. Johnson. Other members were Roy Allgyer, Mary



Moss, Edward Schorr, and Dr. Emmerich von Haam. They visited well-known retirement centers around the country from New York to California, often accompanied by Dr. Maxfield, Todd Tibbals or Governing Board Chairman Nelson French. These contacts and conversations with directors provided an opportunity to evaluate and accept or reject ideas for programs and facilities.

In the September 11, 1960, issue of the *First Community Church NEWS* Mary Moss outlined some of the problems that had already been overcome. The federal government had become concerned about housing for older citizens, and a Congressional bill promised 100% financing to qualified sponsors for operation of non-profit, self-supporting retirement centers. To encourage locating these centers in desirable residential areas, the bill also called for full payment of real estate taxes. Todd Tibbals made many trips to Washington, and numerous interviews were held here in order to convince the Federal Housing Authority that First Community Church was of sufficient stature to be qualified as a sponsoring organization. Mary recalled that John Galbreath was very generous in making his plane available for these trips.

The committee approved the concept of phase building, with the first phase to house approximately 225 persons. Plans for the Village site were unveiled before the Upper Arlington Planning Commission on June 6, 1960. The design called for a four story administration building surrounded by cottages and apartments. It would be a community to house approximately 400 people aged 60 and over. Construction on the first of three stages could begin in the fall if the formal rezoning application was approved. This first hurdle was passed the following month, and the Planning Commission ordered creation of special zoning for the construction. However, opposition to the project arose at the Upper Arlington City Council meeting on July 11. Council chambers were filled by residents from the area surrounding the Miller estate who voiced fears that property values would decrease.

In response, the church's Governing Board chairman, Nelson French, sent a letter to all neighbors of the area inviting them to an open meeting at the church where the concept, purpose and plans for the Village would be explained and all questions answered. Several opponents descended upon the August U. A. Planning Commission meeting claiming that the project would be commercial and in-

stitutional. They presented a petition signed by 57 people occupying 31 neighboring properties, but other residents of the same area spoke in favor of the retirement center. Chairman French gave assurances that the Village would be controlled by a separate non-profit corporation, with 100 percent of the stock owned by First Community Church and responsibility resting with the church.

As a crowd of over 300 persons began to assemble for the city council meeting on August 22, it became necessary to move to the auditorium of Barrington School. After listening to all viewpoints, a council decision was postponed to allow the city's master planner to render his opinion. Church members and friends who were concerned about the outcome of the vote were urged to attend the public hearing on September 12.

When approval for the ordinance authorizing construction was finally given by a margin of six to one, the opposition launched a campaign to bring the issue to a referendum vote. Petitions were circulated to place the referendum on the November 1961 ballot. If successful, such a move could mean a long delay or perhaps complete defeat of this project that had already been under extensive study for the past four years. By means of newspaper articles and an open letter to all Upper Arlington residents, the church attempted to restate the arguments for a retirement center and note that nearly \$70,000 in real estate taxes would be generated and that such facilities in other parts of the country had actually raised property values.

Fact sheets were prepared for use by church members and over 300 volunteers from the congregation were enlisted to call on those people whose signatures appeared on the petitions in order to give them additional facts about the construction, operation and purpose of the Village. Support also came from other Tri-Village churches and from the Deputy Surgeon General of the United States. By the following week 702 withdrawals had been obtained which were enough to invalidate the referendum petition.

In 1961 plans for operating the Village began to take shape. The first Board of Directors was elected, a Code of Regulations was adopted, and the Village Corporation was created to oversee construction, financing and operations. On September 22, papers for the FHA insured mortgage loan of 5.6 million dollars were signed. Shortly thereafter the



deed for the remaining lands of the Miller estate were turned over to the First Community Village Directors. The dream was finally becoming reality.

Umbrellas provided some shelter from the rain as the site was consecrated on Sunday, February 18, 1962, and shovels of earth were turned by Dr. Burkhart, Todd Tibbals, John Galbreath, Mary Moss, Edward Schorr, Billie Bare, Arlington Mayor Warren Armstrong, and Edward Howard, the senior member of the descendants of the Miller family. The crowd attending the afternoon dedication service overflowed Burkhart Chapel, causing the service to be moved to the Sanctuary.

The *First Community Church NEWS* of May 6 announced selection of the Reverend James W. Bidle as Minister-Director of First Community Village. Offices were to be located in the Miller farmhouse, which was still standing on the original farm property. One of his initial events was a party on June 3, where prospective residents met for strawberries and cake, then piled into buses for a guided tour of the construction areas. This first Strawberry Festival established a tradition that continued each spring. The vigorous campaign to recruit residents was greatly aided by extensive newspaper coverage and periodic reports on the progress of construction. A scale model of the Village was even displayed at the Ohio State Fair, with church members on hand to provide information.

The October 7th cornerstone laying ceremony for Hillside House was designated as an official event in the Columbus Sesquicentennial Celebration. Artifacts sealed into the stone included church records, a Bible, a textbook *Columbus, the Buckeye Capital*, a history of the Miller land, records of the past 150 years, a packet containing reproductions of historic American documents, film footage contributed by the three major television stations, a 128-page special sesquicentennial edition of *The Columbus Dispatch* magazine section, and predictions for the city of Columbus in the year 2012 when the cornerstone was scheduled to be opened.

Careful study and planning went into every facet of Village living. A committee of prominent physicians, who were all church members, developed the health care program, then appointed Dr. Link Murphy to the post of Medical Director. A Volunteer Service Director to coordinate the efforts of all those who wanted to contribute their time and talent to the Village was also selected. February 1,

1963, was moving day for the first eleven FCV pioneers. Television cameras and reporters recorded every detail of the day.

*Guideposts* magazine selected First Community Church to receive its annual "Church of the Year" award in 1963 for establishing First Community Village. The November issue of *Guideposts* stated that we were singled out for this honor "for conspicuous initiative and spiritual creativity in its senior citizens programs and for bringing a special, creative spiritual emphasis to retirement living. The Village is a remarkable accomplishment for one lone congregation." The award was formally presented in our sanctuary on November 13 by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, co-founder and editor of *Guideposts* and nationally known minister of historic Marble Collegiate Church in New York City. Earlier in the day he and his wife both appeared as guest speakers for special events scheduled at the Village. He addressed 250 business and civic leaders at a luncheon, and his wife spoke at the annual ministers' wives tea sponsored by United Church Women. Today the plaque, which is symbolic of the award, is displayed in Heritage Hall at the church on Cambridge Boulevard.

From the beginning, Villagers have been active participants in community life. In 1963 they built the first of many floats for the Upper Arlington Fourth of July parade. Activities abound for all who wish to take advantage of them. Classes, crafts, concerts, art exhibits, exercise groups, card games, lectures, discussion groups and bus trips are just a partial listing of the possibilities. There is flexibility in living accommodations and freedom to choose the lifestyle that best suits each individual.

Although the original concept of the Village was an independent living community with assisted living available in the main building and a small infirmary for temporary illnesses, it soon became apparent that a quality nursing home was a pressing need, not only for Village residents' future needs, but also for the wider community. In 1965 one area of the Village became a licensed nursing home, making First Community Village one of the first full-service or "continuing care" retirement communities in the country.

By maintaining teaching affiliations with Capital and Ohio State Universities, First Community Village provides practical experience for seminary, social work, occupational therapy and nursing



students. Many Upper Arlington teens have found rich and lasting relationships with older persons through the Jones Middle School-Village Partnership Program.

A 1964 memorandum from Rev. Jim Bidle, Village Minister-Director, summarized the founding philosophy as follows. "Our main intention has been that we would not be just creating a place to live, but our justification for being in the housing field was that we would try to create a way of life. Therefore, we have geared our whole approach to a creative and lively program, and that is what we try to capture for the people who move into the Village." Since its inception the success of this philosophy has been observed by visitors from across the nation and from other countries as well. A delegation of Japanese leaders spent a day at the Village to study its concept of retirement facilities. It has been a model of progressive retirement living that continues to be improved and refined. It is truly a community within a community – a tribute to the vision and planning of those who brought the dream to reality

### THE MAXFIELD LEGACY

Many significant steps in the life of First Community Church were taken during Otis Maxfield's years as senior minister. In 1960 the congregational decision to affiliate with the Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ gave us interdenominational standing. The church received broad exposure through radio and television. Live broadcasts of the Sunday worship services were initiated in March 1963. Dr. Maxfield and other staff ministers appeared on several other regularly scheduled programs, some of which dealt with counseling topics. With its emphasis on a counseling ministry, First Community Church was recognized in the community as a place to seek help, and the Pastoral Counseling Center that was opened on February 1, 1964, to fill this need was the first such center in the country to be accredited to train other ministers in the field of pastoral counseling in a parish setting. Dr. Maxfield's quest for a mission project that would capture the imagination of the congregation resulted in Project Amigos, which had a lasting impact on our Latin American neighbors as well as on the members of First Community Church.

In April 1966, Dr. Maxfield announced his decision to leave the church on August 31, in order to

continue his religious pilgrimage through study at the C. G. Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology in New York City. He had also accepted a call to become Senior Minister of Second Congregational Church of Greenwich, a historic church overlooking Long Island Sound. During the summer of 1964 he had spent a sabbatical at the Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland, and he now wished to continue his training to become a Jungian analyst. The *First Community Church NEWS* quoted his inner struggle in reaching this decision. "It has become increasingly clear to me that the inner life holds the key to the soul's depth. More understanding of this world of inner experience is crucial for me if I am to make my contribution in the realm of religious experience in the future. There is no other parish I would rather serve than First Community's." He indicated that there had been a great deal of pain for himself and his wife, Ginny, in reaching the decision to take this step.

Before leaving the city, Otis was awarded an honorary degree by Findlay College, primarily in recognition of the work of First Community Church in the international field, especially Project Amigos. In late June the Governing Board hosted a farewell reception attended by more than 400 church members plus many local civic and religious leaders who expressed their appreciation for the Maxfield's many contributions to the community during their years in Columbus. By 1960 he was a member of the board of trustees of Central Community House and the Council of Community Churches. He also served on the board of the Franklin County and Ohio Mental Health Associations, American Protestant Hospital Association, Board of Home Missions and several other civic and religious committees. He was named the "Outstanding Young Man of 1960" by the Columbus Junior Chamber of Commerce. The same honor had been accorded to him by Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1958. He was also selected as one of the five outstanding young men from the State of Ohio. Ginny Maxfield gave many hours of community service and organized the efforts of 4000 women as chairman of the 1961 door-to-door residential campaign of the United Appeal Drive. She had also served as a board member of Junior League and chairman of Volunteer Service Council of Columbus State Hospital. The Maxfield's graciously entertained new members in their home, and Ginny was a valued member of the Chancel Choir.



Otis is remembered by many as a dynamic preacher who could leave the congregation spellbound Sunday after Sunday. Often after he, Ginny and the girls returned from vacation time in their beloved New England, Otis would spice his sermons with tales of family sailing adventures.

Otis Maxfield's impact on our history can best be summed up in his own words. "In my time at FCC we thought the establishment of the Counseling Center, the expanded camp, First Community Village all would develop and further implement themes that had been so clearly established since the days of Oliver Weist. Creating environments in which people can feel empowered to invent their own future, and be true to their own soul, is for me, and was then, a major effort. The sanctuary is only one of these places."

During his tenure as senior minister, Otis had built a large and diverse staff that numbered seventeen at the time of his resignation. His philosophy of a multiple staff encouraged creativity in carrying out the responsibilities of each member's specialty within the total framework of the church. From that staff the Governing Board named the Reverend Donald E. Smith as acting Senior Minister, effective July 1, 1966. However a unique dilemma faced Don when the opportunity arose to become Associate Director of the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry in New York City. The Reverend James Bidle, who had been serving as acting Chairman of the Program Staff since Dr. Maxfield's departure, assumed executive responsibilities for the church when Don left on February 1, 1967, to assume his new post.

Following his years at First Community Church, Otis became Director of the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry in New York where train-

ing programs were given for psychiatrists, marriage counselors, psychologists and ministers. He later became Chairman of Mandala, Inc., a consulting corporation committed to bridging personal achievement with corporate growth. Dr. Maxfield returned to our pulpit several times after his departure from First Community Church, and was one of the four former senior ministers to attend the celebration surrounding Barry Johnson's installation as senior minister in 1984.

In reflecting on his years at First Community Church, Dr. Maxfield had this to say in 1987: "In the turbulent 60's I saw the major programs or ministries not only dealing with families from birth to grave, but also dealing with the emerging hot social issues: race relations, a liberal democracy vs. a communist witch-hunt, issues of poor and rich as being pertinent. The focus during my time as Senior Minister was on the personal. Being trained in psychology and Jungian analysis, I held the conviction then and now that the individual psyche holds the whole world in its grasp. Understanding love and hate, hope and despair, joy and sorrow and finding the integrating function is indeed what religious experience is all about. In a host of ways we tried to focus on creating environments in which that integrating factor for people and groups could emerge. For me in those days, the primary issue involved creating opportunities for people to have soulful experiences, which is the ability to turn an event into an experience, making meaning possible, communicate in loving and tender ways about that experience, and then live more effectively as a consequence. We pioneered and furthered research into marriage, family and life; developed the Counseling Center with a multiple disciplinary staff; dramatically expanded the children's ministry, expanded Akita fourfold, and tried at the same time to include a social conscience."



**DR. ARTHUR L. TEIKMANIS: PASTOR 1967-1970**

The Selection Advisory Committee, headed by Kline Roberts, Sr., spent eight months traveling around the country in search of a successor to Otis Maxfield. They interviewed and processed 144 candidates before presenting the name of the Reverend Dr. Arthur L. Teikmanis as their choice to become First Community Church's new Senior Minister.

When asked how to pronounce his name, this fascinating man replied, "Just call me Dr. T." Both Arthur Teikmanis and his wife, Austra, were natives of Latvia who had escaped from Soviet and Nazi oppression and finally came to the United States in 1946. His autobiography, *Destination Freedom*, records his struggle to obtain an education, their flight across war-torn Europe, and their new life in America.

They had courted while Austra was a student at the National Red Cross School of Nursing and Arthur was attending the theological seminary of the Latvian Baptist Union. His seminary in Riga was closed and converted to headquarters for the N.K.V.D. secret police shortly after the Soviets took over the country in June of 1940. During the year that followed, Arthur found work in one of Riga's railroad stations and later became superintendent of nationalized government property. It was also possible for him to do supply preaching at various churches nearly every Sunday and to graduate from the National School of General Studies. On June 23, 1941, word came from a Jewish friend that Arthur's name was on a list of people to be exiled or executed. He immediately went to see Austra, who had just finished her nursing education, and together they planned to escape. A justice of the peace married them two days later, shortly before the Soviet military was driven from Riga. However, almost immediately, Nazi troops occupied the city.

In the war years that followed, Arthur was admitted to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Latvia, their daughter, Sylvia, was born, and he was called to full time ministry at a country church near the Lithuanian border. The advancing Soviet army forced them to flee in the summer of 1944, and they were evacuated to a labor camp in Germany. Here they were befriended by a German police official who helped them to escape in January 1945. After a harrowing journey, they found refuge with some of their relatives at a Lutheran

Parish house in Augsburg. In April General Patton's forces took the city. Many civilians, including Teikmanis, offered their services and cooperation to the American military government, and he was issued a document identifying him as the Chief Minister of the Gospel in the Occupied Territory.

He sought the aid of American chaplains in collecting leftover food from the mess halls for distribution to refugees. They also helped him to organize church services and provided Bibles and hymnals. He was commissioned to visit the World Council of Churches in Geneva to solicit assistance for the homeless. The next challenge for the Teikmanis family was gaining permission to enter the United States. His association with the American chaplains opened numerous channels of international communication regarding emigration. In response to many letters, they received several affidavits of support offering to help the family relocate. Finally in late 1946, visas were granted for permanent residency in the U. S.

Arthur was admitted to Andover Newton Theological School. In surmounting the language barrier, he initially needed to consult Latvian, English, German and Latin dictionaries to complete reading assignments. His meager income from odd jobs increased during summer vacation as he served a Latvian church in Philadelphia while also learning carpentry. With the resumption of classes in the fall, he was given the opportunity to teach Philosophy of Religion and New Testament Greek. Austra resumed her nursing career as Arthur completed his seminary education. Shortly before graduating with a B.D. degree cum laude, word came that he had been chosen to receive two fellowship-scholarships that would enable him to pursue graduate studies at Harvard.

A call also came to serve the Community Congregational Church in West Peabody, Massachusetts. Here their second daughter, Mahra, was born in April 1952. That fall the family moved on to a church in Lowell where Arthur became very involved in community activities. He received his doctorate of philosophy in religion from Harvard in the spring of 1953. A third daughter, Nora, was added to the family.

Teaching opportunities were offered by several universities, but Dr. T. chose to accept the call of a Congregational church in Sayville, New York, where he remained for five years. During this pe-



riod he taught History and Philosophy of Religion at Adelphi College and pursued a personal course of study in Pastoral Psychology at the Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry in New York.

After moving to First Congregational Church in Winter Park, Florida, he became very involved in working against racial segregation. He taught Philosophy, Comparative Religion, and Religion and Culture at Rollins College where the student population was white only when he began teaching there in 1964. The enrollment of a black girl in his class broke the racial barrier. During his years at Winter Park, he initiated several new ministries including a weekday nursery school, a "Head Start" type of program for black youth and a retirement center. He also found time to help organize a Saturday School of Theology to supplement the education of black ministers, to participate in local projects and organization, and to write his book, *Preaching and Pastoral Care*.

While at Winter Park, he was given the opportunity to study at St. Andrews University in Scotland and Manchester College in Oxford, England. This sojourn allowed Austra and Arthur time for further travel in Europe and the Middle East. Their desire for a visit to Latvia was overwhelming, but after several attempts to apply for a visa were turned down, they realized that it was impossible at that time.

The Teikmanis family was invited to come to Columbus on March 27, 1967, where Arthur and Austra were to meet with the Governing Board, church staff, Deacons and Board of Women, and to attend a staff retreat the following day. A series of teas, open houses and meetings were scheduled over the next several days where they met with the Women's Guild, Men's Breakfast, youth groups, First Community Village staff, boards and commissions and all who wished to meet them. A special congregational meeting was held on April 16, where members voted in favor of calling Dr. Arthur L. Teikmanis as the sixth minister to lead First Community Church. He received word of the congregation's decision as he was departing for Rome to attend a Vatican conference. Dr. T. returned to Columbus to preach on April 30, and made plans to assume his new post on August 15. A formal installation ceremony was held on October 29.

One of the first tasks undertaken by Dr. Teikmanis was a plan for restructuring the 17-member staff

into six departments: Christian Education with Richard Conrad responsible for all education from pre-school through adult programs, including programming at Akita; Pastoral Counseling directed by Robert Brees; Pastoral Care and Parish Development chaired by Arthur Sanders; Religious Music and the Arts under the leadership of Lowell Riley; Community and World Outreach overseen by James Bidle; and Business Administration headed by Robert Murtha. Each chairman reported directly to the Senior Minister, rather than through a Program Staff Chairman. Together they formed the Senior Minister's Cabinet, which met with him regularly for overall staff planning.

This plan reflected Dr. T's deep interest in pastoral care and parish ministry as well as his background in psychology and teaching. He sought to put greater emphasis on everyone's participation in the learning process. Several new adult education programs were introduced that centered on the different interests of the participants. D Groups and sensitivity programs were added. The Minister's Seminar was revitalized when Dr. Viktor Frankl of Vienna, founder of the Third School of Psychiatry and a personal friend of Dr. Teikmanis, was invited to participate in 1968's 25th annual seminar.

Some of Dr. Teikmanis' thoughts on what the church should be were stated in the Annual Report dated January 21, 1968. "The task of the church is not to promote an isolated, static 'spiritual culture' but to provide depth-quality, tone and character for a secular society. In general, its purpose is to facilitate the coming of the Kingdom of God into personal and interpersonal relationships. The church must be concerned with the promotion of the Word of God. The Bible and personal faith are indispensable, yet they are not self-sufficient. Both of them demand spiritual research, depth study and continuous growth in theological knowledge, for such knowledge is indispensable for purposes of interpretation and implementation of our faith. If the church is to be the church, it will have to recognize a secular challenge and accept a corresponding responsibility. The church must be where the people are. As the forefront of the boundary line, the church must be concerned with interracial, interdenominational, international and intercultural relations. The task of the church, from my point of view, is to promote an all-inclusive dialogue. As the forefront of the growing edge, the church must mobilize all of its power and resources



to play a constructive role in a revolutionary society."

First Community Church was already involved in the Opportunities Unlimited program, which matched young people with FCC adults in a program designed to introduce youth to available career opportunities. In November 1967 a plaque was presented to the church "in recognition of outstanding contributions" by the 45 East High School students who were matched with 45 of our members. Commitment to current social issues was deepened with Governing Board approval of Project Equality, a national interfaith program using the hiring and purchasing power of religious institutions to end employer discrimination in the institutions themselves and in the firms that supplied their goods and services. Parents of preschool children were invited to explore ways to provide meaningful experiences between their children and young black children. The second annual cross-cultural camping session, sponsored by First Community's Education Department and the Christian Ethics Commission, was scheduled for Akita's summer season. Its initials, KEO, stood for Know Each Other.

In June 1968 six Governing Board members and the six staff chairmen were named to the steering committee of a Study Task Force to review First Community Church's past, look at the present and determine the church's direction in the 1970's.

New and unique approaches were utilized in worship services including banners, the Holy Week mobile, contemporary arts and music, talk-back and dialogue sermons, new translations of the Bible, and elements other than bread and wine in observing communion. An opportunity for the entire congregation to worship together took place at the Reed-McCoy property on October 6, 1968. The staff, deacons and 300 choir members and bell ringers led the procession of worshippers from their cars to a thirty foot cross. Rain and soggy banners did not dampen the celebrative mood or deeply moving spirit that swept the gathering. As one youngster said, "I guess we are all getting baptized today."

Under Dr. T's leadership, our commitment to Project Amigos continued with student exchanges and two International Dialogue Laboratories. The first of these occurred in September 1967, when Ecuadorian business and professional leaders came

to Columbus for meetings with their American counterparts in an effort to bring about world change through relevant Christianity. Father Carlos Mario Crespo returned the following year to spend a month at First Community as guest priest-in-residence. Dr. T. accompanied members of our congregation and staff to Quito for Phase II of the International Dialogue in 1968.

An interracial and interdenominational school for lay and ordained ministers was begun in October 1968 at First Community Church, offering courses in communication skills, pastoral counseling, educational work of the church and Bible study. The teachers included Fred Staub, Dr. T. and other members of the church staff.

In an effort to improve communication within the church and to "promote a better understanding between the pews and the pulpit," parish dialogues were instituted twice each week. Dr. Teikmanis met with those in the congregation who wanted to discuss his sermons or ask questions about any facet of the church. He also initiated a house-to-house calling program in an effort to know a many members as possible.

The Teikmanis ministry at First Community Church was shaped not only by his philosophy, but also by current events of the era. He touched on some of these factors in a letter replying to a survey that was sent to all former FCC ministers by our Long Range Planning Committee in 1987.

"This was the time when our country and many churches were in turmoil. Black people were fighting for their rights and their freedom. Many of us were troubled by the war in Vietnam. We were trying to bridge the 'gaps' - credibility, segregation, generation, etc. An action task force was organized to deal with the social and individual problems of our society: segregation, drug addiction, runaway teens, prison problems and the like. The theological focus in America at that time was on Godless, Christless and religionless Christianity. At FCC we never used such radical language, but we were concerned with the credibility gap and wanted to bridge it . . . we all wanted to be 'where the action is.' On that issue, the church had a variety of views. In more ways than one we explored the whole area of Christian ethics. This exploration involved social ethics, situation ethics and the new morality."



In his Annual Report of January 19, 1969, Governing Board Chairman C. William O'Neill, also pointed out that the mood of the church reflected that of the nation. America had experienced the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, "God is Dead" philosophy, demonstrations and marches for various causes, inflation, permissiveness and the breakdown of traditional moral fabric. "The economic, social and political issues that have divided people, disrupted institutions and kept the country in turmoil during 1968 have directly affected the thinking of the members of this church about the church and their conclusions as to what the role of this church should be in these matters."

One of the issues that had continued to haunt our church for a number of years was the property at Reed and McCoy Roads. When the possible uses for this land were discussed at a special congregational meeting in April 1957, the suggestions were for a retirement center or a branch church. At that time we had nearly 5,900 members, Sunday School classes and youth meeting room overflowed, and four services were necessary on Sunday to accommodate the crowds of worshippers. With the assurance that the \$30,000 down payment was available in the church's savings account, a positive vote was cast to purchase the 20.4 acres of land. Subsequently, however, First Community Village was built in 1963 at a totally different location.

In 1967 the Governing Board appointed a Development Funds Committee, headed by William Ellis, to identify present needs, priorities and opportunities for the church's future. The committee spent a year meeting with and studying reports from standing boards and committees and staff members. Additionally, a firm of fund raising counselors surveyed 61 church members to determine the congregation's willingness to support a development funds drive. A congregational meeting to vote on the funding campaign was scheduled for March 4, 1968, the sixth anniversary of the church's "Day of Decision" when members had worshipped together at Veteran's Memorial Auditorium and had voted in favor of maintaining the unity of the congregation and building new facilities at the Reed-McCoy site. Following that vote, the Seven Long Range Study Committees explored possibilities and made recommendations on the church's role in the future.

The proposal presented at the 1968 meeting amounted to \$1,660,000 and included \$600,000 for construction of a new facility at Reed-McCoy, \$410,000 for improvements at Camp Akita, \$140,000 to refurbish 1320 Cambridge Boulevard, \$300,000 to accelerate progress at First Community Village, \$75,000 for community and world outreach, and \$135,000 for contingencies. The affirmative vote in favor of the development campaign was limited to fund raising only. Relocation of the church to Reed-McCoy was not involved in the decision to proceed with the campaign. According to Development Committee Chairman William Ellis, "One of the guidelines of the committee was that no expenditures be proposed that would reduce the congregation's freedom of choice regarding location of the church at Reed-McCoy." Governing Board Chairman C. William O'Neill also noted that one-third of the present congregation were not members when the vote was taken to relocate six years previously. Thus, the question of relocating should be brought before the congregation again before any action was taken. Suggested uses for the site included a youth center and a weekday preschool.

Following discussions with Marts and Lundy, the church's fund raising counsel, the Governing Board decided to defer the fund drive until January. In September the committee studying renovation of 1320 asked the Governing Board to consider their recommendation that First Community Church remain at Cambridge Boulevard for the foreseeable future. The Board unanimously approved presenting this question for a congregational vote at the Annual Meeting in January.

The *First Community Church NEWS* of January 2, 1969, reported the lively discussion at the Annual Meeting around this issue which had occupied the church's attention for so long. Following the survey by Marts and Lundy in 1962, they had recommended that the church take steps to inform, educate and persuade the congregation of the wisdom of the move. This led to formation of the Seven Long Range Study Committees. Even after approval of the development campaign in 1968, it was discovered that there was just not enough support in the congregation. The final vote affirmed remaining at 1320 and deferring the development campaign.

By April the Study Task Force established by Dr. Teikmanis nine months earlier concluded that a great many of the goals set by the Seven Long



Range Study Committees had been met. In creating the final "Shaping the '70's Report," hundreds of people participated in the study of "Who We Are," "What We Believe," "Where We Have Been," "Where We Want to Go in the 1970's" and "What the Church Should Be and Do in the Future." It was his hope that this would be a bridge from the past to the future.

Jean Dones has the distinction of having served as secretary to four senior ministers. In reminiscing about her years with Dr. Teikmanis, she noted that each minister came from a very different background, which was reflected in individual personalities and style of ministry. Dr. T's special skills were writing and preaching. He rejoiced in the freedom of opportunity in this country, yet coping with cultural differences was difficult for the Teikmanis family.

Dr. Teikmanis announced at the May 1969 Governing Board meeting that he intended to resign sometime before the next Annual Meeting. Board members pledged their full support through the remainder of his tenure as senior minister. In November Dr. T. accepted a call as senior minister to The First Church of Christ in Pittsfield, Massa-

chusetts. The ministry of Arthur Teikmanis to the congregation of First Community Church drew to a close when his resignation took effect on January 26, 1970. He did a great deal to heighten the awareness of our congregation to emerging social issues of the day. During his years at First Community Church our KEO interracial circles began as well as the street ministry, Contact. We also began programs with inner city children at Akita.

He returned to First Community Church, along with Dr. Harold Englund, Dr. Otis Maxfield and Rev. Robert Raines, for the installation festivities surrounding the installation of Dr. Barry Johnson in 1984. During his ministerial career Arthur Teikmanis served churches in New York, Florida and Massachusetts as well as First Community Church. After retirement he continued to write and lecture and to render ministerial services and organize new churches. He was planning a trip to his native Latvia when he died after a brief illness on July 11, 1993. How fitting that his life's journey so closely paralleled the title of his autobiography, *Destination Freedom*. Following his flight from war and oppression under Nazi and Soviet regimes, the life that he had dedicated to helping others ended at his home in Freedom, New Hampshire.







**REV. ROBERT A. RAINES - PASTOR: 1970-74**

The June 29, 1970 issue of the *First Community Church NEWS* reported selection of Richard Pickett and Dr. Robert Murphy as co-chairmen of the Search Committee to find a successor to Dr. Teikmanis. The committee was charged to search out names and screen candidates. The Governing Board would then be responsible for selecting the one person they would recommend to the congregation. It was suggested that potential candidates should be made aware of the diversity of views within the congregation, the problems inherent in a church as large as ours, and the importance of the youth ministry at First Community Church. An understanding of the mood of the time and issues of the day was also considered important, along with the ability to minister to persons on all sides of social concerns.

There were other urgent matters facing the church at this time. Committees that were studying the future of the church, reviewing the Pastoral Counseling Center, and revising the constitution and organizational structure were encouraged to complete their reports. Inspection of the electrical system at 1320 Cambridge Boulevard revealed a critical need to bring the wiring up to safe standards.

A special fund drive to upgrade and repair the facilities at Camp Akita was launched. This effort seemed to spark a renewed commitment and pride in the special religious experiences that are nurtured in the Akita setting. In addition to financial gifts, there were many donations of equipment. Young people and adults volunteered much of the labor for long overdue maintenance projects.

Youth needs were addressed in several ways. During the summer, plans were approved and implemented to create new meeting space for their programs by renovating basement areas of the church and redecorating Lincoln Road Chapel. Avenues for bridging the generation gap were explored. In addition to their own worship services in Burkhart Chapel, high school students were included more frequently in Sunday sanctuary services by reading the scripture and bringing their music and interpretive dance into the worship setting. A monthly Youth Page was added to the *First Community Church NEWS* and young people were included as members of standing committees.

The growth and importance of our ministry to young children through kindergarten age also received recognition when departmental status was conferred. The Early Childhood Ministry Department, headed by Mary Evans, was given the responsibility for both the Sunday School and week-day pre-school programs.

The "SHAPE of the 70's" Report was released to the Governing Board and congregation in early August. This report was the culmination of 13 months of work by the Study Task Force Steering Committee composed of six Governing Board Members and the six chairmen of the program staff. It had been established in June 1968 to review First Community Church's past and present and to determine its direction in the 1970's. The Board was unanimous in its belief that the congregation should play a major role in determining the church's future course. The *First Community Church NEWS* summarized the SHAPE Report in serial fashion and members were urged to attend meetings on Sunday mornings to share their feelings, concerns, hopes and ideas about that week's segment. The revised document would reflect the comments and suggestions made by Board and church members alike.

A staff committee of Rev. Richard Conrad, Dr. Arthur Sanders and Rev. Howard Huntzicker was named to perform the church's administrative functions during the interim period between senior ministers. A list of 250 candidates was eventually presented to the Search Committee, but by early December additional investigation had narrowed the list to twenty names.

The April 12, 1970 issue of *First Community Church News* announced that a special congregational meeting would be held on April 26, to hear the Governing Board recommendation for calling the Rev. Robert A. Raines as our next senior minister. According to Bob Murphy and Dick Pickett, he had been repeatedly brought to their attention by sources all over the country. Ironically the name of Robert Raines had first appeared in the *First Community Church News* of May 5, 1968, when Dr. Teikmanis wrote his "From the Study" column about the Raines book, *Creative Brooding*, a collection of stories and quotations.

The Search Committee warmly introduced Robert Raines to the congregation as one of the leading Protestant clergymen in the United States. He had been highly recommended as a man who was in-



tellectually stimulating, concerned with the issues of the day, and an excellent preacher. His father was a retired Methodist Bishop and two brothers were also ministers.

Raines was born in Newton, Massachusetts. When he was four the family moved to Minneapolis, where he lived until joining the Navy in 1944. He was trained as a sonar-radar operator and sent to the Philippines. Upon completion of his two-year enlistment, he entered Yale University. In the January 1970 issue of the magazine *Christian Ministry*, Raines described his experience at Yale. "My class was the largest graduating class – 1500 returning servicemen. My years at Yale were wonderful years. I studied on the GI Bill; a lot of people did, so there was more real diversity at Yale than ever before. Many of the things I feel deeply today were shaped then." He lettered in football and hockey, was president of the senior class and graduated in 1950, Phi Beta Kappa.

It seemed a natural decision to enter Yale Divinity School. That year he also married Mary Margaret Gordon, who taught in a private school during his seminary years. Bob graduated cum laude in 1953 and was awarded a Fulbright scholarship. The next year was spent in England at Clare College of Cambridge University.

His first pastorate was Aldersgate Methodist Church in the Cleveland suburb of Warrensville Heights. Here he began to experiment with small koinonia groups for membership classes and seminars and became convinced that some kind of small group involvement really does do something for most people that does not happen in other ways. His involvement in racial issues also originated in 1954. Although he tried to lead his suburban white parishioners in relating to a black church and the issues of the city, he began to yearn for the opportunity to be in a congregation that could be truly integrated and genuinely interracial.

In 1961 the Raines family moved to Philadelphia when Bob became co-minister of First Methodist Church in Germantown. This changing neighborhood provided the mixed congregation that he was seeking. He explained in the *Christian Ministry* interview, "We have a pluralistic approach to doctrine . . . and the church has swung into the community in such a way that different groups of people are concerned about poverty and somebody else is concerned about the tenants or hous-

ing group. For the eight years I have been here, I have been majoring in inter-group relationships. In recent years it has been more social issues, both in terms of my own involvements . . . and my concern for the church's involvement in the community."

Raines outlined some of his major concerns for the church of the 1970's in a *First Community Church News* interview published in the April 26, 1970 issue. "The church needs to consider biblically and theologically what we are about. Many people today seem confused as to the nature of God. I think we need to explore fresh expectations and understandings of God, fresh modes of community life in which we experience God's presence together, fresh imagery and language with which to conceive of God and speak of Him." In shaping a ministry for First Community Church, he proposed that the church and its members must seek to be change agents for healing, justice, and peace. "I think we must not only apply Band-aids, but also seek to change the structures which produce wounded people."

A variety of opportunities for meeting Rev. Raines and his wife, Peggy, were scheduled during the days preceding his initial sermon on April 26. At the congregational meeting held that evening, the vote was unanimous to call him as First Community Church's new Senior Minister. The Reverend Robert Raines preached his acceptance sermon on Sunday, May 3, 1970, and officially assumed the post of Senior Minister on May 15. By the end of June the Raines family had moved into their new home and children Barbara, Catharine, Nancy and Bobby were looking forward to a Michigan vacation before thinking about becoming acquainted with a new community.

The Governing Board's first action, after consultation with Mr. Raines, was to appoint a Financial Planning Committee. Next, a major program was authorized to clean and refurbish 1320 and to undertake the building repairs that had already been identified as critically necessary. New staff members were added, the Rev. John Carr as Teaching Theologian and the Rev. Robert Keck as Director of the Center of Affirmation of Young Life, First Community's new education program for pre-schoolers through college-age young adults.

Rather than the traditional type of installation service for a new senior minister, a special "Time of Promise" was planned at Mershon Auditorium for



October 18. This festive occasion provided the first opportunity for the entire congregation to worship together since the 1968 outdoor service at the Reed-McCoy Road site. Banners depicting our church's unique symbols turned the stage into a center of worship. Special effects were created through tapes, slides, photographs and drama. Vaud-Villities veterans contributed their talents to staging and lighting. Organ, brass, tympani and handbells augmented music of the Youth and Chancel Choirs. Though originally scheduled as Bob Raines' installation, the service as planned and written by John Carr and Dick Conrad developed as a time of rededication for the entire church family. While recognizing the sixtieth anniversary of the church's founding, it centered on the promises of the congregation to God and each other for the future. Bishop Richard Raines, Bob's father, delivered the charge to his son and the assembled worshippers.

The Stone of Promise, weighing two tons and measuring seven feet in height, stands on the front lawn of the church. It is a tangible reminder of the individual and corporate promises made that day by the congregation: "To give God practical priority in our daily lives; in every way we can to make God's love believable for all men; To try to love each other with Christ's kind of love. As for me and my life, Yes."

The depth of Bob Raines' commitment to current social and political concerns was revealed early in his ministry at First Community. An interview published in the *Columbus Dispatch* of May 30, 1970, illustrated his thoughts on how the church should go about involving its people appropriately with critical issues. "It ought to be helping, enabling and encouraging people to deal with poverty, ecology and justice. The church can build bridges, be a community where people can listen to each other and understand each other without polarization and alienation."

He described his own view of the church as having swinging doors. "To minister to those coming in, to their particular needs, counseling, providing a sense of community, friendship and meaning to life. On the other side, going out, to have a responsibility to enable all its people to become agents of healing and reconciliation, with the needs of the nation, of necessity a concern on the agenda of the church." In his opinion the church should acknowledge and welcome the existing diversities

and encourage its people to channel their passionate protest productively. He envisioned this to be accomplished through small groups "working creatively on various issues rather than the church as a corporate body taking a particular stand."

The first example of this approach was manifested in the organization of a Peace Task force that met for the first time on May 24. The stated purpose of this group was "to give college students and other adults an opportunity to find ways to work through the system to bring about change." Its initial undertaking, collecting petitions in Brownlee Hall supporting the denial of funds for military action in Vietnam after the end of the year, stirred immediate controversy because no opportunity had been provided for supporting the current Presidential policy. In responding to this criticism, Raines not only supported the equal opportunity solution, but also called attention to our heritage of unity in diversity as expressed in the hymn written for First Community Church by Samuel Scholes in 1928:

*Through centuries of conflict and clash of thought  
with thought,  
Our fathers for opinions and formal creeds have  
fought,  
But we have greater freedom, the Way of Christ  
to prove:  
Let us agree to differ, while we resolve to love.*

College students and concerned adults met following the bloody campus riots of 1970. At the urging of Rev. Raines, several task forces were established to look for ways of working through the system to bring about change. He promised that a First Community staff member would be assigned to work with each group.

An effort to improve communication and to broaden the base of lay leadership was undertaken by the 1971 Governing Board. Five commissioners representing 400 members of committees and commissions in the church regularly attended and took part in Governing Board meetings. Two youth members also sat on the Board as non-voting participants. Thus, each body within the congregation was assured of a voice at Governing Board level. Constitutional amendments were proposed at the 1972 Annual Meeting to create two youth positions on the Board with terms of two years. Approval by a vote of 217-10 demonstrated affirmation of our youth program and helped to bridge the generation gap.



The Raines years brought many changes to First Community Church. Innovations in worship were explored under his leadership. He sought to provide a variety of experiences to serve our diverse congregation while still maintaining a balance between traditional and contemporary music and litany. The Lenten season was highlighted by Handel's "Messiah" one year and selections from the rock opera, "Jesus Christ, Superstar" another. The early morning communion service remained unchanged and the 11:00 service retained its traditional formality, but the 9:15 service took on a more informal and participative style of worship. Guitar music and liturgical dancing gave a new dimension to spiritual expression. Midweek evening services offered still other opportunities for experimental forms of worship. A celebrative outdoor service at a large, grassy site on a corner of McCoy and Mountview Roads marked the Church's birthday on Pentecost 1971.

In October 1972 the chancel area was rearranged to create an open nave. The first three rows of pews were removed and the altar table was moved from the east wall to the front of the chancel, with an oriental carpet covering the steps. This altered worship setting symbolized God's presence in the midst of the congregation and facilitated flexibility in creative use of the space.

Rev. Raines encouraged active involvement in the social and political issues of the day. In an era marked by the divisive nature of the war in Southeast Asia, campus unrest, the struggle for racial equality and recognition of women's rights, many church members searched for avenues to show their Christian concern and to make a difference in the world.

Perhaps this yearning was most eloquently expressed by Maryann Ewart, who served as director of the Chicago Avenue Preschool, an interracial school that received volunteer assistance and partial funding from First Community Church. "If a person can't reach out and improve things, he's really not paying for the space he's using here on earth. It's like paying rent for the privilege of living, a debt of gratitude."

The Community Resource Committee replaced the Christian Ethics Commission and acted as an enabler for the task forces and concern groups. The Community Resource Committee also helped church members find meaningful involvement by

providing the link between their talents and the needs of the church and community groups. Task forces tackled a variety of problems by disseminating information and working actively toward solutions. Projects were available for anyone who chose to participate and often included entire families. Members of the Environmental Task Force provided news of pending legislation and the Junior High Ecology Group collected newspapers for recycling. Friends Indeed, sponsored by the Women's Guild, ministered to shut-in, ill, bereaved and lonely persons through a regular calling program. The Emergency Task Force distributed food and temporary financial help until more substantial long-term assistance could be arranged through community agencies.

KEO (Know Each Other) circles were interracial groups of 20 people who met monthly for the purpose of becoming better acquainted and bridging the gaps of racial separation. The Peace Task Force sponsored speakers, promoted education and action programs, and coordinated a yearly Vigil for Peace in Burkhart Chapel from Good Friday until Easter. Children helped in delivering the non-perishables collected at the Learning Centers to the food pantry and Central Community House.

At a time when prison uprisings were very much in the news, a sizeable group of First Community members became deeply involved in a ministry to inmates of the Ohio Penitentiary. This program touched many lives and came into being through an interesting series of events. Experiment in Practical Christianity was a challenging course in the church's adult education program that had been developed by Teaching Theologian John Carr and his wife, Adrienne. At the final session of each course, the participants were supposed to go to a place where they could see a need. George Norris, however, did not find his visit to a campus counseling center in the spring of 1971 to be a fulfilling conclusion to his Experiment in Practical Christianity experience. The following week prison chaplain, William Goff, happened to bring his sick dog to George's veterinary office. During their conversation Goff voiced a desire to bring groups into the pen and Norris mentioned that he was currently booking a church-based singing group. A short time later singers Ed Key, Phil Hart and Fern Schmidt Beathard accompanied George and Linda Norris on their first visit to entertain the Honor Dormitory inmates at the prison.



In the ensuing weeks George and Linda repeated their visits and developed friendships with Chaplain Goff, Warden Harold Cardwell and several of the prisoners. One evening was spent listening to an audiotape of the "Jesus Christ Superstar" worship service, which George described as a particularly moving and emotional experience for the men because it met them where they were. Over the summer others became involved both in visitations and in arranging outings such as Playhouse on the Green rehearsals and picnics. On Sunday August 22, more than 30 men from the Honor Dorm came to worship services at First Community, accompanied by a guard and the chaplain. They continued to attend the 9:15 service every three or four weeks. George also led two encounter groups for prisoners inside the walls. By fall the number of interested visitors had grown to 130.

Chaplain Goff was quoted in the *First Community Church News* of September 26, 1971, "The first response on the part of the Honor Dorm inmates was generally incredulous disbelief that these people who owed them nothing and are not paid to be concerned about them really care." He estimated that their First Community Church friends had touched 99 percent of the 150 inmates in some way. "This group of concerned individuals in saying to them 'You are a man; you are a person; you are important'; you are accepted."

In November the Prison Concern Group met to officially structure its organization. Committees were formed to recruit and provide orientation for new members, compile a directory of social agencies concerned with the penal system, provide programs for Thursday night Honor Dorm visits, plan monthly Friday night experiences away from the prison, and improve relationships between inmates and guards. Their goals were to develop one-to-one relationships with prisoners, improve the Ohio penal system, help the prisoners help themselves, and sensitize the community about prisoners and the penal system.

Bob Raines, John Carr and the church administration were very supportive of the project. Brownlee Hall was jammed to capacity on the night that the Honor Dorm band came to the church for a benefit concert to raise money so that prisoners could call home at Christmas. Between numbers the listeners browsed and purchased handcrafted articles made by the inmates. Minister of Music, David Spicer, went to the penitentiary every Saturday

morning for three months to rehearse the Honor Dorm Choir for their part in the "Messiah," which they performed with the church choirs during the Lenten season of 1972. For two years church members were invited to share in a special Thanksgiving service and meal with inmates.

Only one major incident marred the Prison Concern Group's record. A prisoner slipped away from the group on Thanksgiving 1972 to be with his family and was not missed when the bus loaded for an earlier than expected departure. Upon returning to the church, he was stopped by police, had no identification, drew a razor, then attacked the officer who tried to handcuff him and was shot in the ensuing struggle for the gun.

Robert Schatzman's story is the antithesis of this incident. After serving eight and a half years, Bob was paroled and lived with the Norris's for a year. He joined First Community Church, participating actively in several programs, became a top salesman, and married the daughter of a Lutheran pastor. Before imprisonment he described his existence "as an animal with no concept of feeling or responsibility. It was in the Honor Dorm that I learned who I was, what I needed, and what I owed in responsibility to others. The Prison Concern people practiced rather than preached what we should do and how we should do it. It was their individual efforts in one-to-one relationships that proved the changing point in my life."

This was, indeed, a unique experiment in trust and caring that ended when the Ohio Penitentiary was closed and the inmates moved to the new correctional facility in Lucasville.

There were other significant projects and programs that marked the ministry of Robert Raines. One of the most unusual was the 1973 "Mission in Reverse" of the Rev. Bhaskar and Dr. Neela Onawale. They were guests of First Community and First Congregational Churches in a yearlong ministry shared by both churches that attempted to bring the world of missions back home to our congregations in a personalized way. For six months Bhaskar served as a member of our pastoral staff. He and Neela met with many groups such as Couples Circles, Guilds, and Adult Education and New Member Classes to share their Christian faith. Bhaskar also led seminars on world religion. Following postgraduate studies in theology at Princeton University, they returned to India and established a team minis-



try to serve the medical, spiritual and social needs in Poona. The bonds between the Onawales and First Community Church have remained strong and their ministry has received consistent support through our mission budget and special offerings. Several church members have spent time working with Bhaskar and Neela in Poona and there have been several trips to India that included laymen, clergy and other members of the church staff. The Onawales' most recent visit to First Community Church took place in 2008.

As Director of Pastoral Services, Dr. Arthur Sanders had long recognized the fact that more help was needed in ministering to older members of our congregation. Such a ministry finally was made possible through a gift from Elizabeth Davis and the Patton family, whose financial help provided support for four years until it was incorporated into the budget. In February 1973 Nancy Heath was hired to begin this new ministry that has evolved as one of the most valued in the church. With counsel from the Senior Forum of advisors, she instituted programs such as Sixty Plus and the Men's Luncheon. More importantly, she made hundreds of home and hospital visits and acted as an advocate for older persons within the church and community.

Another unique program that First Community helped to support was the Mission Development Ministry of the Rev. Don Huey, an ecumenical urban project that was established in response to the inner city needs of Columbus.

There were several new additions to the Program Staff during the Raines years. Dr. Herbert Manton became Director of the Pastoral Counseling Center in July 1971. Dr. David Lehman served as coordinator of the children's ministry from May 1971 till June 1972 when Jeane Cloud Spoor assumed those duties. Rev. Mark Pawlowski was hired as Senior High Minister in March 1972 and was joined by Junior High Minister, Rev. Tom Mozley, the following October. In September 1973 Ronald Jenkins became Minister of Music.

A resolution to authorize preparation of detailed proposals for developing the four areas that had received study by the Long Range Planning Com-

mittee was adopted at the 1973 Annual Meeting. The final proposals were to remodel and further develop our facilities at 1320 Cambridge Boulevard; to establish an educational and human growth center to be called the Burkhardt Center; to invest in outreach ministries locally and abroad; to construct a year-round adult and family center at Aki-ta, improve existing facilities and add hiking trails and a camping area; and to complete a formal feasibility study for the Reed-McCoy property. More than 1,000 members attended the special June 3rd congregational meeting to consider both the proposals and a development fund raising campaign. Approval was given for the development package and William Guthrie was appointed to chair the campaign.

Honors came to Bob Raines during his years at First Community Church. In April 1971 he received an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Otterbein College and in 1972 was appointed to chair a committee of alumni to review Yale's theology education.

On February 25, 1974, Raines tendered his resignation to the Governing Board. His letter stated, "After twenty consecutive years as a minister of a congregation, I feel the need and desire for a period of study, writing and teaching in some combination." His farewell sermon was delivered on May 29. He became Director of the Kirkridge Retreat Center in Bangor, Pennsylvania, on September 1. A grant from the Lilly Foundation provided funding to pursue a research and action project on mid-life crisis.

In reminiscing about the ministry of Robert Raines, his secretary Jean Dones said, "He brought a more liberal focus on social issues along with his creative writing skills, and published several books during his years here." Dr. Arthur Sanders added, "He served in an amazing capacity and had the greatest social concern of any minister I ever met. He was an exceptionally gifted preacher and preached what he believed. He had a unique gift for the times." Since his departure from First Community Church, Bob has continued to write and to lead seminars and programs at Kirkridge. His twelfth book, *The Gift of Tomorrow*, was published in 1983.



**DR. HAROLD N. ENGLUND:  
PASTOR 1975 – 1981**

The Rev. John L. Carr was appointed Interim Senior Minister upon the resignation of Bob Raines on February 25, 1974. The Personnel Committee of the Governing Board recommended that the search for a successor be postponed for a time in order to define the process and study the staff structure and leadership models for the church.

They had asked themselves some very penetrating questions. Can one man be expected to do everything? Should the church be a reflection of a single personality to whom it looks for leadership or should the church have a personality and mission of its own and seek leadership to operate within it? Committee Chairman John Klamar said, "We need to examine our expectations of the senior minister to see if they are anachronistic and brutalizing. In my interviews with staff members, one thing stood out: the role of senior minister, as outlined in our constitution, may be an impossible assignment."

The search process was officially set in motion by the Governing Board at its April meeting with the appointment of two committees, one to select a senior minister and the other to analyze and recommend any necessary changes in the organizational structure of the staff and its relationship to the congregation.

Life at First Community Church has never stood still during interim periods between senior ministers. This church seems to have a momentum all its own. Such was the case in 1974. The Lenten small-group sessions, *A Personal Spring*, drew hundreds of participants. The Burkhardt Center, under the leadership of the Rev. Dick Conrad, was inaugurated in April and sponsored the 28th annual minister's seminar featuring psychologist Sam Keen and former First Community staff member, Rev. Donald Smith. The Burkhardt Center was a major new program that was envisioned as a gathering of qualified professional and lay leaders in human and organizational behavior who would work together in a setting to educate and foster personal and organizational growth. The Reverend Robert Keck, who had originally joined the church staff to work with young people, sought and received a grant from the Lilly Endowment to conduct a three-year prayer and mediation research project, *New Wine-skins*, with First Community Church as the main laboratory congregation.

Jackhammers roared and dust clouds rose as construction began in July on the renovation of 1320 envisioned by architect and church member, Bob Wandel. A second story took shape over the existing Early Childhood classrooms and kitchen. Daylight from an overhead skylight illuminated the walkway which was built to connect the east and west hallways upstairs. One stairway and office vanished as a new route to the second floor appeared. The stage at the north end of Brownlee Hall was removed to make way for the airy Garden Gallery. Glass walls rose to enclose the Weist Room and allow visibility from the rear of Brownlee Hall all the way to the north transept of the sanctuary. Completion was promised by Christmas.

Exciting worship services were carried out by the Music Department. The congregation moved back in time to experience a mass from medieval and Renaissance days. The mood was set by the scent of incense, music and liturgy from the 9th to 15th centuries, and by the sixteen colorful banners depicting various styles of crosses that decorated the sanctuary. Ron Jenkins and Mark Pawlowski designed another service around the practices in Germany during the period of the 16th to 18th century Reformation, from Martin Luther to J. S. Bach. Contemporary liturgy and a folk mass performed by the High School Choir highlighted one spring-time Sunday, and the mood of early 19th century America was captured on another.

In April the Governing Board established a subcommittee to solicit bids on the Reed-McCoy property. Specific parcels of land were identified at the May meeting and a bid deadline was set for July 10. In September Board approval was given to sell 9.695 acres for approximately \$227,800. The remaining 9.87 acres were retained for possible use in the future.

Several staff changes were taking place. Bob Murtha, who had served as First Community Church Director of Finance and also Director of First Community Village, relinquished his duties in April to pursue new vocational goals. His replacement was George Stultz, who joined the staff in September. The Rev. Tom Mozley, minister to junior high and college-age youth, submitted his resignation effective on September 1. Fran Carter was appointed to coordinate the junior high ministry, with assistance from two seminary students, Debbie Peck and her fiancé, John Pitney. After a 25-year association with First Community Church and many years as a val-



ued staff minister, Dick Conrad left at the end of July to become executive director of a conference and retreat center in suburban Chicago. His departure as director, along with a financial crisis that developed late in the year, foreshadowed the end of the dream for the Burkhart Center.

A new era in the history of First Community Church dawned on January 12, 1975, when Dr. Harold N. Englund was called as senior minister. He was born in Eureka, California, to Swedish immigrant parents who met in this country where each had come to seek opportunity. Their home was marked by lots of love, humor and hard work, and Harold was greatly influenced by his father. Warm childhood memories of ethnic recipes and holiday customs bespeak the significance of this Swedish heritage for Harold and his older sister. His high school years were spent in Oakland where the family moved when he was 14. Pride at being named valedictorian of Oakland High School's Class of 1941 was tempered by grief over the death of his father just two weeks earlier.

Harold had planned to pursue a musical career with the goal of becoming a symphony orchestra conductor. Unfortunately, his father's death ended his dream of attending the conservatory. Instead, he enrolled at San Francisco College where he studied music and played piano and tympani. After a year he switched majors and schools, transferring to the study of economics at the University of California at Berkeley.

World War II changed the direction of his life, as it did for so many. Harold enlisted in the Army Air Force in 1943 and was sent to the University of Oregon to study math and physics. During a six-month assignment in Canada at the Royal Air Force Radar Institute, he met his future wife. One of the Canadian families he had met in church invited him home for Sunday dinner and he kept returning because of their daughter, Enid Carter. He was then transferred to the Pacific Theater, serving on Guam and Iwo Jima. It was the wartime experiences that eventually led him into the ministry. He had discovered that, by drawing on his strong Christian background, he had been able to counsel and minister to many of his comrades in the war zone.

Following military discharge as a master sergeant in 1946, Harold returned to Berkeley to complete his studies, with emphasis on the economics of underdeveloped countries. He graduated with hon-

ors in 1947 and then enrolled at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, a seminary of the Reformed Church in America. Meanwhile, Enid prepared herself to be a minister's wife by attending a Toronto Biblical college. Her parents had roots in Brethren and Anglican churches. They had immigrated to Canada from London, England, as young people and Enid and her brother grew up in London, Ontario. After her graduation Harold and Enid were married on September 11, 1948, in the Baptist Church of London, Ontario.

Harold graduated from seminary in 1950 and accepted a call to Second Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan, where he served as pastor for eight years. From fall 1953 to spring 1955, they were given a leave of absence to pursue graduate study in Edinburgh and London. During that period they also were able to study and travel in Europe and the Middle East. The years in Zeeland were happy and productive. A new church was erected and a new congregation begun in a Detroit suburb. Harold wrote a regular column in the denominational weekly magazine and conducted religious emphasis weeks at several church college campuses.

In 1958 he was called to be the first pastor of a new Midland Reformed Church. That pastorate was interrupted in 1960 when he was asked to serve as interim president of his alma mater, Western Seminary. In a two-year period there he instigated a major rebuilding effort that resulted in a forty percent increase in students, fifty percent increase in faculty, doubled income for the school, raised salaries and established new degree programs. Although he was offered the permanent presidency, he opted to return to his first love, pastoring a congregation.

From 1960-68 Harold Englund served as Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church in Berkeley, California, the largest Protestant church in the city. Those were turbulent years on the adjacent university campus, in the community and in the nation. They were marked by the Free Speech Movement, the rise of the hippie culture and drug scene on nearby Telegraph Avenue, the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King, and the impact of the Vietnam War. The church sought the cooperation of merchants and university administrators in creating outreach programs for the street people, non-reading adults and students. During these years of turmoil, Harold worked ceaselessly to keep lines of communication open to all factions



and to be a peace keeping, truth seeking, stabilizing influence in the community.

In 1968 Dr. Englund accepted a call from Fremont Presbyterian Church in Sacramento. This church also was deeply involved in community projects such as working with prisoners' families and rehabilitating ex-prisoners, a Saturday church school for mentally retarded children, and working with high school and college students to build a church with and for the Pecwan Indians in a remote area of northern California. One of the activities in which he took great pride was Fremont's program that trained nearly 200 tutors who taught reading skills to black and Hispanic adults.

Throughout these years he also served on several commissions and councils of the United Presbyterian Church and on the Board of Trustees of San Francisco Theological Seminary, taught courses at four seminaries, led guidance groups and seminars for pastors doing advanced studies, was involved in ecumenical relationships, and received an honorary doctoral degree from Hope College.

At the invitation of the Search Committee, the Englunds were enticed from the sunny climate of California for a visit to snowy Ohio in early January 1975. The congregation convened on January 12, to issue a call. Enid, Harold and their sixteen-year old son, Bruce, moved into their new home in late February. Dr. Englund preached his first sermon as the eighth Senior Minister of First Community Church on March 2. Their elder son, Brian, elected to remain in California to complete his law studies.

When Harold assumed his new duties, First Community Church was facing a severe financial crisis. In December the Governing Board had agreed to proceed with an interim budget for the first quarter of 1975, to be approved at the January meeting for submission to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. It also established a special task force on budget and priorities charged to seek and gather information from the congregation at large about the programs and priorities they felt were most important in the church. Meetings were organized to assure thorough involvement of members in these discussions of budget and program priorities.

The Annual Report revealed a deficit of \$107,440. Plans were made for an additional fund-raising effort and a follow up of unpaid 1974 pledges and those who hadn't yet pledged for 1975. A congrega-

tional vote at the Annual Meeting had authorized operating at current staff and program levels for the first quarter, but directed that a revised budget for the balance of the year be presented to the congregation at a special meeting in April. A one time Lenten Renewal Gift was sought. Dr. Englund issued a challenge to make Easter a time of renewal and reassessment. On April 6, the new budget was presented, but it was balanced only because of the Lenten gifts and painful cuts. Several staff positions were eliminated or reduced and publication of the First Community Church News was discontinued and replaced temporarily by a one-sheet weekly newsletter.

In an interview with Beth Riley, Harold outlined his philosophy of the church as an enabler of community. "In the church we live and work with a diversity of ages, cultural level and problems. The church shows how it can be done. If it can't be done in the church, I'm a bit pessimistic about the world." He outlined his responsibility as "helping people with their ministries, challenges and difficulties . . . to help others discover who they are, what they can do, and the places they can best fill."

Just three weeks short of the 25th anniversary of his ordination, Dr. Englund was installed at a celebrative service on June 15, 1975. A special part of that service included the hymn, "May the Mind of Christ, My Savior," which had been sung at Harold and Enid's wedding and at every service in which he had been installed as a minister. A brilliant sun shone upon the informal reception on the lawn that followed.

The next day the Governing Board met to approve the final report of the Organization Study Committee. This group had been appointed at the beginning of the search process the previous year in an effort to improve communications and more clearly define lines of authority and responsibility between the senior Minister, staff and Governing Board. The report provided for the establishment of five new councils of laypersons to oversee the five primary areas of church: Education, Mission, Parish Life, Worship and the Arts, and Finance and Administration.

Englund's conviction that the church organization should be run by the laity was influential in shaping the final reorganization proposal. The June 22, FCC Newsletter quoted his observations. "A congregation has a natural leadership of gifted, spiritual sen-



sitive, experienced people. This leadership needs to be discovered, enlisted, trained, empowered, used and trusted. Our lay councils will be servants of the congregation, responsible to the Governing Board, partners with the staff to get FCC's mission done. The result, in time, will be a growing feeling among our members, 'This is our church! We can guide it! We are responsible for it! We are needed to make it work!' No organization plan can do more"

In reminiscing about this facet of his ministry at First Community Church, Dr Englund said, "I have long believed that lay people have to be given a very real policy making role to play in the church. I turned areas of the church's life over to them for initiative and policy making and the Governing Board then accepted the reports of the lay commissions, revised or modified them, approved them or declined them; but the initiative lay in these five lay commissions. The reality of lay leadership was a very, very strong part of the style of ministry that I developed. I thought it built ownership, and when it came to budget time, 250 people, roughly, were involved in the grass roots budget toil. So, finally, the competition of the marginal dollar that reached the Governing Board was one that found everyone who had participated in the process feeling a sense of participation."

If Harold Englund held strong convictions about the value of church members working together, he also believed that they should play together. He hiked the trails at Akita and provided thoughtful, inspiring leadership for both men's and women's retreats. The first of many family potluck dinners was held in Brownlee Hall shortly after his arrival. He enjoyed playing the piano for group singing afterward. He also visited First Community Village, leading the residents in singing old favorites or entertaining at the piano. Both Harold and Enid joined the cast of *Vaud-Villities*, singing in the glee clubs and becoming veteran performers. No one who saw it will ever forget Harold singing "In the Mood" with the Chickens!

The largest dinner in church history occurred on November 4, 1975, in the Rhodes Building at the Ohio State Fairgrounds when hundreds of members met together for a giant potluck. It was a masterpiece of planning that involved hordes of hostesses scurrying around to issue personal invitations to every member of the congregation in Franklin County and to oversee the food and service for

their guests. A monumental traffic jam ensued on the streets surrounding the fairground as church members began arriving at the same time that a convention of accountants was trying to leave. Highlights of the evening included a program by the Senior High Choir, reminiscences of the past 60 years by various members, introduction of past Governing Board and staff, and announcement that a baby girl had just been born to our first refugee family, the Nguyen's. Attendees were asked to stand according to the year they joined the church. The celebration ended with a community songfest and a final rousing rendition of "Battle Hymn" led by Ron Jenkins and accompanied by Harold at the piano. It was indeed a night to remember!

A number of staff changes took place in 1976 and 1977. John and Adrienne Carr departed to assume teaching posts on the faculty of Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta and Mark Pawlowski accepted a call as Associate Minister of First Presbyterian Church in Greenwich, Conn. The 1976 budget was balanced partially through redesigning some of the staffing positions. The switchboard was taken over by a corps of trained volunteers and lay participation was stepped up at all levels of church life. Part time positions in junior high and children's ministry were phased out; and both Fran Carter and Jeane Spoor left to continue their seminary education leading to ordination. The Reverend John Cairns was called as Minister of Christian Education, arriving at First Community in August 1976. Seminary student Larry Kent worked with junior high youth, and the Reverend Richard Sebastian assumed the post of Youth Minister on May 1, 1977.

The severe winter of 1977, along with an energy crisis, impacted programs at First Community and everywhere in our geographic area. Lincoln Road Chapel was shut down and Trading Post hours restricted. Food, blankets and money were collected every Sunday, and then taken by Howard Huntzicker to United Way Emergency Headquarters and food pantries. The sanctuary was closed off and worship services were held in Brownlee Hall through the month of February. As thermostats were set back to save fuel; boots, thermal underwear and layers of sweaters became necessary apparel in the church. Many meetings and programs were cancelled or held in homes. The choirs rehearsed at First Community Village and sang a cappella anthems on Sunday mornings. With the ground frozen to a depth of 38", Akita was closed



down for nearly two months until the pipes could thaw naturally.

Two very special gifts to the church were unveiled in 1977. Hundreds of people had contributed to the Richard Conrad Memorial Fund. In tribute to Dick's memory and in recognition of his unique ministry to the congregation of First Community Church, sculptor Gary Ross was commissioned to execute the powerful figures that float from the ceiling of Gallery Court. The chalice and bread plate of pewter lined with gold that grace our sanctuary altar table were commissioned by the First Community Foundation in memory of Esther and Clarence Lorig. Artist Kent Vanderplas later created matching candlesticks and a bud vase before destroying the molds so they could never be used again.

Over the years Eldis Reed had made numerous trips to Latin America as First Community Church's goodwill ambassador for Project Amigos. Wanting to find out for himself just how our church could best respond constructively to their needs, Dr. Englund accompanied Eldis to Bogotá and Quito in March 1977. There he was able to meet some long-standing friends of our church and to observe the program in which we had been involved. Shortly after their return, Eldis was presented with the International YMCA's World Service Award in honor of his outstanding service as a Christian layman in Latin America. First Community Church also received a plaque in recognition of its work in Latin America through the YMCA. The awards were named for Herbert Evans, another First Community member, who had long been active in promoting the international work of the YMCA and had become involved in Project Amigos at its inception.

A dramatic hands-on mission project for both youth and adults came about following a devastating flood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Rev. Rick Sebastian received a phone call from a seminary classmate describing the effects of the flood. The next Sunday Rick announced that he would like to fill the church bus with supplies and volunteers to help the people whose lives and homes had been ravaged by this natural disaster. The response to his appeal was immediate. Money, food, cleaning supplies and free tetanus shots were donated. In record time the bus was enroute. The volunteers moved mud, cleaned up, hosed down, loaded debris and ministered to people in any way they could. A second trip brought to 54, the total number of adults, college and high school students who

had personally helped with the relief work. It was an experience that changed lives on both sides of the effort. In December 1978 serious flooding occurred in Frankfort, Kentucky, and once again Rick organized a relief expedition. Thirty-two volunteers between the ages of 14 and 70 answered this call.

There were other exciting programs that involved our young people in spiritually enriching outreach projects. An exchange program with the youth group of a church in Washington D. C. provided the opportunity for dialogue and fellowship with students in another part of the country. The first "Mountain T.O.P" (Tennessee Outreach Program) trip took place in July 1978 as 18 students worked in Appalachia to repair, paint and build houses and outbuildings. Six students worked in Latin America as missionaries with Project Amigos, and were followed by three more the next year. Through the junior high Super Tuesday Program (STP) program, led by seminary student Larry Kent, relationships were forged with residents of First Community Village. Larry observed, "STP attendance is greatest on the weeks when the program has the greatest depth and opportunity for service rather than on the purely recreational weeks." When money raised by the youth to support their various projects exceeded expectations, they tithed a portion of the proceeds to the church.

The entire church hummed with many activities. One of the most popular was the Bible class taught by Harold. Lenten study groups, varied adult education offerings, pulpit exchanges with pastors of other faiths, observance of the Jewish Seder, a ten-day visit by Dr. Donald Frasher from Ireland, and forum discussions on controversial topics focused attention inwardly on personal spiritual growth and outwardly on heightened awareness of our role in the community and the world.

Rev. Bob Keck's New Wineskins Center brought an exciting new dimension of research in meditation, dream interpretation, biofeedback and holistic medicine and health. For several years New Wineskins sponsored the annual ministers' seminars where nationally recognized speakers provided additional stimulation.

Dr. Englund was very interested in strengthening ecumenical relationship and was actively involved in the Metropolitan Area Church Board. By working together, these religious leaders successfully achieved peaceful integration of the Columbus



school system. Harold formed close friendships with Roman Catholic Church leaders and preached at St. Joseph's Cathedral when the Bishop and Archbishop preached at First Community. After trying out two programs sponsored by the Catholic Church, marriage enrichment and Cursillo, Harold and Enid recommended them to our congregation. First Community took turns with other churches in night counseling at Trinity Episcopal Church near Capitol Square. Trinity was also the site for the Bible study classes Harold taught for downtown businessmen. His energy and stamina seemed endless, especially to those who found themselves attending breakfast meetings with him. Under Harold's leadership, our staff ministers took a more active role in the Northwest Clergy, and relationships among churches in this area were strengthened. Harold had made it clear to all the clergy in the Northwest area that if illness or any unforeseen problem arose in their churches on a Sunday morning, they could call him and he would send one of the retired ministers who were members of our congregation to serve in whatever capacity he might be needed. Harold's secretary, Jean Dones, noted also his special interest in ministering to ministers, and how he and Enid together ministered to clergy couples.

In 1978 the sanctuary was cleaned and renovated. The funding campaign was so successful that pledge receipts were \$9,500 more than expected. This made it possible to purchase new pew cushions and a hydraulic elevating platform. A rededication service in December incorporated facets of the original 1926 dedication service for the new church.

Two new ministries were developed in 1978. The Child Care Center, under the direction of Mary Ellen Powers, opened in August to provide an enriching experience for the 3-5 year children of working parents and was an immediate success. A Family Life Ministry, envisioned as both educational and supportive, was determined to be an important next step in our total ministry. The Rev. Lyndon Whybrew arrived on December 1 to head this new department. Courses were developed in all four areas considered to be a part of the Family Life Ministry: forming relationships, parenting, total family concerns and singles. Lynn also counseled families around such issues as marriage, divorce, transition, and dealing with problem children. A wide range of experiences were offered such as couples' weekends, parent training, relationship workshops and

family camps. Singles and intergenerational cluster groups were also formed.

Everyone who loves Christmas Eve knows that it is a very special time at First Community Church, but 1978's proved to be memorable indeed. Picture people taking their seats in the sanctuary, murmuring quietly about the beauty of the decorations and the glow of candlelight, waiting expectantly for the sounds of the organ and beloved carols sung by the choir. Suddenly the fire alarm begins blaring and ushers swiftly lead the congregation out into the cold night air to await the arrival of the fire trucks. Fortunately the emergency did not last very long, and soon all were back inside the church, even if not in their previous pews. Someone had placed a lighted candle on a chest in one of the classrooms above Burkhardt Chapel. When it burned low, it ignited the top of the chest and the wisps of smoke triggered the smoke detector. One of our custodians extinguished the small fire and there was no damage, but it was a Christmas Eve like no other, and one remembered by all who were present that night.

A celebrative Festival of Faith highlighted the beginning of our 70th year. The whole congregation gathered on October 7, 1979, at Mershon Auditorium to look back at our history, sing praises to God, share worldwide communion and affirm our purpose as a congregation. It was at this service that Rev. Rick Sebastian taught our ministers and deacons how to serve communion by station as many Lutherans do, and communion is still served in this manner.

Lay volunteers organized two major fund raising projects in early 1980. The Women's Guild initiated a sorely needed renovation of the church kitchen by offering the Governing Board a challenge pledge of \$2,000 per year for three years to be matched by church funds. They purchased a new stove and ovens, then organized a giant bazaar to raise the money needed to complete the project of refurbishing the entire kitchen. Meanwhile "Bluebird," the faithful bus that had safely transported our youth on so many trips, had completely broken down and was beyond repair. Scores of volunteers joined forces to organize a very successful garage sale that raised over \$11,000. The Governing Board approved the purchase of a new bus when it appeared that private gifts and other fund raisers could bring in the money necessary to meet the \$24,000 cost. The new bus "Yellowbird," arrived



just in time to carry the staff to a farewell luncheon for Youth Minister Rick Sebastian who was leaving for a pastorate in Rochester, New York.

Harold Englund spent a three-month sabbatical leave in California during late spring and early summer of 1980. He and Enid returned just in time to celebrate the 30th anniversary of his ordination and the fifth anniversary of his pastorate at First Community Church on July 20th. It was a summer of special anniversaries with Howard Huntzicker and Art Sanders celebrating the 35th anniversary of their ordinations on June 22.

On September 29, 1980, Dr. Englund announced to the Governing Board his intention to resign after the first of the year and return to California as Senior Pastor of Carmel Presbyterian Church. During his tenure at First Community Church, Harold Englund brought a healing and teaching ministry, nurtured a strong lay leadership, built a creative staff, strengthened our ecumenical ties, and helped to develop new avenues of ministry through the Day Care Center, New Wineskins Center and the Family Life Ministry.

Harold preached his last sermon on January 4, 1981, Epiphany Sunday. In his closing remarks, he said, "We are grateful beyond words for the nearly six years we have served FCC. It has been a growing and learning experience for us both. The church has responded with warmth and enthusiasm." At a reception following the 11:00 worship service Harold received commendations from the Ohio House of Representatives and Bishop George Fulcher of the Columbus Catholic Diocese in recognition of his many good works within the Columbus community.

Harold and Enid returned to Columbus in 1984 for Dr. Barry Johnson's installation. They stayed in touch with our church and many of its members in the years following their departure, and sent warm messages via the *First Community Church NEWS*, inviting anyone who visited California to drop by and see them.







## REV. JOHN A CAIRNS INTERIM HEAD OF STAFF – 1981 -1983

Following the departure of Dr. Harold Englund in early January 1981, the Governing Board divided some of the senior minister responsibilities among several members of the program staff and appointed Rev. John Cairns as Interim Head of Staff. John had served as Minister of Education since 1976. In his first "Cairn's Corner" article in the January 11 issue of the *First Community Church NEWS*, John wrote, "At our recent program staff retreat, we unanimously agreed that this period should not be a time of being in limbo for FCC. We are committed to moving ahead with new and renewed emphasis on areas and concerns vital to the life of the congregation and the accomplishment of Christ's mission in the world." And that is exactly what happened.

In February an intensive one and a half year training program began for the twenty-four persons who would teach the Bethel Bible Series starting in the fall of 1982. Lincoln Road Chapel was filled with music and movement as high school youth held a twelve-hour dance marathon to raise money for their trip to Canada in March where they would meet with a youth group in Ontario who would then come to Akita next summer. John Cairns proudly hosted the first regular meeting of the Scioto Valley Presbytery ever to be held in a non-Presbyterian church. Attendance during Holy Week and Easter services equaled last year's. Eighty-one pastors and their wives from throughout the Midwest and Canada attended the 29th annual Ministers' Seminar and gave rave reviews for the programs that were coordinated by Rev. Lynn Whybrew and his Family Life Ministry. Women's Guild Group E celebrated its 50th year of devoted service to the church and community.

The Governing Board approved John's recommendation that a self-study be undertaken of the organization and structure of program and staff. H. Rhea Gray, a management and organizational development consultant, was engaged to study First Community Church's structure and to make recommendations that would help us live within our income. His function was to meet with staff and lay leaders and to help us look at ourselves and reflect our strengths, weaknesses and possibilities so that we could plan more effectively for the future. In May Rev. Grey presented the results of his review of the church to the Governing Board.

He reported that in general he felt that First Community Church was in a healthy condition and ready for a period of growth, but that the ministry of the church would be strengthened by moving to a more team-oriented approach to define the staff more as generalists and less as specialists. He recommended focusing on new member recruitment and stewardship and stated his belief that the church had barely begun to scratch the surface in utilizing the many and widely varied talents within the congregation.

The church bustled with its routine schedule plus even more activities than usual. During the week of April 12, 1981, seventy-seven events were on the calendar, and that counted all of the Sunday School classes and seminars as only one event.

Celebrative occasions of all kinds dotted the church calendar during this interim period. Sunday May 17, 1981, was declared "Lowell Riley Day" in honor of his forty years on the staff of First Community Church. Lowell played the organ postlude and directed his handbell choir in playing a hymn suite he had arranged. The choir sang anthems he had composed. At a reception after the service hosted by Vaud-Villities, long lines of church members and friends stopped to pay tribute to both Lowell and his wife, Beth, for the many ways they had enriched their lives through the years. No one before Lowell had ever achieved such a lengthy tenure on the staff. Other celebrations included a festive Pentecost service that ended with the entire congregation on the lawn, and an interfaith Thanksgiving service at St. Joseph's Cathedral with participants from the Jewish and Catholic faiths.

The saddest note during this period involved the illness of Rev. Howard Huntzicker. Bud, as he was affectionately called, had joined the staff in 1968 and worked primarily with new members, missions, ushers and the Women's Guild, but he was involved in countless other projects around the church. His warmth, good humor and caring concern made him one of the most popular and beloved ministers ever to be part of the First Community Church family. Something went awry during surgery to replace a heart valve on June 1, and Bud did not regain consciousness. Prayers for his recovery and in support of his wife, Bettenell, were sent heavenward by friends and staff members who gathered at 11:00 each morning in Burkhart Chapel or prayed quietly wherever they happened to be. It was announced in the January 17, 1982,



issue of *First Community Church NEWS* that for the first time in 36 weeks, Bud's name was missing from the weekly hospital list. He was finally able to go home where round the clock private duty nurses cared for him, and friends could visit more freely. It was not long before teams of volunteers went to his home daily to help the therapists conduct passive range of motion and patterning exercises. Bud was never able to return to work, but until his death in May 1990, he sometimes attended worship services in his wheelchair.

The Family Life Ministry launched a new family cluster program called F.L.I.N.G., Families Learning Together in Nurturing Groups. The leaders had taken special training from the originator of the program and planned to start new groups each quarter. The belief was that as families took part in this program, the church would be enriched with a broad base of people of all ages who enjoyed working, playing and worshipping together.

Several staff changes occurred during 1981. In January Julie Osborn became John Cairns' secretary. Marilyn Lash left her post as youth department assistant in April. After seven years as our organist, Robert Griffith found it necessary to resign when he became chairman of the music department at Ohio Wesleyan University. Kathryn Whitten succeeded him in September. Sally Wandel replaced Virginia Frick as Scheduling Coordinator. Also in September Rev. Louis Swartz was hired as Interim Associate Pastor to help with the duties normally performed by Bud Huntzicker.

Once a month during the year our pulpit was filled by distinguished visiting ministers including Dr. Floyd Faust, pastor emeritus of Broad Street Christian Church and dean of Central Ohio Protestant clergymen; former First Community staff minister John Carr; Dr. James Glasse, president of Lancaster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania; and James Morgan, president of World Neighbors. Each brought fresh insights and inspiration to our congregation. Mr. Morgan came to Columbus in November to help celebrate the thirtieth birthday of World Neighbors, which had been founded here by Dr. John Peters and Dr. Roy Burkhart. From its small beginnings, nurtured largely by members of our church and our community, World Neighbors grew to the point where thirty years later it had more than 65 separate programs in Asia, Africa and Latin America to help local workers in food production, family planning, health services and com-

munity development programs. As a church, First Community continues to this day to financially support this self-help organization that has always worked at the village level to alleviate hunger, poverty, disease and ignorance.

In his annual report as Interim Head of Staff John Cairns stated, "No year at First Community Church is ordinary, but 1981 was certainly more 'unordinary' than most. It was, of course, a year between senior ministers...A primary factor in the life of FCC this year is the illness and long-term disability of Howard Huntzicker. Bud was sorely missed and the personal touches of his ministry could not be replaced...No review of the year would be complete without noting the work of the Search Committee under chairman Jack Davis in evaluating a list of 170 possibilities." Don Gardiner, Governing Board Chairman, wrote, "What could have been an aimless year turned out instead to be one of challenge, growth and community, thanks to the strong support and perseverance of the congregation and the dedication of our staff, Governing Board members and lay leaders."

The second interim year began in anticipation of a new senior minister, but the candidate declined our offer in January. However, life moved forward at First Community Church with its usual vigor, as 1982 saw a dramatic renovation of the church library with new cabinetry and display areas for books and archive materials that made it one of the most sought after meeting areas in the building. There was a renewed commitment to increase the level of mission donations to ten percent within the next three years. A new Statement of Purpose for First Community Church was adopted at the June Governing Board meeting. The Early Childhood Department undertook a campaign to raise \$30,000 for a new pre-school playground to meet state licensing requirements. With the help of many teachers and parents, it was completed and dedicated on October 24th.

With the departure of Lou Swartz at the end of his interim year, Rev. Martha "Missy" Weatherhead was called to serve primarily in the areas of mission and membership. Missy's grandparents were First Community members Martha and Don Ebright, and her mother and uncle grew up in our congregation.

First Community Church's fall schedule was busy with concerts, preparations for the annual Wom-



en's Guild book fair, and fourteen Bethel Bible classes that filled every nook and cranny of the church. Four hundred participants were enrolled in this new spiritual journey. For the first time ever a Seven Keys program for adults was offered by Diane Persinger, who had led the youth seminars for eleven years, and by youth minister Bob Rhymer. Senior high students gathered in the church kitchen to prepare food for the homeless shelter, and then went to Gladden Community House where they tackled cleaning and maintenance tasks in the homes of some of the senior citizens in the Gladden area. Guild Group Q, with the help of quilt collector Lucy Hoffman, filled Brownlee Hall with antique furnishings, a beautiful array of quilts of every description borrowed from many interested church members, and several quilters demonstrating their art.

Fall at Akita brought an open house; senior high workday; and retreats for singles, men, women, and the choir. The second annual folk festival at Outpost attracted recent campers as well as many former counselors who had served on the Akita staff. Director Tom Wood was on hand to share the wonders of Akita as he presided over the singing, games, hikes and an apple cider festival.

At last on October 25, 1982, announcement was made that the Rev. Dr. Barry L. Johnson had been nominated to the post of Senior Minister. He would preach at both worship services on December 12, and then the congregation would meet to vote on his candidacy.

As the holidays approached, life at First Community continued at its usual fast pace. On November 14th the new organ in Burkhart Chapel given by Guild Group Y in memory of member Frances (Frankie) Parker was dedicated with recitals by Ron Jenkins and Kathryn Whitten. The night before Thanksgiving members of our church joined with those of Temple Israel and St. Joseph's Cathedral in a service of Thanksgiving and Shalom for the entire community at the Cathedral. Our Chancel Choir and John Cairns participated in the service along with representatives of the other congregations. The three churches also combined their Thanksgiving offerings for the Open Shelter. The Children's Christmas Craft Shop, the choir's annual Christmas concert, and the family vesper concert that involved 150 children and youth were all highly successful.

There were many in the congregation who wanted John Cairns to accept the post of Senior Minister that he had filled so ably, but when invited more than one time, John declined. As he ended his second year as Interim Head of Staff, John gratefully acknowledged his colleagues and those on the support staff as well. He concluded his annual report with these words, "The privilege of growth and service that I have enjoyed over these last two years will always be special. So, too, are the new opportunities for ministry with you that lie ahead in 1983 and beyond." Those of us who worked and worshipped with John appreciated his warmth, good humor and capable leadership.







**BARRY L. JOHNSON, PASTOR: 1983-1992**

The search for a new Senior Minister to succeed Harold Englund was a lengthy process in which the committee looked at 175 candidates during the course of twenty-one months. Finally, on October 25, 1982, the Governing Board nominated Barry L. Johnson and scheduled his first sermon for Sunday, December 12. At the special meeting following morning worship, he received congregational approval to become our ninth Senior Minister. The longest search process in the history of our church was finally concluded.

The Johnson family, consisting of Barry, his wife Celeste, daughter Tracy and son Dane, settled into their new home and he assumed his new duties on February 1, 1983. In a letter to the congregation Barry wrote, "I was impressed by the diversity of program, sensed the marvelous opportunity to be a part of a ministry of national significance and discerned a challenge that would force me to grow spiritually and professionally. The Search Committee, the staff, and those members of the Governing Board with whom I met all impressed me with their vitality, depth and commitment to Jesus Christ. If these people are representative of the total congregation, I am thrilled at the possibility of living, leading and learning with you."

Barry Johnson was a native of Bloomington, Illinois. During his first 12 years, the family lived in the city, and then moved six miles outside of town. He had an older brother and two younger sisters. The Johnsons attended an Evangelical United Brethren Church where his mother was extremely active. Sunday School attendance was mandatory in their household. He described himself as a behavior problem in those early years. Finally, his father was assigned to be the teacher of his fourth grade Sunday School class. Each year Mr. Johnson graduated with his son into the next grade, so that he taught whatever class Barry was in for four years.

Athletics were an important part of Barry's teen years. He played halfback on the football team, guard on the basketball team and pitcher on the baseball team. However, it was involvement with the speech team that proved to be more significant in shaping his future. For this he credits the sensitivity and perception of his freshman English teacher. Having already thrown him out of class three times for misbehavior, she knew that a fourth offense would cause suspension from school.

Therefore, after ejecting him from the classroom, she hid him in the faculty lounge and after class returned to tell him that as a penalty he must be on the speech team. His love affair with public speaking blossomed from that experience. On a reel-to-reel recorder he studied Walter Cronkite, listening to how he spoke and put information together. He taped other speakers, too, learning phrasing and story telling from them. Then he would write and record his own speeches.

The decision to enter the ministry was made while he was still in high school. There was not an active youth group in his EUB church, nor did he ever attend church camp. However, he described himself as "into Christianity" by age 10 to 12. Evangelical services with outside preachers were a "cultural experience." The minister from their church was a significant figure in the Johnson household. His daughter was married to the song director for Billy Graham, whom Barry thought was the best preacher in the world at that time.

Because Billy Graham had attended Wheaton College, that was where Barry also wanted to go, and it was the only college to which he applied. The years at Wheaton were also important because that was where he met an attractive psychology major, Celeste Hoppe, who later became his wife. Following graduation with a history degree in 1965, Barry entered Evangelical Theological Seminary in Naperville, Illinois. "There I got serious about learning and discovered that I was a student. I had clowned around at Wheaton, but when I got to seminary I knew I was now into the professional part of my life." Several professors made lasting impressions, particularly those who taught systematic theology and Greek. Barry characterized those years as a period of awakening. In 1968 he received a Master of Divinity degree.

His first church was a small United Methodist congregation in Bensenville, Illinois, near Chicago's O'Hare Airport. This was during the chaotic era of civil rights and anti-Vietnam war demonstrations. Chicago had been rocked by the violence surrounding the presidential convention of 1968. Churches were losing members and the Methodist denomination was splitting, with conservatives going one way and liberals going the other.

In the spring of 1969 Barry attended a workshop given by social psychologist Jack Gibb that became another turning point in this life. The intensive



small group experience followed Dr. Gibb's theory that for true role freedom to evolve in a group, trust must first be established, then open communication, self-determination, and interdependence. This approach created an environment conducive to personal and group discovery. Barry found this fascinating. He learned from Dr. Gibb that this theory had never been used in a church setting, but could have applications in that environment. Ever since his undergraduate years at Wheaton College, Barry had toyed with the idea of creating a new approach to Christian evangelism. Now, he believed that Dr. Gibb had provided the key for powerful communication.

He began writing sermons and designing activities for a program that would help people center on five topics: trust, openness, responsibility to self, interdependence and centrality of Christ. EURISKON, from the Greek word for discovery, was chosen as the name for this new program for church renewal. Barry noted, "I did the first one at my brother-in-law's church in Hartford, Connecticut, because he was the only guy who would risk it." The program was well received and many requests were generated after a descriptive article appeared in a Methodist magazine. By 1972 the combination of travel and trying to fulfill his pastoral duties at the Bensenville church were too much. Barry went to the bishop and told him that he wanted to work full time at the renewal ministry. The bishop gave his permission, but predicted that the dream would fail.

Randy Rocke, who is currently the Director of Media Ministry at First Community Church, was directing music for a large Presbyterian camp when he first met Barry Johnson. By January 1973 he had been persuaded by Barry to become the music director and field coordinator for EURISKON. Their ministry of reconciliation was centered in music, preaching and small groups. Nationwide advertising in religious periodicals plus word of mouth recommendations kept Randy and Barry on the road about twenty-six weeks a year.

By 1975 the stresses of frequent travel and being away from his family caused Barry to take special interest in a *Christian Century* ad. He put together a portfolio and sent it off to Shiloh Church in Dayton, Ohio. By November he had become the senior minister for this busy church with its multiple staff, varied programs and 2,500 members. Barry Johnson served as senior minister of Shiloh church in

Dayton from November 1975 until January 1983 when he left to accept the position as senior minister at First Community Church.

Three major events marked the period of his life at Shiloh: a tragic fire in the church, the beginning of his television ministry and earning a doctoral degree. In April 1978 six fires were set inside the building and, because there was no alarm system, they burned undetected for several hours. The structure was gutted, though not destroyed. For more than a year the congregation met wherever they could find space. The church was rededicated in June 1979, with President Gerald Ford as keynote speaker. From his EURISKON travels to churches all over the country, Barry came to believe that television was going to be the growth element of the future. He determined that if he ever had a large enough church, he wanted to experiment with TV. Following the fire the church was redesigned to accommodate television and lights were added to the sanctuary.

When Barry accepted the pastorate of Shiloh, Randy Rocke had returned to Illinois to finish college. Now, as Barry prepared to embark on a television ministry, he invited Randy to come to Dayton and help him with TV. In 1980 Johnson started his doctoral research on television in the mainline church and two years later earned his Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary in Dayton.

When asked what made him decide to leave Shiloh and accept the call of First Community Church, Johnson responded, "the second touch." He had applied for consideration as First Community Church's senior minister, but on further thought decided that he was not yet ready to leave Shiloh and asked that his paperwork be returned to him. When the initial nominee of First Community's search committee made the decision in May 1982 to remain with his own congregation, Barry received a call from Paul Peters of the Central Southeast Association of the United Church of Christ urging him to again become a candidate for the position at First Community. By then he had completed another year in Dayton and was ready to accept our call and move on.

In the April 10, 1983, issue of *First Community Church News* Barry stated, "FCC had a meaningful history long before I arrived. In the same sense, my experiences heretofore offer fresh insight and skill.



Ours is the opportunity to conscientiously blend the two together to make the witness of FCC as powerful as possible at this point in time."

Television was a subject of high priority for Barry. Consequently a task force was appointed in late May to study a potential television ministry. This group was to deal with the philosophical question of why the church should consider a television ministry, how such a ministry might be utilized, and how it would be financed. First Community Church already had a long history of involvement in radio and television dating back to 1935. When we installed closed circuit television in 1957, First Community became the only church in the state of Ohio to have such equipment. After intensive study, the Television Task Force presented their report to the Governing Board in September, recommending that the Media Ministry include First Community Books and the radio broadcast. It would be necessary to install additional lighting in the sanctuary and build a control room in the basement. The Board approved the proposal subject to adopting a plan for financing the cost of equipment and initial operating costs. The final report won approval for a proposed capital funds campaign after the first of the year.

The Mission Through Media Campaign was highly successful with pledges of \$925,000 exceeding the \$750,000 goal. Work began on designing a new climate control system for the sanctuary, creating a TV control center in the basement, ordering equipment and finding a media director. Randy Rocke, who had helped Barry Johnson establish his TV ministry at Shiloh Church in Dayton, was hired to take over those duties at First Community Church, and soon began training a corps of volunteers to operate the equipment.

Another project that was initiated early in the Johnson ministry was a congregational survey. A questionnaire titled "Shaping the Future, Recalling the Past" was developed to measure the dreams and desires of the members. The Roots Survey, as it became known, provided an opportunity for members to talk to each other about the church in a context separate from an appeal for money. More than three hundred volunteers interviewed the congregation in pursuit of information about the past, present and future of the church. Fourteen hundred survey forms were returned. The result was an overview of the insights, attitudes and opinions of our people that helped staff and

lay leaders formulate plans and programs in accordance with the expectations and needs of our diverse congregation.

Several staff changes took place during 1983. Lowell Riley retired after 42 years of service to the church. Rev. Richard Flynn joined the Program Staff as youth minister, succeeding Rev. Bob Rhymmer. Akita Director Tom Wood took a position at a camp in New York, but left us with these words. "In working through the seasons with retreats and camps with adults and kids, I became keenly aware that what happens at Akita is fun, exciting, refreshing, but at the core, Akita is part of the FCC ministry." With his departure, the position was renamed and the search began to find someone to fill it. In October Rev. Kline Roberts III was called as our Minister of Renewal. Kline was a perfect match, having grown up at First Community and serving as counselor and program director at Akita in the mid-1960's. Instead of being based at camp, Kline would be a member of the church staff in Columbus who spent time at Akita.

As Barry Johnson described it, the festivities surrounding his installation as senior minister on January 29, 1984, "will be a time of joy for all people of FCC as we recall the past, embrace the present, and look to the future." His predecessors, Otis Maxfield, Arthur Teikmanis, Robert Raines, and Harold Englund were all invited to participate. They gathered on Saturday for a roundtable discussion. A festive banquet that evening provided an opportunity for the visiting ministers to reminisce, and each spoke from the pulpit on Sunday morning and during the afternoon installation service. It truly was a memorable occasion for everyone and afforded opportunities for church members to visit with their former pastors.

One result of the Root's Survey was that the Governing Board created two new task forces in early 1984. A Mission Task Force was charged to develop a major mission project of parallel significance to the media ministry. The Monday evening meal program at the Friends of the Homeless Shelter that was launched on March 26th continues to be one of our hands-on mission projects in 2009, and First Community is the only church to provide a hot meal one night of the week, 52 weeks a year. For 13 years Joel Hawley was in charge of signing up groups within the church to undertake that responsibility, before passing the duty on to Carol Baker.



The other task force was charged to work with Dick Flynn in developing a five-year plan for the youth program. The need for well-trained leaders emerged as a top priority. As a result, the Lay Institute in Youth Ministry was developed to provide that training. The final task force report recommended that traditions such as the Block of Wood, 7 Keys and Crossbearer programs be retained, and that a program for college/career age group be organized. Outreach to youth in the surrounding northwest area had already been initiated with the exciting Act I New Year's Eve party that drew 500 young people and 120 adult volunteers, and included a visit from OSU football coach Woody Hayes. This was the first of several highly successful alcohol-free New Year's Eve celebrations for youth that followed.

In addition to the sanctuary alterations required for television, dust clouds arose from other areas in the church as second floor office space and first floor coatroom and restrooms were reconfigured. Burkhart Chapel was renovated so that it could be used for meetings as well as worship. The child size pews were removed, new carpet was installed to compliment the beautiful Oriental rug that now accented the floor, and fingers were flying to needlepoint the chairs that would replace the pews. Jane Trucksis was asked to create designs for the chair backs and seats to compliment the colors of the Oriental rug and incorporate First Community Church's symbols as well as other Christian symbols. This project ended up taking five years to complete. During that time 84 donors paid for materials, 45 stitcher/donors and 36 additional stitchers spent an estimated 25,500 hours of effort in completing the needlepoint for the chairs. Jane had created 40 different patterns and it was estimated that each chair took a minimum of 225 hours to complete, with 30,960 stitches for each back and 62,715 for each seat. The results are strikingly beautiful and will be treasured for many years to come since each chair was done in memory or in honor of a loved one.

First Community Church was alive with numerous activities. The high school choir began Holy Week of 1984 with their production of *Godspell*. John Cairns unveiled plans for the trip he would lead to the Holy Land and Greece. A challenge course and the Parker Memorial Pavilion at Outpost took shape at Akita. Art Sanders was surprised by special recognition of his twenty-five year ministry at First Community, and the church hosted Project Proc-

lamation, a convocation of ministers from major United Church of Christ churches across the nation to study the impact of television ministry as mission.

Meanwhile, Rev. David Hett joined the staff as Minister of Church Growth, and Rev. Jeb Magruder was hired as Executive Minister. One of the first tasks Jeb undertook was designing and leading Tuesday at Ten, a Bible study group that in 2008 remains a popular part of our Christian Education curriculum. Carla Fox, who had been responsible for the children's ministry since 1980, left the staff in September 1984. Kathy Whitten, organist and bell choir director, moved out of town in October. Fortunately, Ron Jenkins was able to entice Bob Griffith to resume the position he had previously held as church organist. Jean Dones, who served as secretary to four senior ministers, Arthur Teikmanis, Bob Raines, Harold Englund and Barry Johnson, retired at the end of the year. Also John Cairns announced that he would be leaving for a new position in Dallas.

One of the most pressing issues addressed at the 1985 Annual Meeting was a \$100,000 budget deficit. Because the Governing Board had decided on a balanced budget, cuts were necessary and there would be no increase in staff salaries. The mission budget was reduced, as were the hours for some staff members. In addition, Dr. Arthur Sanders announced that he would retire by July 1. Before the meeting ended, Bill Mielke, incoming Governing Board chairman, announced that quarterly Town Meetings would be held to air concerns and ideas.

The Mission Task Force that had been charged in early 1984 to develop a congregation-wide major mission project presented its final proposal in February 1985. It had studied numerous possibilities on local, national and international levels. Taking the budget concerns of the church into consideration, the task force decided to pursue a local effort that offered every member of the congregation the opportunity to participate in a hands-on way. Project Adelphos was designed to recruit a corps of volunteers, and then link them with people in the Tri-Village area with specific needs such as help with transportation, respite care, visits, shopping, cleaning or minor handyman jobs. The purpose of Project Adelphos was to build a sense of community and love between people everywhere by responding to God's requirement to care for one another. In August 1986 Project Adelphos was renamed Heart to Heart, which is still a very active



ministry of First Community Church. During the worship service on Sunday, February 15, 2009, it was announced that our Heart to Heart ministry had distributed \$11,000 in funds and provided 17,000 meals during 2008, making it the sixth ranking social agency in the city of Columbus.

The initial telecast of "First Edition" aired on April 14, 1985, at 8:00 p.m. on WTTE-TV, Channel 28, and included Barry's sermon, an anthem by the Chancel Choir, and remarks by Mary Evans, Minister of Early Childhood. In September "First Edition" moved to 8:30 a.m. on WBNS-TV, Channel 10.

When Art Sanders moved his retirement date to April 1st, several other staff changes became necessary. Kline Roberts immediately assumed the role of Minister of Pastoral Care and continued as staff representative to the Akita Council. In order to operate within the budget, the Governing Board was forced to request the resignation of Missy Shiverick to permit hiring a new Children's Minister within the limitations of the budget.

A major celebration took place on April 28, 1985, when we observed the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of Grandview Heights Congregational Church. There was special litany and music in the identical worship services, historical memorabilia on display, and tribute was paid to Grace Irwin, our sole surviving charter member. "Reflections on Our Heritage" articles recounting church history began appearing in *First Community Church News*. The final element in the celebration was *Soli Deo Gloria*, a service of worship dedicated to praise through music on October 13th when 40 members of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra joined the Chancel Choir in presenting some of the great music of the church.

Further staff realignment occurred in late 1985. Kline Roberts was asked to expand his oversight of pastoral care to include a new calling program by the Deacons and coordination of pastoral services with the Older Adult Ministry. This necessitated passing his Akita responsibilities to Lynn Whybrew, whose Family Life Ministry programs at Akita had gradually made it the major user of camp outside of the summer camps. David Hett announced his decision to leave the ministry.

In May 1986 several administrative and personnel issues surfaced that prompted the Governing Board to engage the services of Reverend Speed

Leas, a conflict management consultant with the Alban Institute. Over a period of time Rev. Leas met with members of the congregation, the board, and the staff to listen to their concerns and gather information about our church. He scheduled a return visit to Columbus to meet again with the staff and congregation after processing his findings and preparing a report.

Announcement was made in the July issue of *Guidposts* that First Community Church would receive its "Families Are Forever" Award and a \$1,000 check for the Family Clusters program developed by Rev. Lynn Whybrew and his Family Life Ministry. Ironically, the award was presented at the 11:00 worship service on July 27th that was followed by a reception to celebrate Lynn's seven-year ministry at First Community, and to bid farewell to him and his family. When Lynn departed, George Stultz became Interim Camp Director, with George and Janet Tyler on site as camp managers.

Speed Leas's report to the congregation included a plan to teach us how to manage our differences effectively and to begin charting a long-range plan for the church. Further staff meetings were scheduled to help identify immediate program needs. These needs would then be reviewed and search committees appointed to look for additional staff to serve them. Rev. William Hensley, who had previously worked with Barry at Shiloh Church, was hired as an associate minister to work with the Pastoral Life, Mission and Family Life Councils.

The major recommendation made by Rev. Leas was to appoint a Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) made up of persons representing all facets of church life. The Governing Board charged the LRPC to "review and evaluate all programs and assets of First Community Church in order to develop church-wide consensus which will result in specific measurable long range planning goals." The 40 members of the committee were in place by the first weekend in November 1986, under the able leadership of John Klamar and Mary Miller. The task for the LRPC was to help the Governing Board make decisions and set directions for the congregation regarding its future. The first step in this process was data gathering. Sub-committees were assigned to study the theological roots and history of First Community Church; interpersonal and religious needs, interests and goals of church members; needs for existing programs; stewardship and finance; parking, staff and program space



needs; world and community needs; and demographic trends. It was estimated that this process would take approximately six months.

Life at First Community continued to move forward while all these deliberations were taking place. A gala banquet in March 1987 honored the 26-year ministry of Art Sanders who had come to First Community Church in 1959 as Coordinator of the Program Staff. He moved to Pastoral Services in 1962 where through the years he officiated at 1,110 weddings and as many services of memory. Statistics also show that he made 33,000 hospital visits, an incredible gift to our congregation from this compassionate, caring and gentle man. His wife, Vi, was not only a helpmate in Art's ministry, but she served for many years on the Board of Women, volunteered regularly at the Trading Post and was an active member of Guild Group G. Former staff member Rev. Jim Bidle, along with Otis and Ginny Maxfield, were among the many who came to celebrate Vi and Art's years at First Community Church and wish him well as he assumed Emeritus status.

Also in March nearly 1,400 people, including former President Richard Nixon, jammed the church during the service of memory for legendary Ohio State University football coach Woody Hayes. Millions more across the country viewed the telecast of the service. At Akita Toad Hall, an adult meeting facility, was dedicated in memory of Ken Krouse, and a switchback path with steps eased the walk to the lake. Our young people cleared nearly a hundred dead trees out of the lake and undertook projects that ranged from helping our Akita neighbors, to assisting with the Special Olympics, to scraping off the gum that had accumulated underneath the pews in the sanctuary. A generous bequest enabled the church to purchase new pianos for the sanctuary, Burkhart Chapel and the choir room.

Helen Wilson announced that she would be retiring at the end of December 1987 as Director of Counseling Ministries after 22 years of service to the church. Although Helen continued to see a limited number of clients, this marked the end of the First Community Pastoral Counseling Center that had served the church and the community so well for 23 years. Numerous private and community resources had been established to fill yet another need that First Community Church had initially observed and met so ably.

Speed Leas guided the LRPC and Program Staff through the process of developing a mission statement that would lead the church in a common and unifying vision for the future. Their next task was to envision what would be most important to the church in the next 10 – 25 years, and to generate proposals. Barry observed in the July 26, 1987, issue of *First Community Church News*, "Two basic insights have emerged about First Community Church that will also shape our approach to the future. First we are proud of our heritage and innovation and we want to preserve it. Second, we are an inclusive congregation with lots of room for variances in social, political and theological opinion."

The primary question that surfaced as an important issue for further study was whether the future of First Community Church should be at 1320 or another facility. Proposals were made to create a position of Spiritual Searcher in Residence, and to establish an Older Adult Center to meet their spiritual, physical and sociological needs. Finally, Akita, as a beloved asset and resource of the church, must be preserved and revitalized as an extension of the church. The Governing Board unanimously accepted the Long Range Planning Report and appointed task forces to gather additional data, including financial needs, by June 30, 1988.

Much energy was devoted to evaluating the various task force recommendations during 1988. The Governing Board studied them carefully and tried to involve as many members of the congregation as possible in implementing proposals. The Facility Study Task Force determined that even renovation would not provide enough space or solve the parking shortage at the church. Their recommendation was that the Governing Board should adopt a plan for relocating the church northward in an area closer to the center of the congregational base and population growth. The Akita Task Force reported that because camping is an integral part of the mission and ministry of First Community Church, any redesign of camp facilities should be done carefully. Improvements should be consistent with predetermined priorities and have adequate maintenance funding in the budgeting process. Recommendations included enlarging, renovating or replacing the lodge and dining hall, replacing hillside cabins and bathrooms, securing a full-time professional director, providing site housing for him, and expanding the maintenance staff. The task force studying the concept of a Spiritual Searcher observed that



this idea could enrich the spiritual lives of our people, and recommended forming a committee to create and implement the program. Costs would range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 with money not to be taken from the operating budget.

In October it was announced that a group of church members had purchased property in nearby Hilliard and agreed to hold it until the congregation decided whether or not it wanted to relocate. By then, demographic surveys had determined that 50% of our congregation lived south of Fishinger Road and 50% to the north. A vote would be held on Pentecost the following year as to whether or not to construct a new church in a new location.

In his weekly column in the *First Community Church NEWS* of January 8, 1989, Barry Johnson wrote, "Let us do our best to share information without defending positions, to compare opinions without annihilating persons, to reach for the future without compromising the past. The thought of relocating the church is an emotion charged issue. The goal is to make a wise decision, either way, and keep the FCC family together, 'agreeing to differ, resolving to love, uniting to serve.' From now until the scheduled day for voting, the name of the game is information. All of us have a responsibility to learn as much as we can about the proposal. What are the advantages, disadvantages, what will it cost, how do we propose to pay for it?"

Forty-five neighborhood meetings were held, the church newsletter carried question and answer columns in each issue, and public forums at the church provided opportunities to hear from all the committees, to share concerns and to ask questions. The need to relocate was more about reversing a downward trend in membership and solving the parking problem than in responding to overcrowding. Between 1970 and 1985 the church had lost nearly a third of its members and ten percent of its income, and giving had not kept pace with inflation.

Announcement was made that the firm of Wandel and Schnell had won the competition to design a new church. Now all that remained was voting on the issue. All members of the church whose names appeared on the rolls of the membership office were eligible to vote, and absentee voting was approved. Balloting took place on Wednesday evening, May 10, and Sunday morning, May 14, with an accounting firm tallying the votes. The May

21st issue of the church newsletter announced 886 votes for relocation and 1109 votes against. The men who had purchased the land in Hilliard decided that they would retain title and hold it under option to the church until December 1989. A task force was appointed to assist the Governing Board in setting priorities and direction for the future by analyzing reasons underlying the "No" vote.

A series of working worship services were held to develop some sort of win-win compromise to maintain the church's vitality. At the conclusion of these sessions, it was clear that people wanted the church on Cambridge Boulevard to remain the hub of our ministry at this time, with satellite development at another site a strong possibility. Suggested plans included assessing the maintenance needs of the present church buildings, adding staff positions and increasing hours for Heart to Heart staff and Nancy Heath's Ministry to Older Persons. The Governing Board appointed task forces to study possibilities for 1320 Cambridge Boulevard and an extended ministry facility.

Several staff changes took place during summer 1989. George Stultz, who had been serving as Akita Director as well as Business Administrator, announced that he would be leaving in July for a church in Michigan. Kline Roberts assumed George's administrative duties at Akita in addition to his own pastoral care responsibilities. In August Rick Moore was hired as Business Administrator to replace George. Kathy Klammar moved from her position as Barry's secretary to become the Director of Children's Ministries. Rev. Bill Hensley left for North Carolina to accept a teaching position.

In October the first Spiritual Searcher event with theologian Dr. James Fowler drew high praise. Also a festive celebration at Akita marked its 40th anniversary. Former children's minister Bill Taylor returned to lead Women's Retreat and share stories of early camp history and how we came to acquire Rock Stalls. Campers and counselors contributed memorabilia, photos and poetry to create a wonderful exhibit in Brownlee Hall. Hundreds of Akita lovers gathered at camp amidst the splendor of fall's colorful foliage to celebrate and rededicate the camp.

The November 12, 1989, issue of *First Community Church News* outlined plans to renovate 1320 and build a branch church on the Dublin Road property originally proposed as a relocation site. The new



facility would contain meeting space for youth programs, preschool and daycare centers, and worship space. Our primary worship service and all of our media productions would remain at 1320 at 11:00 a.m. with the senior minister preaching. The 1320 Task Force was specifically challenged to solve the parking problem, expand restroom facilities, and create space for the Older Persons Ministry and Adult Education.

A capital funds campaign was launched in spring 1990. The campaign directors identified "bringing the congregation together" as their number one concern, and selected "By Faith . . . Together!" as the theme for the campaign. A church member graciously covered all banquet expenses for a congregational dinner held at the Hyatt Regency on May 22nd where plans were outlined and pledges gathered. By June 10th, 811 pledges totaling \$5,580,268 had been received. The architectural firm of Brubaker, Brandt was designated as architects for 1320 renovations with the Gardner Company as contractor. Architects Wandel and Schnell were named to design the extended ministry project, with the Setterlin Company as contractor.

Although the campaign and future plans claimed much attention during this period, other important events occurred in 1990. First Community Church began its involvement with the Interfaith Hospitality Network in April. In order for us to begin housing homeless families for one week every three months, more than 150 volunteers collaborated to clean and refurbish Lincoln Road Chapel, prepare meals, and collect food, clothing, bedding, furnishings, toys and books. On May 11, Rev. Howard "Bud" Huntzicker was finally freed from his ailing body and those of us who had known or worked with him joined in celebrating his life, his ministry, his faith and his example of courage. In August Jeb Magruder announced that he would be leaving the staff to accept the call as senior minister of a church in Lexington, Kentucky. The September 16th issue of First Community Church News pictured his replacement as Executive Minister, retiring Navy Chaplain Rev. Herbert W. Goetz, Jr. Before the end of the year two more staff changes were announced. Darlinda Fleitz replaced Rick Moore as Director of Business Administration and John Ross was hired as Director of High School Ministries.

Ground was broken at the Dublin Road property on April 23, 1991, for the new facility that would become known as the Center for Extended Min-

istry. Great care was taken to design a structure that would serve several purposes. The large fellowship hall was capable of hosting lectures, concerts and dinners as well being a space suitable for worship. Kitchen and storage areas were adjacent to the main room to enable serving large meals. Preschool classrooms and areas for youth were located at a distance from the worship space. The Center for Extended Ministry opened its doors for worship on Sunday, December 8, to the echo of these words. "Like Akita and First Community Village, first it was a dream, then a plan, then through the hard work and fundraising of many hands it now stands ready to serve this gathered household of God for many years to come."

Other important events dotted the calendar in 1991. Work was begun on refurbishing Lincoln Road Chapel and undertaking the renovations of 1320 that had been approved following the successful conclusion of the "By Faith . . . Together" capital campaign. The 50th Annual Sweetheart Luncheon was held in May. This was an event that evolved from birthday parties hosted by Hazel and Roy Burkhart for his mother and her friends. They were so enjoyed by these older women that after her death the staff decided to continue the custom as a regular program of the church to honor all ladies who had reached the age of 65. The retirement in June of Mary Evans as Director of Early Childhood Ministries marked another milestone. After more than forty years on the staff, Mary was not only a pillar of First Community Church, but was also a respected authority in the field of early childhood education. Donice Wooster was named as Mary's successor. Leadership of the Day Care Center also changed when Vickie McVey replaced Marilyn Streng Cordle as director.

In 1950 First Community Church had been named as one of America's twelve great churches in a poll of 100,000 clergymen conducted by *The Christian Century*, one of the country's most prestigious religious publications. In 1991 a representative of *The Christian Century* revisited our church to see how we were faring 41 years later. A thoughtful assessment published in October concluded that the church encouraged theological inclusiveness and continued to be a center of community activity in the Tri-Village area offering a dizzying array of activities to appeal to all ages and interests. The author also commented on the sense of loyalty and community, and declared that the formula at First Community Church works.



On Sunday, May 17, 1992, special worship services were held to dedicate the Center for Extended Ministry and reconsecrate the church building on Cambridge Boulevard. Unfortunately spirits were soon dampened as the Governing Board was forced to meet in special session and make more than \$60,000 in budget cuts and eliminate some staff positions. In spite of increased attendance, growth in membership and the excitement generated by the new and improved facilities, a depressed economy and shortfall in pledge payments required that expenses be reduced.

Executive Minister Herbert Goetz announced that the professional plans of Dr. Johnson to leave First Community had been under his consideration during the past year and he felt that this was the appropriate time to make this change. On July 24 the Governing Board accepted the resignation of Dr. Barry Johnson and stated in a press release, "We would like to acknowledge in the past ten years under Dr. Johnson's leadership that First Community Church has enjoyed the most significant growth of any ten year period with two successful

major capital fund drives enabling renovation of 1320 Cambridge Boulevard and the construction of new facilities in Hilliard. Another major contribution was in the area of television ministry. Considering these accomplishments, we as a church are well positioned to accomplish the vision he has captured to enter the 21st century."

Several other notable projects were launched during the ministry of Barry Johnson. First Community is still the only church to provide a hot meal one night a week, fifty-two weeks a year at the homeless shelter. Heart to Heart continues to be a very successful, valued hands-on ministry of mission to the local community. Perhaps most importantly, the congregation has been enriched and inspired by the many Spiritual Searchers who have spent time in our midst. In his interview with *The Christian Century* Barry cited the procurement of the land in Hilliard as the proudest accomplishment of his tenure at First Community Church, not because of the land itself, but because of what it symbolizes. "It means that I've been able to turn their eyes to the future."







### BRUCE G. INGLES: INTERIM SENIOR PASTOR, 1992-1993

With the resignation of Barry Johnson, the Governing Board began the search process for an interim senior minister. Meanwhile Executive Minister Herb Goetz was appointed to serve as interim head of staff.

The *First Community Church News* of October 11, 1992, announced that Rev. Bruce Ingles had been hired as our interim senior pastor. Bruce was well qualified, having just completed his seventh interim pastorate. His degrees were from universities in Tennessee and North Carolina. He had then studied at Edinburgh, Scotland, and served as a mission teacher in Teheran. His M. Div. was earned at Princeton, and he was in the process of completing his doctoral thesis at Princeton Theological Seminary. Bruce had previously served churches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio. He and his wife Carolyn were delighted to be coming to Columbus, as one of their two daughters was attending law school at The Ohio State University and was planning to join First Community Church.

Bruce said that the experience of heading a number of large churches as an interim had helped him to learn what is normal in a time of transition. "It is a time to focus, a time of people rising up with new ideas, and of new people becoming involved." With his gentle demeanor and understanding heart, Bruce Ingles was uniquely qualified to lead the congregation of First Community Church as it looked to the future.

In a report to the congregation printed in the December 13 issue of *First Community News*, Governing Board chairman Dick Vesper noted that the Governing Board, along with the program staff, was committed to thoroughly evaluate the possibilities and concerns that faced the church at present as well as in the near and long term future. "Without question the most pressing issue is that of church finances. First Community Church must get its house in order before we call a new senior minister." The Finance Committee was charged to evaluate the entire financial structure and current financial status of the church operating funds and to streamline the church's accounting system, with the ultimate goal of providing long-term financial stability. Chairman Vesper proposed a series of town meetings to allow the congregation to submit ideas, feelings, information and recom-

mendations. He promised that a search committee would be named sometime early in 1993. Also he suggested that the Long Range Plan be revisited to see if our goals remained what we envisioned them to be.

Bruce Ingles facilitated this effort in several ways. He led Adult Education seminars on "The Art of Being a Church Officer in Today's Church" and "Getting the Church Ready for a New Start." He also recommended a collaborative effort in strategic planning by the Governing Board, staff and congregation to "listen to what God would have First Community Church be in two, five, or ten years." In the March 7, 1993 issue of *First Community Church News* Rev. Ingles wrote, "An interim period involves facing issues squarely, a good deal of listening and time for healing. But God has blessed this church with Governing Boards, staff and other leaders throughout the congregation who have helped FCC move through the initial stages of the interim period. For us to be ready for the new start we all want, we need to keep opening up the church and its processes and to find a sense of cohesion and togetherness. This may involve more change." He noted several signals for a new start that included coming to terms with our history, forming a search committee, welcoming home all inactive members as well as new members, opening boards and processes to new ways and new people, inviting the congregation to share in a plan of improved stewardship, restating our uniqueness as a congregation, celebrating our oneness as a multiple location church, and faithful members who have served in the past now offering to contribute to the life of the church however and where they could.

By mid-March, the search committee was in place, with Sherry Barger as chairman. They set to work immediately after the three congregational meetings that were held to discuss the qualifications we were seeking in a senior minister.

As in other interim periods, life went on in the church. In March Dogwood, the lovely new cabin at Akita built to replace Pine Cone, was dedicated. William Brackett, Executive Director of World Neighbors, visited in May to present the Pioneer Award to First Community Church and several of our members who had been actively involved in this unique mission since its founding in 1952 by John Peters and Roy Burkhart. Kathy Klamar left the staff with the intention of beginning seminary studies, and Peggy Sorenson was hired in July as direc-



tor of the K - 8 ministry to children. Notification was received of the death of former senior minister Dr. Arthur Teikmanis on July 11, as he was making plans to visit his native Latvia. "Reflection Hall" was created on the second floor of 1320 Cambridge Boulevard to display Bruce Lynn's beautiful color photographs of Akita, First Community Village and all the church buildings. Nancy Heath announced that she would retire in October after serving for twenty years as director of Older Person's Ministry, and Julie Osborn was named to succeed her. Also in October the Trading Post observed its 40th anniversary, Ron Jenkins' 20 years as minister of music was celebrated, and Gabe Campbell, beloved former youth minister, returned to lead Women's Fall Retreat.

Bruce Ingles announced in mid-summer that he had been invited to serve as senior minister of the Moorings Presbyterian Church in Naples, Florida. Many were saddened to see him leave, but following the Soli Deo Gloria musical service on October 17, as they said good-bye to Bruce and Carolyn, they also promised to visit his new church during winter vacations in Florida. A tribute printed in the *First Community Church News* of October 17 stated, "Bruce's year at FCC has been characterized by many warm friendships, moving sermons and a gifted, low-key leadership. Last year he said he hoped FCC could move through healing to momentum. He has helped to make that happen."



### DR. RICHARD A. WING: SENIOR MINISTER, 1993 – Present

The *First Community Church News* of November 7, 1993, reported that after contacting 104 potential candidates and receiving resumes from 81 of them, representing eight denominations, the search committee had selected the one candidate who they believed best met the criteria for Senior Minister at First Community Church. Dr. Richard A. Wing had been invited to preach at both services on Sunday, December 5. A congregational meeting was scheduled for 12:30 p.m. when an official call to service would be extended. The response of the gathered members on that day was a resounding "Yes."

Dr. Wing was currently the Senior Minister of University Christian Church in San Diego, a post he had held since 1989. He had previously served four other churches in California. He was a graduate of Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon, where students also attended classes at the University of Oregon. His Doctor of Religion degree is from the School of Theology, Claremont, California. In June 1970 he was ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and received standing with the United Church of Christ in 1994. The search committee described him as "a deeply spiritual man whose high energy and skills in consensus building will provide excellent leadership for FCC." They noted that his primary focus is in worship, pastoral care and teaching. His first book, *3:00 A.M. Meditations for the Middle of the Night* came off the press in 1985 and a second, *The Space Between the Notes*, would be published in 1994. He was also a teacher and trainer of the Stephen Ministry Program. For the previous eight years, in addition to pastoring his own church, Dr. Wing had led workshops in the U.S. and Canada for the Foundation for Community Encouragement, one of whose founders was Dr. M. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*.

Although Dick was born in Michigan, he grew up in Modesto, California, where his family moved seeking a warmer climate. He has an older brother, David, and younger sister, Judy. His father was a church choir director and high school music teacher, so church was always a very important part of his family's life. During high school Dick was first chair violinist in the orchestra and thought about becoming a professional musician. He also was interested in speech and forensics, and had a part in

the school production of "Our Town." During his junior year, the speech teacher, Mrs. Edna Speltz, encouraged him to enter a humorous speech interpretation contest where he gave Robert Benchley's "The Treasurer's Report" and won the California state championship.

When asked what influenced his decision to enter the ministry, Dick related the story of how his journey to the pulpit began when he was 15 years old, and his minister, Hartzell Cobbs, took him aside one Sunday before the worship service and asked him to read the Scripture, John 3:16-17. Dick still believes that he was asked because he was the only boy wearing a tie. However, it was then that he began to consider becoming a minister, and he was strongly encouraged in this decision by Rev. Cobbs. The recollections of Cobbs' influence and of Mrs. Speltz telling him to keep working on a speech until he got it right for a competition are indelibly etched in Dick's memory.

While in seminary from 1966 until 1970, Dick served as a youth minister. He recounted how Bob Raines was a hero because his book, *Creative Brooding*, provided so much inspirational material that Dick could use with his youth group, and they definitely thought Bob Raines was "very cool." Dick first heard about Roy Burkhart and First Community Church in 1970 when he became an associate minister at Lakewood Village Community Church in Long Beach. This church had been started in 1937 because of the inspiration of First Community Church and the influence of Dr. Roy Burkhart on its founder, Chaplain Wilford Hall. The church's pastor after Chaplain Hall was Rev. Roger Lautzenhiser, Sr., whose son is a member of First Community Church. Dick reflected, "The community church movement changed me more than I knew at the moment. After experiencing the blessing of a totally interdenominational congregation, it was hard for me to get excited about denominational things. I believe that the community church, as it exists in Columbus and Long Beach, is the most effective model of what the Protestant Church should be as we move into the 21st century."

According to Sherry Barger, chairman of the search committee, they selected Dick in part because of his familiarity with and openness to the community church philosophy, his respect for the history of First Community Church, his preaching skills, his collegial administrative style, and his community building experience.



During an earlier visit to Columbus when he had preached in a neutral pulpit for the benefit of the search committee, arrangements were made for Dick to have lunch with Art Sanders. They spent more than three hours in conversation and Dick said, "Art's great wisdom and clarifying nature in observing what goes on over the long haul was exceedingly helpful to me." Dick has extremely high regard for our beloved Dr. Sanders, and refers to him as "a holy presence."

Dick noted that the search committee had not held anything back from him about our history. He loved the three-page letter he received from Interim Senior Pastor Bruce Ingles that was very helpful. Dick stated his belief that it would be a huge challenge and also a huge privilege to serve the congregation of First Community Church.

The Wing's whirlwind visit to the church during the first weekend of December 1993 provided an opportunity for the congregation to meet and become acquainted with Dick and his wife, Shirley. They dined and met with members of the Governing Board, councils, diaconate, choir, church staff and other clergy from the community. His first words to the congregation after the affirmative vote were, "I am not God's gift to you. You are God's gift to me."

Dr. Wing returned for another brief visit in early January to meet with Ron Jenkins and Herb Goetz to plan the worship services through May. At that time he also selected Jeanne Blair to be his secretary. Jeanne was then working in the business office as Administrative Assistant to Ray Moore, and had served the church in many capacities including a term as a deacon, assistant to Sally Wandel in the scheduling office, and for a number of years she was the wedding coordinator. Dick's plans were to arrive in Columbus a few days before the Annual Meeting on January 29, and to begin his ministry in early February.

When describing his concept of the church's mission, Dr. Wing affirmed his belief that the church should focus on worship, study, standing by people in pain, serving and sharing. The program for the church's immediate future that he outlined in the February 20, 1994 issue of *First Community Church News* was an ambitious one. He already had ninety visitation and speaking engagements on his calendar. By the end of April he planned to visit all staff members in their offices, make home visits to

all Board members, and hire a Minister of Pastoral Care to succeed Kline Roberts who was departing in March to become Senior Minister of Paradise United Church of Christ in Louisville, Ohio. He also wanted to add another service at North Campus, call a Minister of Education/Mission, strengthen our affiliations with the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ, complete a master plan for the North Campus, and prepare for a 1985 capital campaign that would include new education facilities at North Campus and attention to work needed at Akita. He announced that the central goal of his ministry over the next ten years would be to increase the number of worshippers at both locations. The second goal was to utilize television to invite people to our two locations and to serve the homebound and others who were unable to attend.

A number of staff changes were announced in March 1994. Rev. Barbara Cunningham would join the staff in May as Associate Minister of Pastoral Care. Meanwhile Art Sanders was called out of retirement to serve as Interim Minister of Pastoral Care until Rev. Cunningham's arrival. Jim Long was appointed to serve as a pastoral intern in completion of his seminary work at Methesco. The resignation of Rev. Dick Flynn was also announced. Dick had arrived in December 1983 to assume the post of Youth Minister, and immediately was asked to organize an alcohol-free New Year's Eve party like the Bar None of years past. The party, named Act I, attracted 500 young people and began a new tradition that brought in as many as 900 youth from all over the city in ensuing years. Over time Dick redesigned the style of camping at Akita and tripled the summer attendance of middle and high school campers. In 1991 he had accepted responsibility for membership and also became the "pastoral presence" at North Campus, where he helped to develop a more contemporary style of worship service, organized a morning breakfast fellowship for men and women, and began an evening Bible study group.

September saw yet another change with the departure of Rev. Herb Goetz following his summer on the staff of Lakeside Association. Herb had served as Executive Minister since 1990, and was also Interim Head of Staff after Barry Johnson's resignation. His wife, Mary Ann, was a favorite song leader for women's retreats, helped to lead our liturgical dancers during worship, and utilized her nursing background in our parish life. Herb's experience



as a Navy chaplain had served the community well during the deployment of military troops in Operation Desert Storm when he organized prayer services and groups to support our local military families. He also brought a new focus to our mission projects by leading trips to Casa Materna Orphanage in Naples, Italy, where our media team videotaped the work being done there. Herb proved his skill and organizational ability as a tour guide on other excursions to Italy, the Holy Land, Cambridge, England, and Greece.

A new phase of First Community Church's ministry was initiated in fall 1994 as members of our congregation began their training to become Stephen Ministers. After their first fifty hours of classes in topics and skills related to this caring lay ministry, they were linked with people who were experiencing a wide range of life needs or crises. Other changes around the church included adding a second worship service at North Campus, hiring Louis Miller to direct middle school ministries, and naming Tom Persinger as Akita Director.

Another form of ministry evolved with the formation of Community First Coalition, a project funded by a bequest to the church from longtime member, Beulah VanWagenen, who was very interested in helping to prevent homelessness. Our volunteers worked with others from the Interfaith Hospitality Network and the YWCA to directly impact the lives of children. One project was a Saturday Kids Camp fostering care for the children and their families. Another collaboration with The Ohio State University assisted students who were single parents in obtaining paid internships in the business community where they could earn money while gaining experience in their field of study.

In looking back over his ministry at First Community Church, Dick reflected, "The singular dream that I had in coming here was that I noted that the church was hurt as the result of short pastorates. I'd like to remain here long enough so we could accomplish the things that have not been completed in the past. We need to do whatever needs to be done."

There were three major issues that claimed much of the church's attention and energy over a period of years. One was Camp Akita, another revolved around the issue of same gender covenant ceremonies, and again we needed to address our need for more space, parking and room to grow.

In discussing the Governing Board's approval of conducting covenant ceremonies, Dick noted that we moved slowly as we looked at that subject. "The clergy had already been doing them in parks and homes, but we were getting requests to do them in the sanctuary. That needed to be a Board decision, so when they decided to pursue the issue, we knew there needed to be a careful study." A committee was appointed in October 1996 and took a year and a half to complete its report. The final recommendations were to concentrate on communicating with the congregation, make educational materials available and conduct adult education programs and discussion groups that addressed the issues fully. This process lasted for several more months. Dick continued his summation, "After the Board affirmed doing covenant ceremonies in our sanctuary, some members of the congregation feared what this might mean. Eventually they sat down with members of the Governing Board and discussed together all sides of the issue and decided that it should be put to the congregation in a survey vote. At the conclusion of this process, the Board's decision was affirmed by a majority vote."

As for Akita Dick noted, "When we began making plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Akita, we realized that the camp might be closed down unless the defects were addressed, so after a careful study of the entire campsite we developed plans for rebuilding the camp." Evaluation of the facilities revealed the necessity to expand and renovate the dining hall, construct a new lodge, and build brand new hillside cabins and bathrooms. An ambitious campaign, "Akita recreation" was launched in early 1999 with a goal of 4.5 million dollars. Jody Phillips, daughter of John Galbreath, and Dick Wing were designated as honorary co-chairs with Dick Vesper as general chairman. The successful campaign concluded on Sunday, May 23, 1999, exactly fifty years and one day after the original dedication. The congregation gathered at Akita to worship and celebrate its golden anniversary. In the ensuing months trees obstructing the view of the lake were removed, the dining hall underwent extensive renovation and expansion, old buildings were demolished and new ones began to take shape. With great credit to the builders and a dedicated and innovative group of Akita staffers and counselors, the 2000 camping season began on time and was carried off with great success. A new Akita had been created, but the old Akita spirit was alive and still going strong.



Dick recently mused, "We've always been in a capital campaign ever since I've been here. We laugh about the fact that when I got off the plane, I was told that there was a million dollar debt. This church hates debt more than any other church I've ever known in this world - not dislikes, but hates! So our capital campaign retired the debt, acquired some seed money for Akita, and did some physical things at 1320 Cambridge Boulevard that needed to be done. The fact that the congregation came forth with a three and a half million dollar capital campaign was inspiring to me because it meant we were looking to the future."

He continued, "A significant moment came when I told the Board that we needed to create a plan for facilities at North Campus, even if we did not build now. The Board agreed, with the stipulation that it needed to be lay led, not staff driven." Dick views the cost of the project as being the most challenging issue he has faced to date. He remarked that if we had developed the Reed and McCoy property in the 1960's it might have cost two million dollars, but it would cost ten times that today to get the facilities we need. In 2005 a master plan was proposed and the capital campaign, "Honoring Our Heritage, Building Our Future" has raised \$10.1 million through 2008. The new education wing for our youth was opened at North Campus in May 2009. It is the intention of the Governing Board and staff to continue to raise money until all phases of the plan are complete including a sanctuary and columbarium.

Shortly before his death in 2005, Dr. Scott Peck asked Dick Wing and First Community Church to collaborate with him on developing a program that could bring civil discourse to important issues. Over three hundred church members piloted the course as a Lenten study that came to be called "Faith and American Politics." In the fall of 2006 we trained leaders in selected churches around the country. In 2008 Logos Productions agreed to publish, market and distribute the curriculum to a national audience. This stands as another tangible accomplishment of Dr. Wing's ministry.

When asked what he viewed as the most significant things that have happened during his ministry here Dick replied, "Bruce Ingles told me, 'There are certain things you can make happen in this church, but there are certain things that the church will make of you.' This church has contributed so much to my life that it makes you grow. It has taught

me patience and maturity. It's hard to talk about significant things because we normally talk about budgets and buildings and numbers. Real significance comes in the power of personal relationships. Those are the lasting things. Often we look at the tangible things, but the real ministry has to do with significant relationships and the change that takes place in standing by each other in the midst of all the changes that happen in our lives. The most significant thing is what we can do by standing by each other in a spirit of love."

Sherry Barger has a unique perspective of the Reverend Dr. Richard Wing, the man and the pastor. Not only was she chairman of the search committee that brought him to First Community Church, but also she has served as his Administrative Assistant since 2000 when Jeanne Blair retired. "In the fifteen years that he has been here I, and other staff members, have found that he is a man of boundless energy and enthusiasm who has demonstrated that sharing responsibility and building community is the key to effective administration. His actions are clearly rooted in Christian values and always focused on the Mission and Vision of the church. He models excellence and understands that encouraging excellence in others strengthens our faith community. He is generous with his time and always willing to fit in another call or hospital visit or appointment, but also knows how to set limits and balance his personal and professional life. Dick has a healthy ego that enables him to listen to new ideas and other points of view as well as criticism. He does not shy away from controversy, realizing that the process of healthy debate is critical to both short-term goals and long-range objectives. He is confident, trusts his staff, is compassionate, accepts responsibility and practices forgiveness. And he has a great sense of humor. He truly loves his job and does not see it as work. His batteries are recharged by everyone he meets."

As First Community Church enters its second century, what is our Senior Minister's vision of the future? Dick affirms the 2009 Strategic Plan, which embraces First Community Church as a collection of four dynamic campuses: South, North, Akita and Media. This new paradigm incorporates the ministries of Akita and Media to create a faith community beyond our traditional walls, but bound by a common story of who we are and what God has called us to do. The church mission and vision, staff members in common, and openness and commitment to the never-ending search for a better un-



derstanding of God, others and ourselves link each of our four campuses.

With the dedication of the beautiful new education wing at North Campus on May 31, Dick would like to complete the planned facilities at the North Campus. His vision for the future of First Community Church is that it stays steady and on message, maintaining our vision of inclusivity, following a wide path, constantly questing, and remaining open to change and interdisciplinary study. He describes First Community Church as: "A Journey church rather than an Answer church" and "a Grace church rather than a Judgment church." Over the years he has assembled a talented and caring staff whose creativity, commitment and wide-ranging experience daily minister to our entire church family in countless ways. Dick believes that this church has a brilliant and incredibly informed laity and that, as a congregation, we are deeply blessed. We believe that Dick Wing's ministry blesses us as well.

One of the monumental events during Dick Wing's ministry at First Community Church was the celebration of our Centennial in 2009. Planning actually began on April 1, 2005, when he asked Diana Arthur and Jackie Cherry to serve as co-chairmen for the Centennial and to formulate plans for marking this historic occasion. They were already collecting stories and conducting interviews with some of our long-time members that John Hoberg was videotaping for posterity and the archives. Jackie was also writing the history of the church, so two projects were already underway. Over the next several months they recruited a committee of very active church members who had a high level of involvement in the life of First Community Church. One member, Kent Brandt, had played a major role in celebrating the 50th anniversary in 1959.

By the time the committee held its first meeting in October 2006, it had been determined that we would mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Sunday School on April 18, 1909. It would be a yearlong celebration with the major festivities beginning the week after Easter on April 19, 2009, and lasting for a month. A tape recording of the 50th anniversary observance from the archives was reproduced as a resource. The initial brainstorming session produced a broad range of ideas and several major conclusions. It was important to frame the celebration in terms of our faith, to involve families and members of all ages in meaningful and inspira-

tional activities, to commemorate our past but also to help the church move forward and look to the future. In order to broaden the perspective of the committee, several younger members were added and later some staff members as well. There were suggestions for renting a large public venue where the entire congregation could worship together, or meeting at all the church locations including Akita. Possible settings for a congregational dinner ranged from French Field House on the OSU campus to a downtown hotel to a picnic at North Campus.

By May 2007 the impossibly long list of suggestions had been pared down to a list of feasible possibilities. Church history would be the inspiration for a children's musical to be written by Sally Beske and a church school curriculum to be developed by Dawn Costin. An anthem and a choir hymn would be commissioned for the special worship services, and invitations would be issued to all of the former senior ministers. We would investigate being included on the National Register of Historic Places. The cornerstones would be opened and their contents displayed. Planning began for a congregational dinner at a downtown hotel. Commemorative brochures would be made available to all members and a variety of recordings would be produced. Banners and historical timelines would be created that could be used in the future for new member classes. Agreement was reached on a theme statement: "Looking back to the future – 100 years of making God's love real." A logo was developed to carry out the theme. The committee's concern about both how and why we would celebrate was reflected in the mission statement adopted the following month. "The mission of the First Community Church Centennial Celebration is to honor the first 100 years of our commitment to making God's love for all people real in the world, and to gain inspiration as we enter our second century as a welcoming faith community."

Over the next year plans were refined and probable expenses estimated to formulate a budget. Decisions were made to invite all former clergy and staff to the congregational dinner, and to hold all the commemorative worship services in our own church facilities. Efforts began to seek underwriting from First Community Foundation as well as individuals in order to cover projected costs and make the dinner affordable for all members. The exterior of 1320 Cambridge Boulevard was power washed and other maintenance issues were addressed to



improve appearances. Jonathan Ebright captured the memories and personal reflections of various church members for his video vignettes, while John Hoberg edited and spliced together the hours of conversations with older members that he had recorded in the past several years. These would be combined with recordings of the children's musical, cornerstone opening and historical highlights to create a keepsake DVD.

A commemorative Christmas ornament went on sale in September 2008 as the first event in the observance of the Centennial. Bright red banners bearing our logo and declaring our 100 years appeared inside and outside our buildings and served as the backdrop for *Our First Century: A Musical Celebration*, the delightful production written by Sally Beske and performed by the children on February 22, 2009. Former youth minister, Richard Hardy, led a Lenten study of the Seven Keys. Brownlee Hall came alive with images captured by Bruce Lynn of Camp Akita and all of the buildings that comprise First Community Church in a photographic exhibit from April through July. Timeline banners depicting our history in text and pictures were created by David Bull and displayed at both campuses.

The cornerstones proved to be an intriguing chapter in our Centennial story. The stonemason encountered no difficulty in retrieving the container from Lincoln Road Chapel's cornerstone on April 8th. It had previously been opened in 1959 on the 50th anniversary and the contents were found to be in good condition at that time. Sandy Pfening, chairman of the cornerstone festivities, had encountered no difficulty in securing the services of a stonemason for the Chapel, but several had declined to even attempt opening the cornerstone of 1320. Somehow they feared that it might damage the structural integrity of the church. This cornerstone had been undisturbed since originally laid on May 18, 1924, and proved to be a real challenge. Stonemason Jim Gadrin soon discovered that the concrete had hardened almost to the consistency of steel. He worked with various tools over a two-day period before finally breaking through the wall. Then he had difficulty with the stone lid that covered the cavity where the copper casket rested before he finally succeeded in removing it from the wall. On April 16, a group of First Community members, staff and clergy assembled in Brownlee Hall to view the contents of the cornerstones. Representatives from the Upper Arlington and Grandview/Marble Cliff Historical Societies were in attendance as well

as Arlington mayor Don Leach who presented a proclamation honoring the Centennial. The box from Lincoln Road Chapel was opened first, but proved disappointing as the contents had deteriorated beyond recognition. Fortunately all the documents had been copied in 1959 when it was previously opened. On the other hand, everything from 1320 was in pristine condition. There were 1924 editions of *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, *The Columbus Citizen*, and *The Ohio State Journal* as well as several issues of *The Community News* published by the church that looked as if they had just come off the press. Other items included the Grandview High School 1923 yearbook, a bound copy of the 1923/24 church bulletins, Upper Arlington High School manual, 1924 Women's Guild roster, church membership list, a photo of the ground breaking, Masonic Lodge roster, lists of teachers and boards of education for both schools, booklets about the church, some of Rev. Weist's sermons, and a complete set of blueprints for the church. These artifacts were placed on display in Gallery Court until returned to the cornerstones in the fall, along with contributions created by the children and youth, wishes for the future from each Group of the Women's Guild, a copy of *Reflections On Our Heritage: A History of First Community Church*, and statements by the Governing Board and Dick Wing.

The main Centennial activities were compressed into a brief three-week period. The commemorative worship service on Sunday April 19th celebrated our founding and the first 50 years of our history. The second half century was celebrated the following Sunday. The centerpiece of our festivities turned out to be the Coming Together Dinner on May 2 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Marti Timmons and her enormous committee planned and executed a marvelous event that left each of the 1,028 attendees with a glowing sense of fellowship and love for one another as well as pride and appreciation for all that First Community Church has accomplished in its first century. There was musical entertainment as well as a nostalgic legacy video prepared by Ned Timmons that provided glimpses into our past. Other highlights of the evening included remarks by former senior ministers Otis Maxfield, Robert Raines, Harold Englund and Barry Johnson; as well as a tribute to Dr. Arthur Sanders who served on the staff with all of these men and ministered among us for more than 50 years. The only complaint heard was that there was just not enough time to visit with all the former ministers and staff members who returned for this home-



coming. Three celebrative services featuring the Centennial hymn and anthem and inspirational liturgy were held on Sunday, May 3 in the main church at South Campus as Dr. Wing's sermon focused on the future of First Community Church.

Other Centennial projects included installation on the South Campus lawn of three limestone benches engraved with the words "Agreeing to Differ," "Resolving to Love" and "Uniting to Serve." Conceived and designed by Bob Wandel, these benches announce the essence of First Community Church for all to see. A new cross will be erected on Vesper Hill at Camp Akita. For the first time in many years the church entered Grandview's Memorial Day Parade and Upper Arlington's July 4th Parade. Some members of the Prayers and Squares Quilt Minis-

try are creating a commemorative picture quilt for display in Gallery Court at 1320. *Reflections on Our Heritage: A History of First Community Church* should be off the presses by the fall of 2009. Meanwhile the committee working on the application to include First Community Church on the National Register of Historic Places hopes to complete its work by 2010.

It is impossible to count the number of individuals who were involved in some aspect of celebrating our church and honoring its heritage and service to God and the world, but there were hundreds and each person contributed to making 2009 one of the most significant years in the long and memorable history of First Community Church.



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*Rev. Fred L. Brownlee, Pastor 1910-1914*



*Rev. Oliver Weist, Pastor 1915-1931*

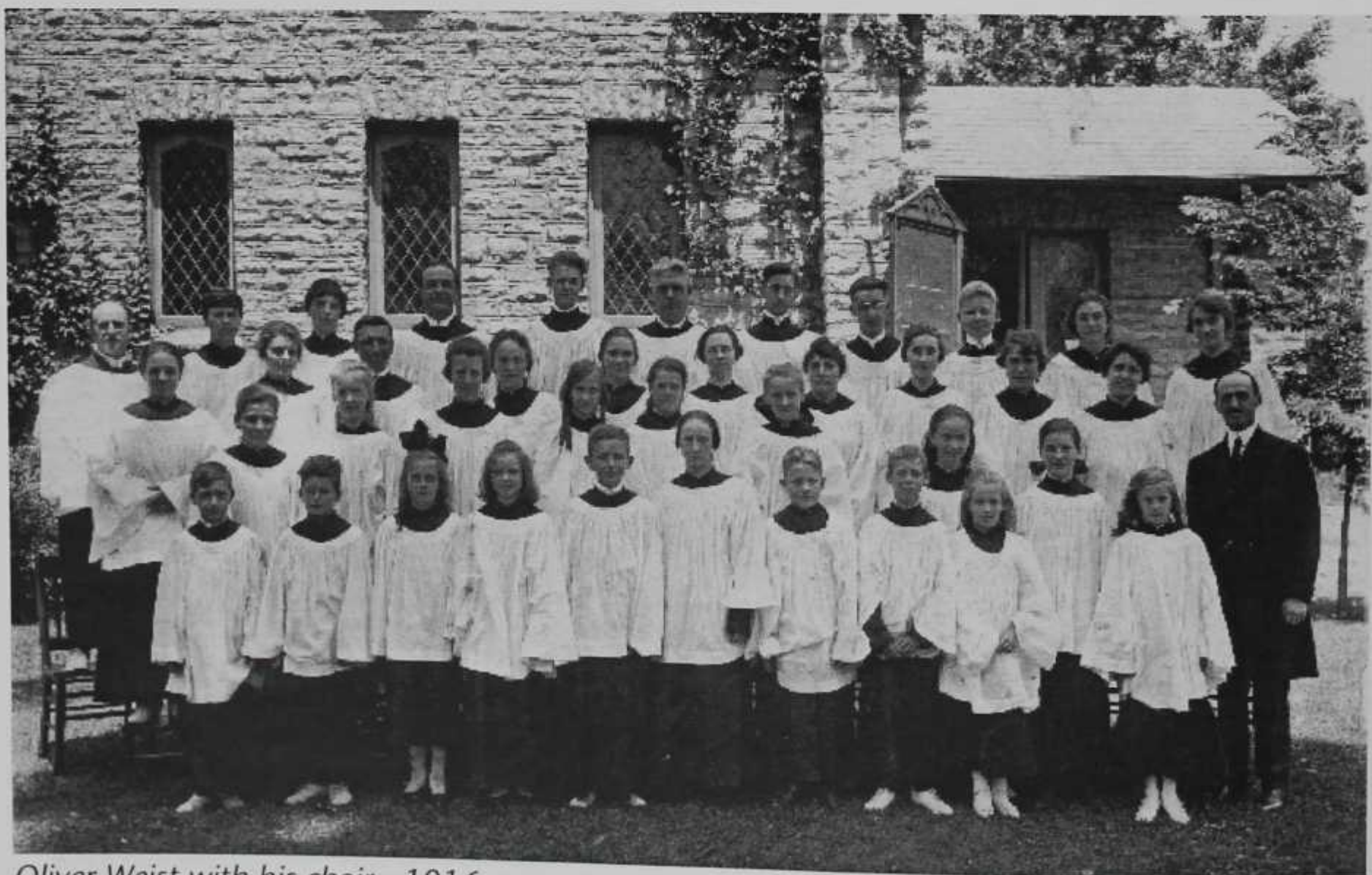


*Construction of Grandview Heights Congregational Church. Note horse-drawn wagon carrying stone. (Photo courtesy of Grandview Heights Marble Cliff Historical Society.)*





*Lincoln Road Chapel*



*Oliver Weist with his choir - 1916*





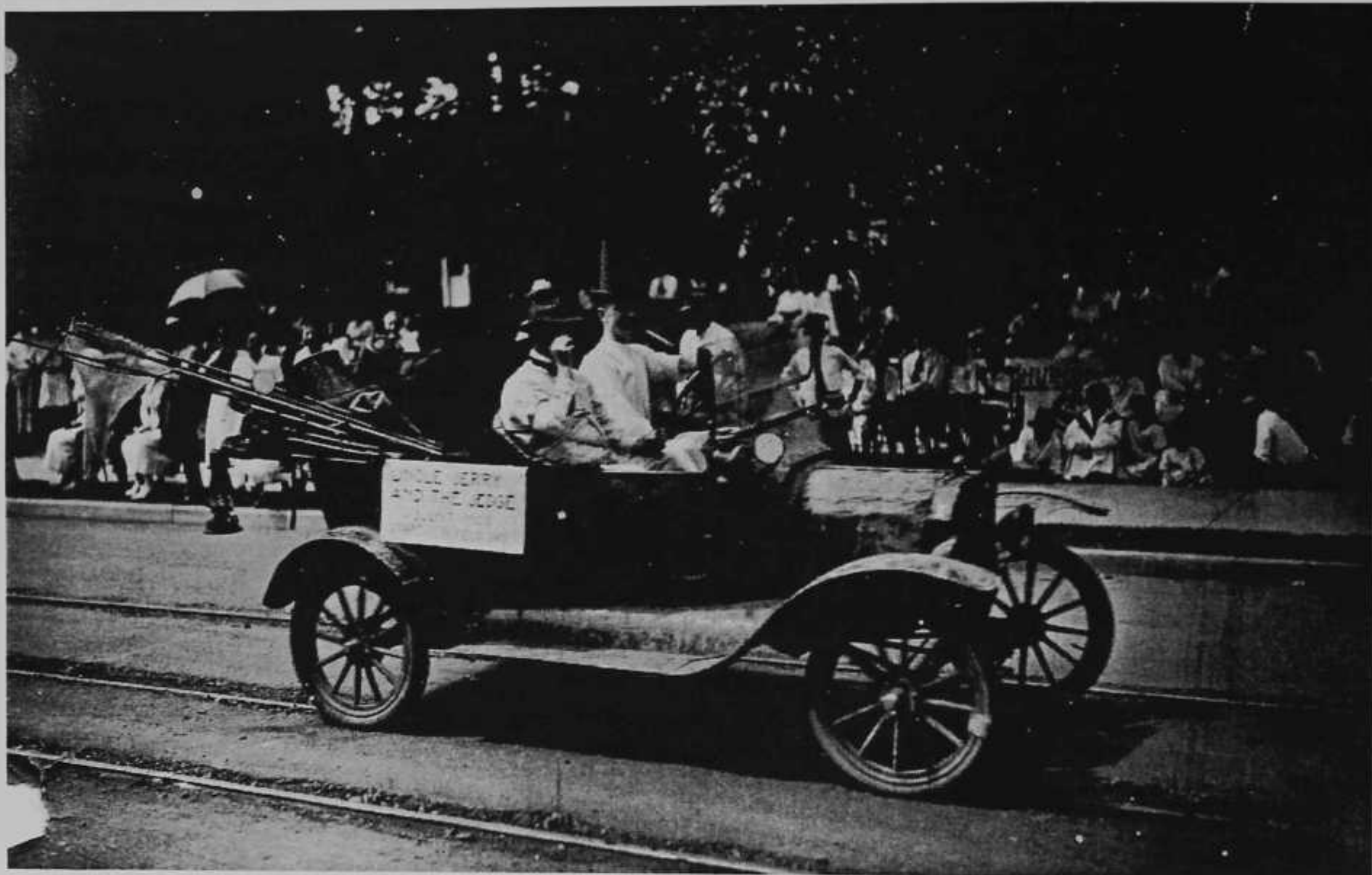
Field Day Parade. Note the streetcar tracks on First Avenue.



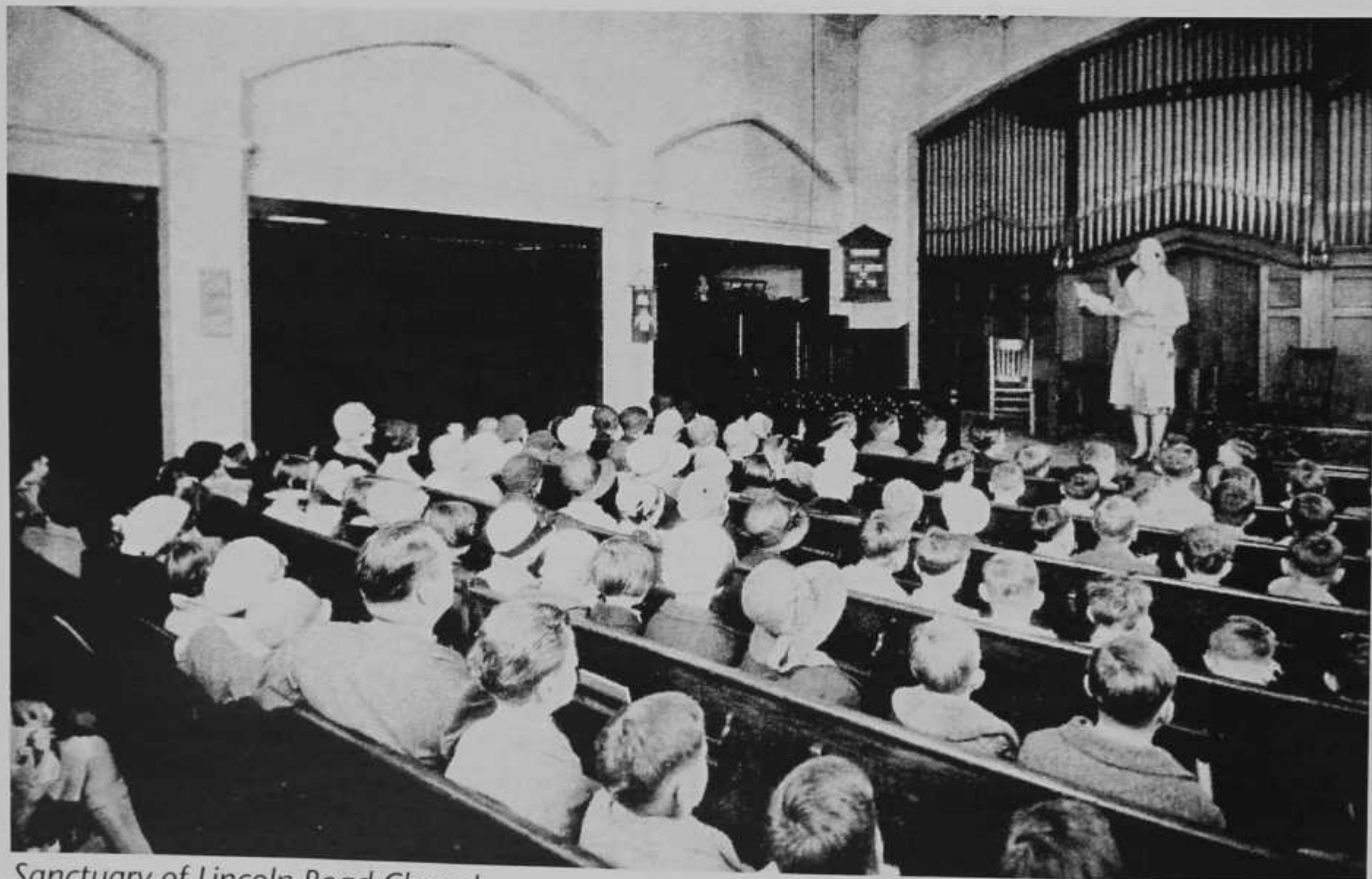
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Field Day Parade





*Field Day Parade*

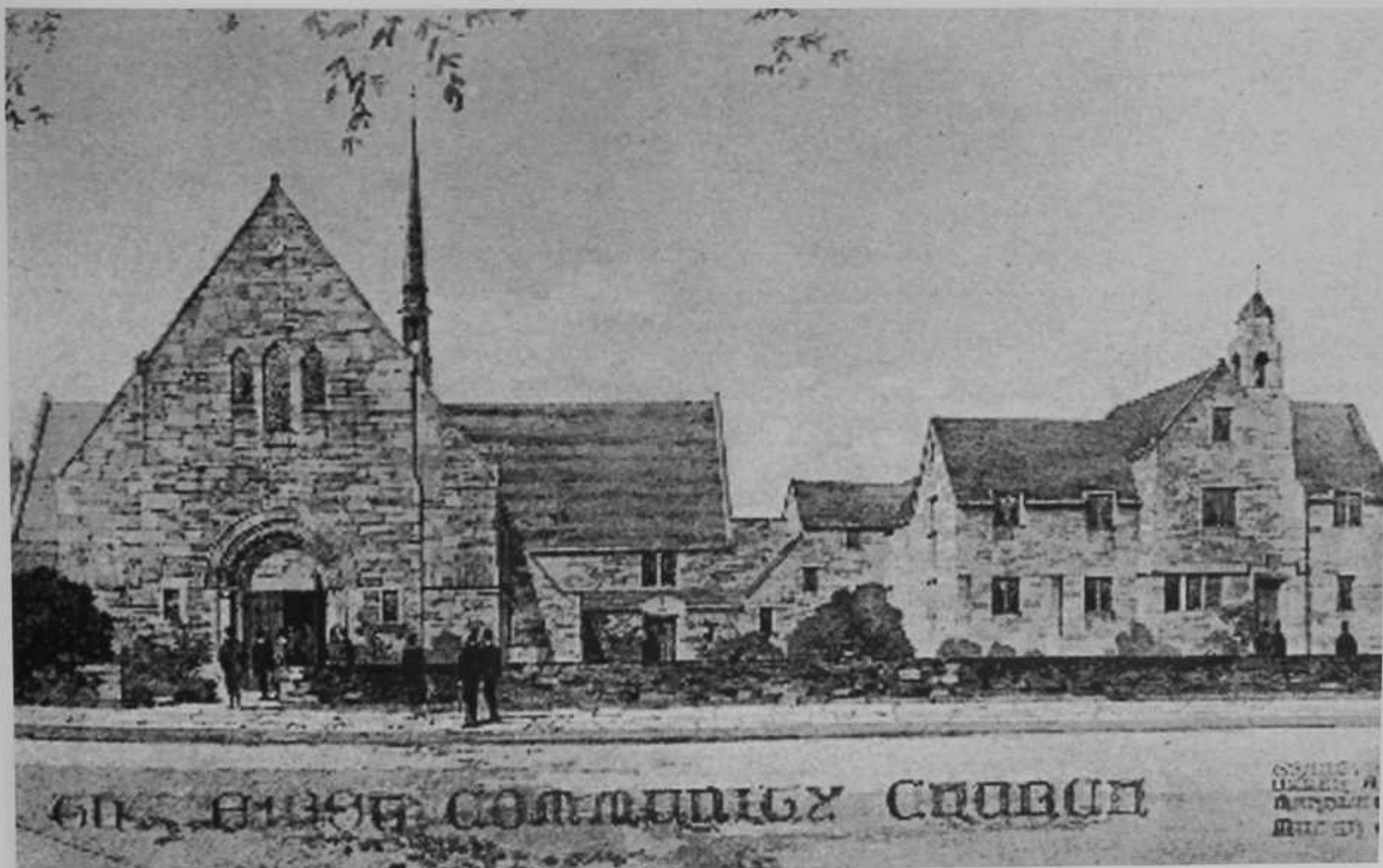


*Sanctuary of Lincoln Road Chapel*





*Sunday School class in basement of Lincoln Road Chapel*

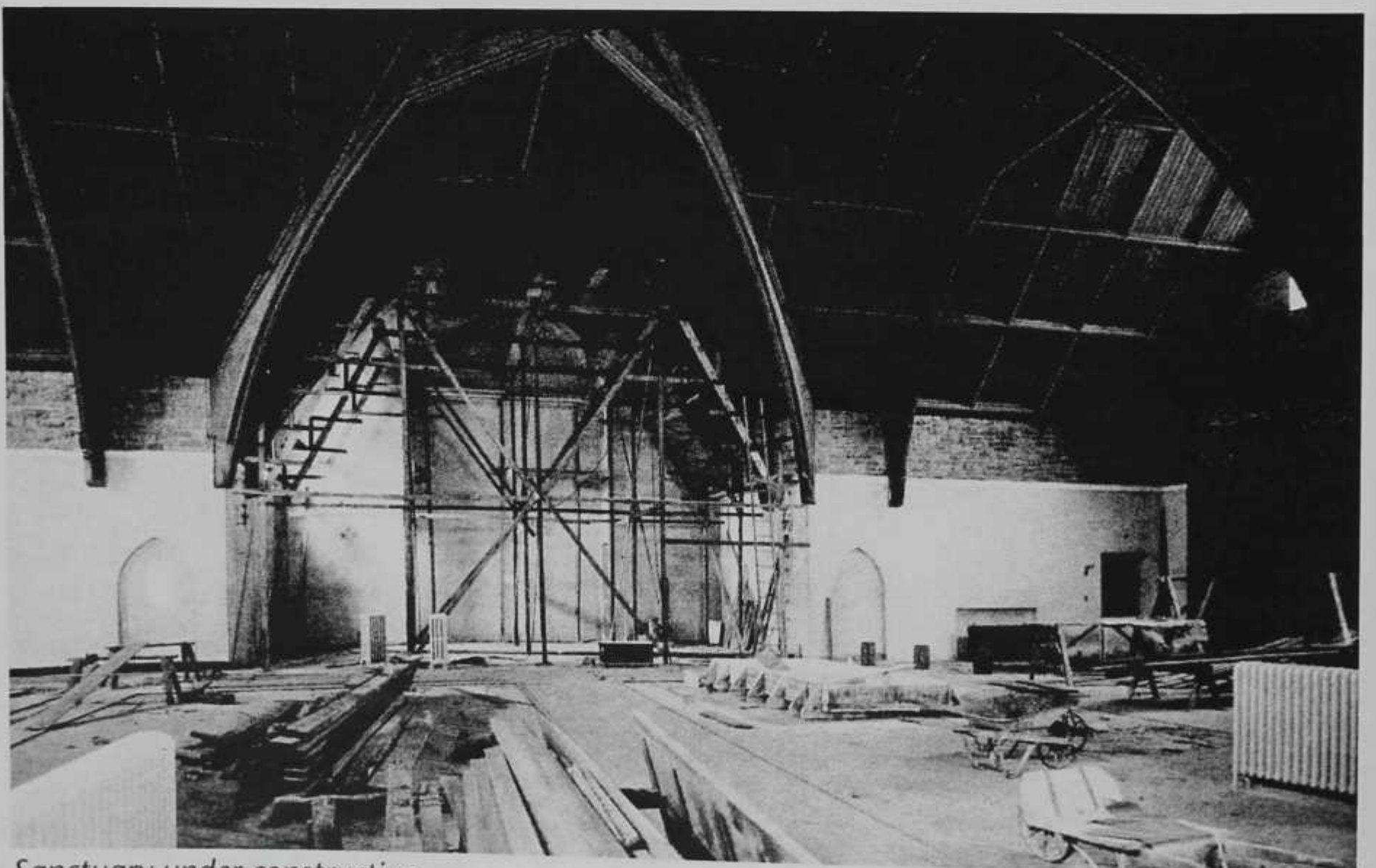


*Architect's sketch of new church*





*Construction of new church*



*Sanctuary under construction*





*Gymnasium under construction*



*Church Dinner in the Gymnasium*





*Rev. Rufus E. Wicker, Pastor 1931-1935*



*Dr. Roy A. Burkhardt, Senior Minister  
1935-1958*



*The first Bar None Dance was in 1938. This annual New Year's Eve tradition lasted until 1976. The initial ACT I alcohol free New Year's Eve party held in 1994 was roughly based on this model.*





*Cloister Choir rehearsal. Directed by Lowell Riley, the choir numbered between 120 and 150 high school girls and sang for the 9 am service until 1958.*



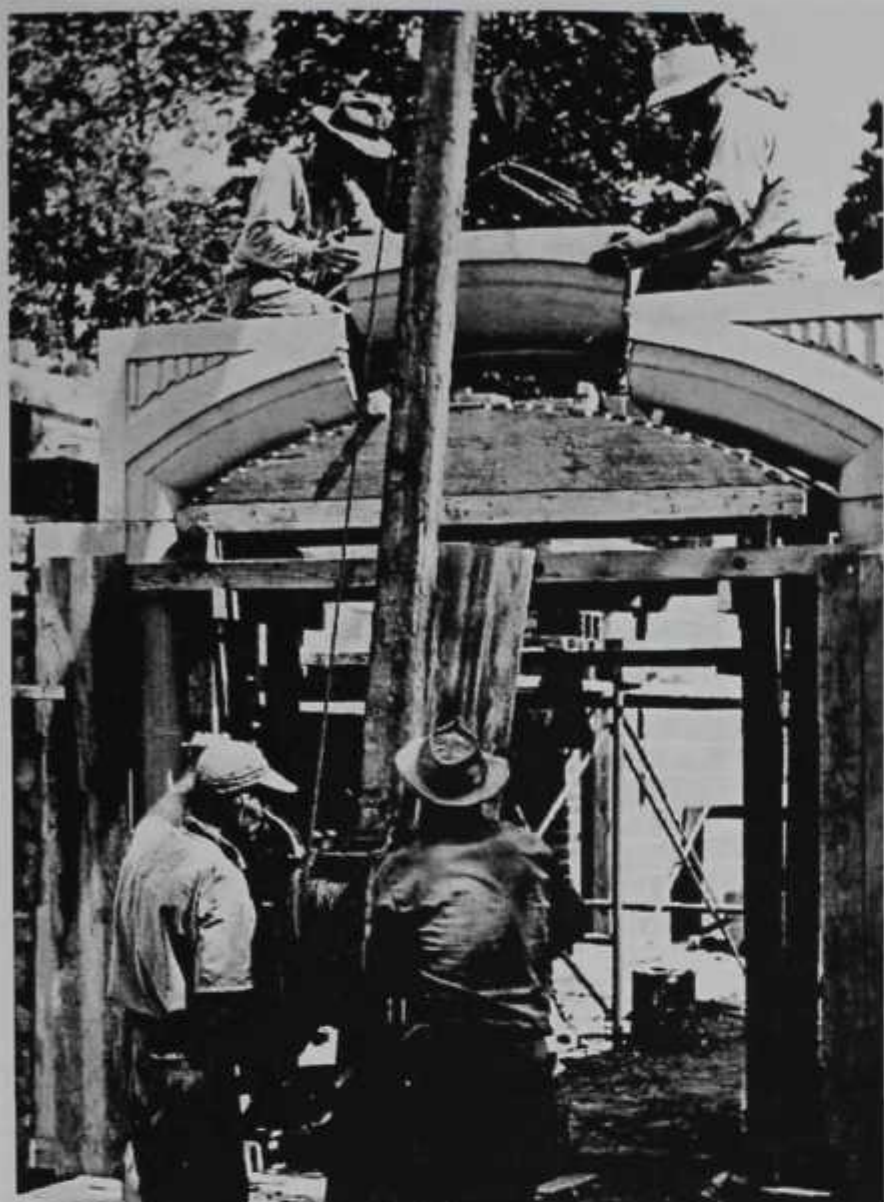
*In 1929 the church had an active athletic program fielding a baseball team, two bowling teams, and two basketball teams that competed in the Church Athletic League of Columbus.*





*First Avenue House, built in 1909, was originally occupied by William Kropp, a shoe manufacturer, and then by the William Anderson family. In 1945 it was purchased by the church and housed the preschool and ministerial interns Fred Doty and Ed Golden. In the post-war years it served as a teen Center and church offices until it was taken over by the Tri-Village Trading Post in 1953. When the Trading Post moved into new quarters ten years later, First Avenue House was used for Vacation Bible School and youth fellowship meetings before becoming a home for the Khoat Nguyen family, refugees from South Vietnam in 1975. They lived there for two years until relocating to Los Angeles. Before the house was demolished in October 1977, its vintage woodwork, bubble windows and plumbing fixtures were sold at silent auction.*





*Placing the keystone over the Bukhart Chapel entrance - 1951*



*Dr. Burkhart counseled teens on the street or in his private office*



*Dr. Otis A. Maxfield, Senior Minister  
1958-1966*



*Dr. Arthur L. Teikmanis, Senior Minister  
1967-1970*





*Otis Maxfield, Fred Brownlee, and Roy Burkhart at Dr. Maxfield's installation in May 1958.*



*Project Amigos*

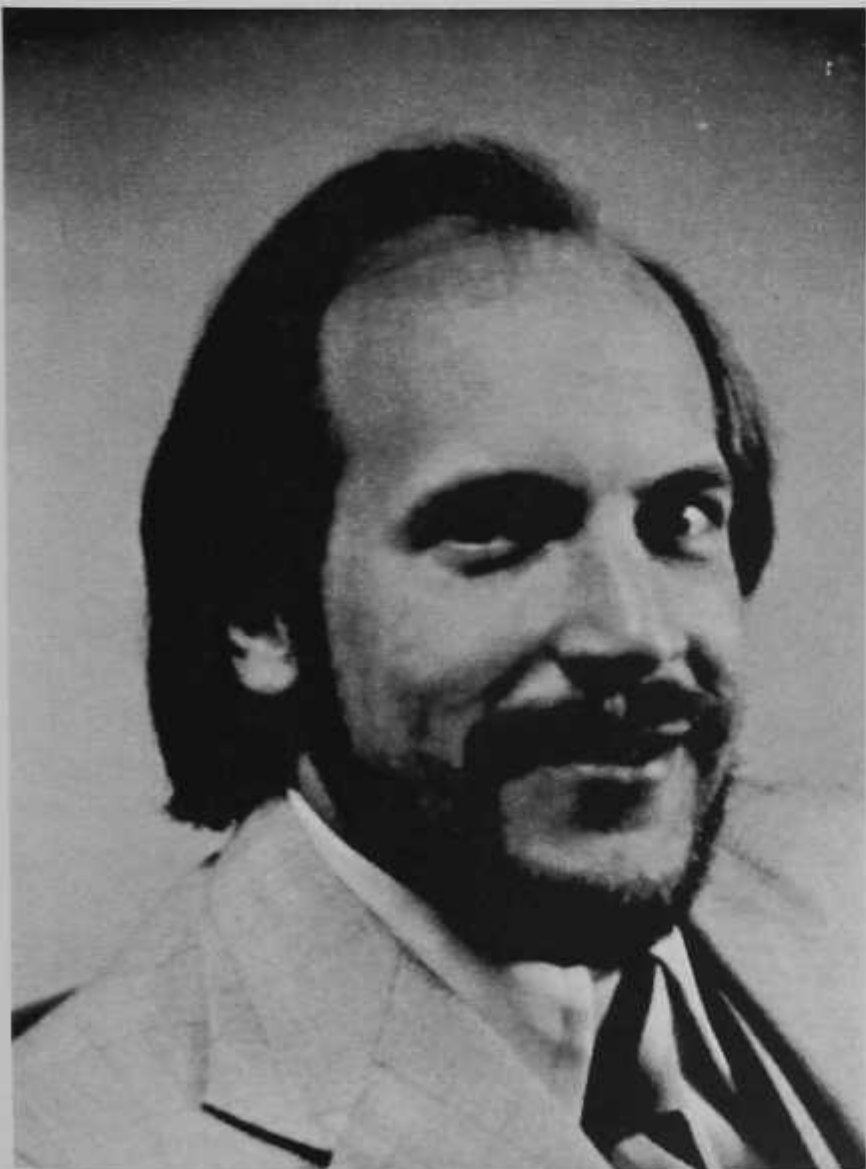




*Rev. Robert A. Raines, Senior Minister  
1970-1974*



*Dr. Harold N. Englund, Senior Minister  
1975-1981*



*Rev. John A. Cairns served as Interim Head of  
Staff from 1981-1983*



*Rev. Barry L. Johnson, Senior Minister  
1983-1992*





*The Center for Extended Ministry, now known as the North Campus, opened in late 1991*



*Rev. Bruce G. Ingles, Interim Senior Pastor  
1992-1993*



*Dr. Richard A. Wing, Senior Minister  
1994-Present*





*1320 Cambridge Boulevard with the Centennial Banner*



*The Cherub Choir performing at the Centennial Celebration*



*Proposed Expansion of the North Campus*

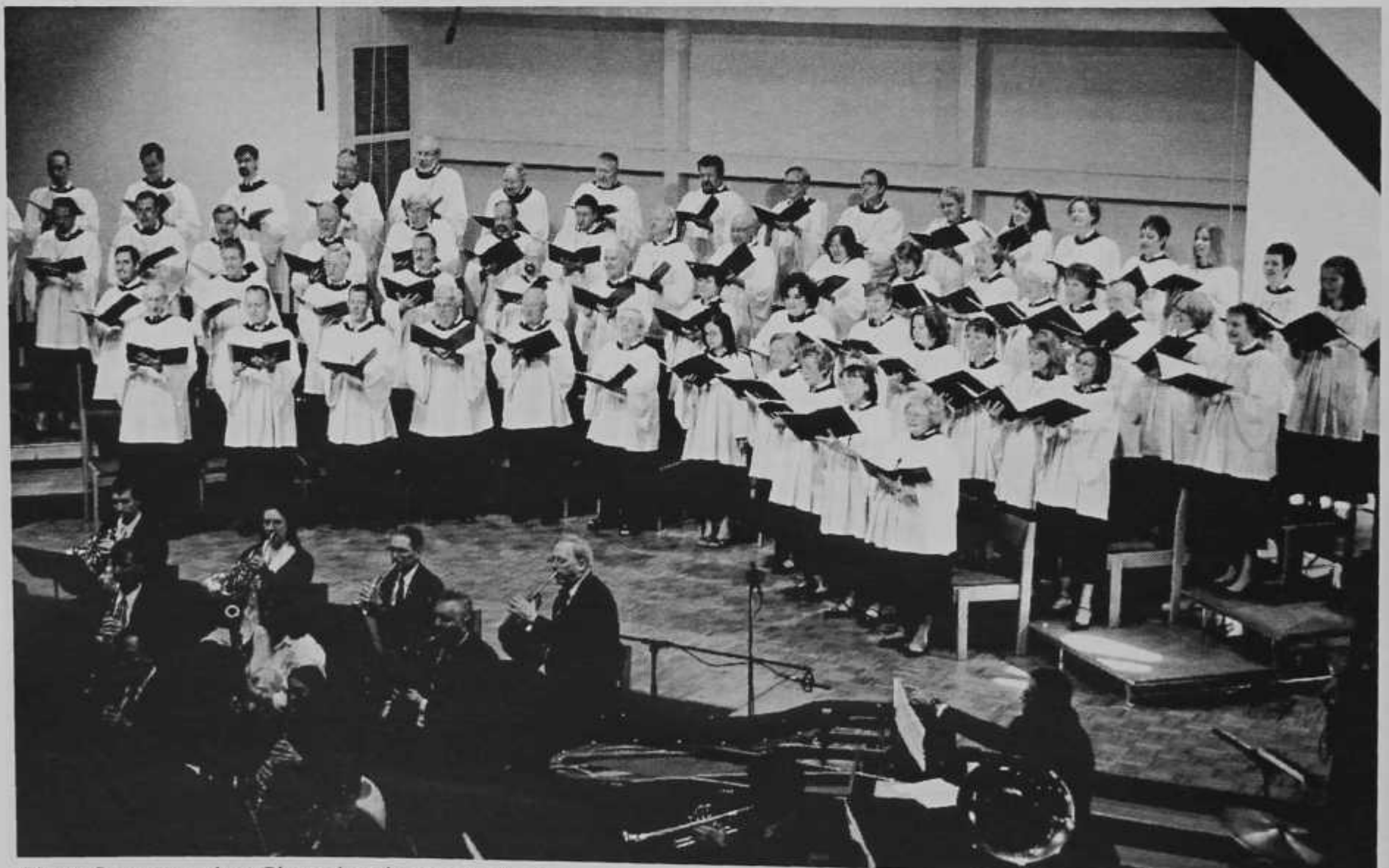




*Lowell Riley in the midst of pipes for the new organ*



*Ronald J. Jenkins, Minister of Music and Liturgy 1973-Present*

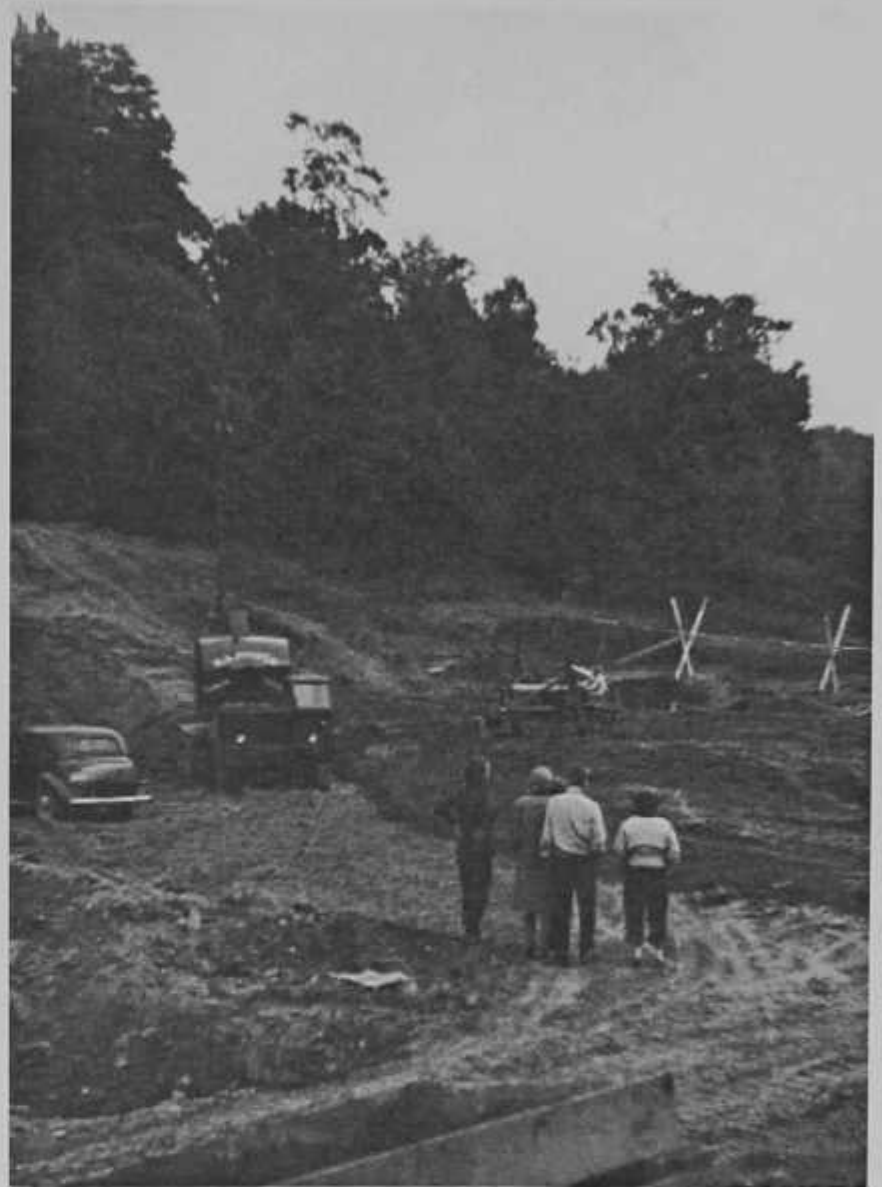


*First Community Church Chancel Choir*





*Beginning construction of original lodge at Akita - 1948*



*Excavating for the lake at Akita - 1948*



*Camp Akita sign*



*Camp Akita in Autumn*





*Dr. Burkhart broadcasting from WBNS-TV studios in 1953*



*Television control room at South Campus*





*Vaud-Villities Producer Bob Murphy with Founder and Musical Director, Lowell Riley at the piano*



*Vaud-Villities Finale*





Children welcoming First Community visitors to the Deep Griha school



Youth building homes in Mexico with AMOR Ministries



# *Our Ministries*





1841





## AT WORSHIP

Members of First Community Church have been afforded a wide variety of worship experiences through the years. Both music and drama have served to enrich our religious observances since the days of Oliver Weist.

An article in the November 1917 issue of the local monthly magazine *Norwester*, described the two totally different services that were held each Sunday. Public Worship, the informal morning service, began at ten o'clock and lasted for an hour and thirty minutes. This consisted of religious education classes for all ages followed by a sermon. The Vesper Service, which was very formal, was scheduled at 4:00 p.m. There were chants and responses plus the processional, anthems, and recessional by the vested choir. Rev. Weist was justly proud of the choir, which he organized and directed for several years.

"The difference between a chapel and a church is the organ," said Weist. Therefore, one of his earliest goals was to obtain a new pipe organ. The Women's Guild assumed responsibility for raising funds and undertook many projects to earn money. By November 1917 this dream was assured with over \$3,000 in the organ account. A contract of \$4,695 was signed the following month with the Austin Organ Company, builders of the Mormon Temple organ that was the world's largest at that time. Delivery was made in May, and the new instrument was dedicated on June 2, 1918.

The innovative philosophy of our church was evidenced early in our history. Rev. Weist's articles that appeared regularly in *Norwester*, often noted our different attitude. "It is easy for this church to make any change that is needed for the good of the work. There is no church tradition to stand in the way of progress; the fact they 'they have never done it before' is no argument to people who live out here." In December 1918, after announcing the times for services, he wrote, "We call this, 'The Church with the Open Door'; open seven days a week to all who care to come. We want in attendance and membership men and women, young and old, who live in the life of this new day, who accept the leadership of Jesus Christ, who care for truth more than for tradition, and who believe that the best is yet to be. See not only what kind of gospel we preach, but that we also practice that gospel."

In describing a typical worship service in 1921, Rev. Weist noted, "We do not hesitate to include in our service anything that would help to beautify and inspire our worship, no matter from what source it comes. For our present form of worship we are indebted in part to the Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists." He explained that no evening services were scheduled in order to make that time available for working with young people. "We can accomplish a great deal more by centering all our efforts on the morning hour. Too long the Church had deified talk. Experience has taught us how much more practicing we can do when we have less preaching. One sermon is enough for any congregation to hear and enough for one minister to prepare each week. A minister can do many of the things in the community that need to be done (and are usually left undone) if he does not have a second service hanging over him."

Belief that a community church ought to serve all Christians was the reasoning behind the informal morning and very formal afternoon services previously described. When the decision to have only one service was made, it was significant that the congregation, representing many different religious heritages, voted unanimously to adopt the form for the formal service. In 1929 there were four different orders of worship – one for each Sunday of the month – so that a variety of responses, chants and liturgy were offered.

A popular evening service, held once a month, utilized the new medium of moving pictures. First there was a devotional period in which everyone participated. The organ, two pianos, and an orchestra provided music, with words to the hymns superimposed on scenic slides projected on the screen. The message then came via a well-chosen movie instead of a sermon.

Oliver Weist's musical background served both the church and the community. His vested choir, composed of adults and children, was often asked to sing at other churches. He believed that music provided great discipline and that all children of the community ought to be afforded the opportunity for vocal training. Each year fourteen youngsters were selected from the community to sing regularly with the choir. In addition, there were a number of substitutes who received the same training and sang occasionally. No child was received into the choir whose parents did not promise to see that they



sang regularly from September till July. In appreciation of their faithfulness, junior members present on Sunday morning were given complimentary tickets at the following Thursday afternoon's rehearsal for admission to the Saturday movie. The adult singers practiced separately from children, and the two units of the choir came together only on Sunday morning. By 1929 twenty juniors were full-fledged members of the choir, while fifty were in attendance at the weekly rehearsals.

One of the considerations in planning the new church was adaptability for dramatic presentations. The choir was augmented to 70 voices for the annual Christmas pageant and cantata, the first service scheduled in the new building on Christmas Eve 1925. *The Community News* article that gave details for the event included the following admonition. "Those who wish to see the pageant to be given tonight are asked to come in a spirit of worship, not for entertainment. This announcement is made following the remark by a community resident, who said, 'Pageant! I thought the church was made for a religious purpose.'"

Another feature of the new church was the rear balcony choir loft that was used occasionally for the full choir, but more frequently for soloists and antiphonal singing. In most churches the organ is played only for church services, but not at First Community. The architect and Building Committee were determined that if an instrument cost so much, then it should be available for almost daily use. Thus, two consoles were installed, one in the sanctuary and the other in the balcony of the gymnasium where it could be played for banquets, movies, plays and Sunday School. In addition there was an echo organ in the balcony. Many people considered the most impressive part of the worship service to be the hymns played on the chimes of this instrument during the devotional period that preceded the morning prayer.

It had long been church policy not to lock up the organ and forbid anyone to touch it. Instead, operating on the theory that the church was the servant of the community, residents were encouraged to practice on the Austin two-manual organ for a nominal fee to cover only the cost of operation. The new Estey three-manual organ offered greater challenge to aspiring students. Anyone wanting to use either instrument was invited to contact the Church Secretary to schedule practice time. Fifty

cents an hour was charged for the new organ and twenty-five for the old.

There were several other examples of the church's leadership in providing for the musical life of the villages. The Rev. Weist organized a male chorus in early 1917. The members voted to be a community organization rather than a church organization, yet rehearsals were held at the church. Weist served as director, and the Church Secretary handled all paperwork. Soon they were receiving more invitations than they could possibly accept.

In March 1919, 31 boys met to form a brass band under Weist's direction and decided to invite girls to join also. The December 1921 *Norwester* carried the story of yet another musical group. "Following our theory of the church serving the community, regardless of the effect of that service upon the church, we have organized a Community Orchestra among our young people. As with other organizations, this has nothing to do with the church except that it furnishes a meeting place and pays all the bills. One of the objects is to help the boys and girls with their music in furnishing the opportunity of playing together under the best of leadership." All children taking private instrumental lessons were invited to join. This group was led by Caroline Thomas and rehearsed weekly. Her father, James O. Thomas, was church treasurer for 25 years. The entire Thomas family was very involved in the life of the church and they were among the first to join Oliver Weist's choir. Everyone in the family played a different musical instrument. While studying violin at Juilliard School of Music, Caroline took part in early radio broadcasts from the Waldorf Astoria. She returned often to give recitals and play for worship services at First Community Church. Caroline Thomas Harnsberger led a fascinating life as violinist with the Evanston Symphony Orchestra, artisan in repairing stringed instruments, pilot, researcher, lecturer and author of fourteen books. Her long friendship with Mark Twain's daughter, plus her own personal research, made her an authority on Twain and led to five books about his life. Her last years were spent at First Community Village.

When the burden of being choir director in addition to all his activities as full time minister to the church and community became too heavy for Mr. Weist, he asked his friend, Evelyn Silbernagel, to take over responsibility for the choir in 1921. At first she declined, but agreed to direct for a couple of weeks until he could find someone else. How-



ever, she kept that job for twenty years. Those who sang in her choirs attested to the fact that she was a strict taskmaster who carried on the tradition of musical excellence that had been established for First Community Church. Elaborate pageants and musical programs were presented each Christmas under her direction.

The *Tri-Village News* of January 1, 1937, described a new kind of Christmas Eve service, planned by Mrs. Silbernagel, in which all three Grandview churches participated. Christmas music by the First Community choir preceded Bible passages telling the story of the nativity. Following the stroke of midnight from the organ chimes, ministers of the three churches assisted by Dean Palmer, Bob Murphy and two other young men representing First Community Church served communion. Then the sanctuary was darkened before being illuminated to reveal a living tableau of the adoration. More than 600 worshippers attended this service. Earlier in the evening one hundred young people had visited fifty homes in the community caroling to shut-ins and then were served a chili supper when they returned to the church.

In the ensuing years there have been many variations on this special holiday observance. The living tableau was enlarged and the use of real animals led to several misadventures. One family service was added, then two, with more formal candlelight services scheduled late on Christmas Eve. The ministry of music by the choirs has always enhanced the seasonal flavor of these worship services.

In early 1941 the decision was made to add an early morning worship service to the Sunday schedule. Two members of the Music Committee recommended hiring a young organist and musician they had worked with in downtown productions of the Young Business Men's Club. Lowell Riley joined the staff in May to organize a youth choir for the early service as well as a men's chorus. He had already acquired prominence in local music circles as an organist, singer, composer and arranger. Since 1935 he had worked at WBNS and was musical director of the radio station. Little did anyone realize at the time that he would remain part of the church staff for 42 years, or that his men's chorus would become Vaud-Villities, the oldest and largest musical variety show in the United States, which staged its 67th annual production in 2009.

The November 1, 1941, *Youth Edit* enthusiastically described the activities taking shape under Lowell's direction. The Youth Choir numbered 70 high school and college age members who sang regularly for the 9:30 a.m. service. They had also sung for a united youth worship service and had appeared on the program of the OSU Chapel Hour.

In a front-page article *The Columbus Dispatch* of November 1, 1942, featured Lowell "as composer of the first important musical composition on a war theme by a local artist". His requiem to honor America's war dead was sung by the combined First Community choirs on November 15. The article continued to describe his achievements. "For a man not yet in his 30's, Lowell Riley has composed an astonishing amount of music. In choral work particularly Riley has been outstanding. First Community Church officials look upon him as the sort of young man who will eventually lead church music out of many of its out-moded patterns." That prophecy indeed came true.

Because so many young men left for wartime service, an all girl choir was formed to replace the mixed choir. The Cloister Choir grew rapidly and averaged between 130 and 150 members. It was an important part of the music program of the church and there was lively competition to belong. Downtown newspapers announced the "Christmas Choral Fantasy" to be presented by the combined Cloister and Junior Cloister Choirs for three nights at the Palace Theater in 1946. This was but one of several Christmas and Easter concerts at downtown theaters by the Cloister Choir. They also sang in the annual productions of Vaud-Villities.

Riley greatly expanded the variety of church music. He had joined the staff on a part time basis in 1941 and did not devote his full time to the church until January 1947. By then he had organized six choirs. There were choirs for children of all ages, including the first and second grade Cherubs. During that period he had also taught choral music at both Grandview and Arlington High Schools. The young people were especially enthusiastic about the programs he tailored for them. One example was a February 1947 organ pop concert of light classics and popular songs followed by dancing in the gym. He organized small vocal groups such as the Hi-Jinx Chorus, which not only performed locally, but also sang on a weekly radio program and traveled with the youth groups to churches in other cities. Eventually the Church of the Block of Wood



had its own choir of junior high singers. From 1944 through 1958, the Cloister Choir sang for the 9:00 a.m. service each Sunday morning. During these years young people also participated in our weekly worship by reading the Scripture lesson each Sunday, and once every summer they presented an entire worship service based on their experiences at camp. Lowell's able assistant as director of all the children's choirs was Sunny Murtha.

For many years a 6:00 a.m. sunrise service was held at Scioto Country Club Golf Course to begin the observance of Easter Sunday. This dramatic worship service was presented by the Brownlee youth groups, with music by the Cloister Choir. There were other unique opportunities for worship during Holy Week, including special music by the Chancel Choir. Communion elements were available in Zell Chapel for anyone wanting to partake privately. People were urged to come to the sanctuary at any time for quiet meditation.

#### **A NEW ORGAN**

Perhaps the most carefully considered purchase ever made by the members of First Community Church was our Moller organ. It had become increasingly apparent that the Estey organ, installed when the church was built in 1926, needed extensive repairs. Group O (for organ) of the Women's Guild was organized in 1953 for the express purpose of raising money and sparking interest for a new organ. Many of the women in Group O were members of the choir or ardent supporters of the church's music program. One of its main projects for several years was preparing and serving a turkey dinner near Thanksgiving time.

In December 1953 the Board of Trustees appointed a committee to look into the problem of organ maintenance and to investigate the possibilities of financing a new instrument. They first made an inspection trip to the organ loft in the upper south part of the chancel behind the screen that forms part of the ceiling structure. This area houses the pipes, reservoirs for storing air under pressure, chests that supply air to the pipes, and the electrical components that control each sound producing component. Here they were able to see for themselves how badly the wooden parts had warped, cracked and come apart from the effects of heating the sanctuary. Leather portions had also dried out and lost resiliency. These conditions produced frus-

trating situations beyond the control of even the most talented organist. At times the organ played continually, sometimes not at all, and often there were unwelcome wheezes and whistles. On a single Sunday, 23 organ failures were recorded that had not been apparent in practice the day before.

After a six-month study, the committee reported that repairs would run around \$20,000, approximately \$7,000 more than the original cost of the organ. Expert consultants confirmed its obsolescence. Even extensive repairs would not solve the major problems. The report concluded that we would still have an inadequate organ, even if \$20,000 were spent for repairs.

A figure of \$25,000 toward a new organ was added to the proposed budget for 1954 and the committee was charged to investigate purchasing a new instrument. They visited many churches to evaluate their organs and to compare sizes, makes, and sound quality. These findings were reported at the Annual Meeting of May 24, and the congregation voted to authorize the committee to proceed with the purchase of a new organ, subject to final acceptance at a later congregational meeting before the order was placed. A major dilemma arose when the organ broke down completely on November 19, with no hope that emergency repairs could be made in time for the Christmas season. Creativity has long been a hallmark of church staff, and this crisis was met by moving the small organ from the Children's Chapel into the sanctuary, along with two speakers for amplifying the sound. Through this arrangement, organ music was provided in the sanctuary during the entire repair period.

The organ committee was determined to obtain the best possible organ at the fairest price. A subcommittee, in consultation with Wilbur Held, organist at Trinity Episcopal Church and member of the Ohio State University faculty, drew up specifications. However, it was soon agreed that this was an assignment for experts, so the committee recommended contacting several reliable organ builders and asking them to visit the church, hear what we wanted, and then draft specifications to fit our needs and submit bids. These requests were sent to four manufacturers on February 8, 1955.

Meanwhile, the committee explored another method of finding the proper organ at the right price. Rather than letting the specification control the price of the instrument, they decided to set an



arbitrary figure of \$50,000 and find out whether an organ in that price range would be adequate for our sanctuary. While various manufacturers were preparing bids, committee members, along with Lowell Riley, visited other churches that purportedly had \$50,000 organs. These inspections revealed some organs to be totally inadequate for our needs, while the cost of others far exceeded the reported figure. The bids submitted by the organ builders also convinced the committee that we needed a more expensive instrument.

On August 9, the organ committee presented its final report to the Board of Trustees. After twenty months of study, their recommendation was to accept a bid from M. P Moller, Inc. to build our organ in one year's time. The Moller proposal was superior for many reasons and also included several extra features. Two other manufacturers had submitted bids that did not meet specifications and the third, through costing less, would take two years for construction. The Board approved purchase and installation costs, subject to congregational authorization. A special meeting was called for October 23, and unanimous approval was given for expenditures of \$78,689 for the organ and \$19,875 for its installation. At that time there was a balance of \$26,229 in the Organ Fund, and the remainder was to come from pledges to the Annual Finance Campaign over the next two years. Guild Group O continued to raise money, and one-half of the commission on all Trading Post sales was also given to the church for this purpose.

Work in the sanctuary began the following spring. The old organ was removed and sold for \$500. Lowell Riley recounted that a partition was built to completely seal off the chancel area to keep the rest of the church as dust free as possible. The south loft was opened up further and a second loft was constructed above the north side of the chancel over the choir room. Part of the chancel floor was lowered to make room for the console and the rail in front was raised to conceal it. These alterations were completed by the end of August when the small chapel organ was moved into the pit where the new console would eventually be located. During this portion of the work, some potentially dangerous fire hazards were discovered that required installation of new wiring and electric panels to replace the overloaded unit for lighting the sanctuary.

Although the organ parts were scheduled to arrive on September 15, engineering delays postponed their delivery until November 8. Five moving vans loads of pipes and components were stored in the Weist Room. The size of some pieces awed everyone who watched the unloading. The largest wooden pipe took eight men to lift from the truck and the longest zinc pipes were about eighteen feet. The chests containing the action valves to control the flow of air to each of 366 pipes were twelve feet long, four feet wide, and each weighed half a ton. All eight of these were hoisted into the loft from the chancel by ropes and pulleys. The console arrived on November 26, and several men were needed to lift its 1,000 pound weight into place. For anyone who has never peeked behind the rail to look at the console, there are four rows of 61 keys each, 253 control knobs and 32 pedals. If all 2,112 separate wires that link the console to the loft were joined together, the length would exceed two and a half miles.

Three years after the organ committee was appointed, a dedication service was held the evening of Sunday, December 23, 1956, with a recital of Christmas music played by Lowell Riley. He recalls that not quite all of the pipes were in place by that date. During the next few weeks they were installed and the organ was "voiced" by the Moller finisher who was considered to be one of the best in the country. All work was completed in time for the series of organ recitals that were scheduled over a five month period to demonstrate the beauty and power of our new instrument. These guest artists included Virgil Fox of Riverside Church in New York, Alexander Shriener of the Mormon Tabernacle, Wilbur Held of Trinity Episcopal Church and head of OSU's organ department, and Edward Johe of First Congregational Church. Dr. Homer Blanchard concluded his statement in the dedication program with these words, "May this organ ever serve to the greater glory of God!"

Throughout the 42 years that Lowell Riley served on the staff of First Community Church until his retirement in December 1983, he gave many musical gifts to this congregation. His sensitive touch on the organ contributed to the beauty of Sunday worship, services of memory, and weddings for two generations of brides. He wrote anthems, responses, a requiem and "The Seven Keys Cantata," in addition to most of the choral arrangements for the Cloister Choir and Vaud-Villities. Not only did he organize and direct choirs of singers of all ages,



but he also did much to increase our appreciation and understanding of sacred music. His weekly column in the *First Community Church News*, "Comments from the Choir Loft," gave interesting information about the coming Sunday's anthems, hymns or composers. There were concerts by visiting choral groups and a varied program of organ recitals by Lowell and guest organists. In 1963 the Chancel Choir gave the premier performance in central Ohio of Francis Poulenc's "Gloria." Many choir members were also involved in Vaud-Villities, which gave yet another outlet for their talents and benefited the Music Department through gifts purchased from show proceeds.

Probably the Vaud-Villities' gift that has been most enjoyed by our worshippers is the set of matched hand bells, made by the famed Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London, England, who also made Big Ben and the Liberty Bell. After waiting two years for their delivery, the bells arrived three weeks before Christmas 1962. The music committee served as our first impromptu ringers because there was not enough time to train a bell choir prior to the holidays. However, it was not long before Lowell organized bell choirs for women and high school students. The Boy's Choir of 20 members made their debut in October 1966 when they began playing for the early morning communion service. Our bell choirs have taken part in local festivals, Vaud-Villities, and national conventions. The First Community Village bell choir, formed in 1972, even played while riding on a float in the Upper Arlington July 4th parade. Organist Kathy Whitten directed the bell choirs for two years after Lowell Riley's retirement in 1983, then Celeste Johnson, Barry Johnson's wife, took over the Women's Bell Choir for the next two years while Carol Neff directed the Children's Bell Choir. For the past 21 years Carol has directed the Adult Bell Choir. Our Whitechapel Ringers add beautiful music to our worship at least once a month and are always well-received. They also have a busy schedule playing for special events outside the church, and in 2001 nine of our ringers traveled to England where they toured the Whitechapel Bell Foundry and played in English churches with English bell choirs. We currently have five octaves of choirchimes and five octaves of bells: four and a half octaves of Whitechapel and five Malmark bass bells. Sally Beske directs two youth bell choirs.

Through the years many innovative worship experiences have been offered during Sunday morning

services. Surely one of the most moving occurred in 1965 when the sanctuary was transformed into the setting for Gian-Carlo Menotti's opera, "Amahl and the Night Visitors." Commissioned especially for television, its premier performance was Christmas Eve 1951 on NBC-TV with Chet Allen in the role of shepherd boy, Amahl. For our production Chet played King Melchior and offered advice to our Amahl, Mark Erickson. The Chancel Choir sang the choruses and choir soloists Norman Staiger, Dick Wilson and Jevné Kessel portrayed the other kings and Amahl's mother. Rev. Richard Conrad, who served as production coordinator, wrote in the *First Community Church News* of December 12, "For Amahl to be presented as morning worship is to place one of the Wisemen's most precious rubies before the altar, for Amahl is a jewel with gleaming facets reflecting all that is Christmas." In the next few years Amahl was performed four more times.

Guitar music and liturgical dancing as forms of spiritual expression were frequently part of Sunday services from the late 60's through the 1970's. A Lenten service on Sunday, March 21, 1971, highlighted music from the rock opera, "Jesus Christ Superstar" in an attempt to place worshippers into the midst of Jesus' last days. Scripture readings and the sermon by Rev. Robert Raines focused on the events of Holy Week as depicted through the "Superstar" music.

Under the direction of David Spicer, who served as Minister of Music in 1971-72, several musical worship services were offered. One entitled "A Showcase for Youth" featured instrumentals by young musicians as well as numbers by all the youth and children's choirs. In another event, an ensemble composed of all the First Community choirs and the Honor Dorm Men's Glee Club of Ohio State Penitentiary performed the Lenten and Easter portions of Handel's "Messiah."

Many memorable worship experiences have transpired since Ronald Jenkins became Minister of Music in September 1973. A series of special services in early 1974 traced the development of music and liturgy in the Christian Church. The initial service was a Mass as it would have been celebrated in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, complete with colorful banners and incense. The second service was designed after the 15th to 18th century practices in reformed Germany, from the time of Martin Luther to J. S. Bach. The "Rejoice Mass" by the Senior High Choir culminated the series. In English



with guitar accompaniment, this is one of the earliest musical works to be written in response to the Second Vatican Council.

Who can forget the celebrative Pentecost Sunday when the congregation was urged to wear something red and everyone streamed out of the sanctuary following the joyful choir recessional to conclude the service on the lawn and release a cloud of balloons? In the 35 years that Ronald Jenkins has served as our Minister of Music, he has made his own unique mark on the musical history of our church. His responsibilities have included directing five choirs for adults, youth and children; coordinating worship; art enrichment and special celebrative events; and producing the concert series.

As an eighth grade student, Ron began playing piano in the Southern Baptist church where he grew up in suburban St. Louis. Two years later he became the organist. During the summers he also played for revivals. Following graduation from William Jewell College with a bachelor's degree in music, he earned a masters degree in music history from Florida State University in 1963. Ron served as assistant choral director for Washington University in St. Louis while pursuing post-graduate studies in choral conducting and organ. At the age of 26, he became Minister of Music at First Presbyterian Church in Kirkwood, the largest Presbyterian Church in Missouri, and seven years later assumed the same position at First Community Church. An article in the *First Community Church News* of July 23, 1973, introduced him as "an untiring entrepreneur of good church music, new and old . . . a man who has a special rapport with music, one who shapes music with intelligence and good taste and regards the Sunday morning worship service as the core of his music ministry." There is no doubt that he has fulfilled that description.

Ron says that he would like to think that the things we accomplish here at First Community are not necessarily unique to our church, but are appropriate in any God-loving church that wants to be expressive and inclusive in its acts of praise and adoration. "Perhaps because of the history of this particular congregation, it might be easier to accomplish a great variety of expressions. Indeed, the people here hope for and make polite demand for a variety of worship experiences."

He believes that the most important thing about worship is being God-centered. The basic elements

of a service should give people the opportunity to praise, to pray, to offer thanks, and to hear the Word spoken, sung and interpreted. It should be inspiring, sincere and uplifting so that one leaves church with a deepened sense of relationship with the Creator. Worship should be at the same time familiar and stretching. It should always be growing. He attempts to give expression to the varied liturgical and musical tastes of the congregation which range from Gospel to Bach. His hope is that people will not praise the choir for its excellence, but because it enabled a worship experience in praising God. His personal reward comes from getting the best out of his musicians so that they have had a moving experience in using their talents, so that God was praised through them.

Ron takes great care in selecting the music for each Sunday's services so that it compliments the liturgy, sermon topic or occasion. One clear example occurs on Block of Wood Sunday when the choir and congregation sing "By Name I Have Called You" as each person's name is read when he or she joins the church. Often the words of an anthem repeat the text of that morning's Scripture lesson.

There are several things of which he is particularly proud. One is the strong emphasis on observances of liturgical holidays such as Christmas Eve and Holy Week, and the detailed care that goes into planning for them. The special musical services such as "Soli Deo Gloria" and "Morning Song" are another source of satisfaction. Our ambitious concert series has brought citywide acclaim for First Community Church's music program. Members of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra frequently accompany the Chancel Choir and Chamber Singers in worship as well as in concert. Ron was particularly pleased at the accomplishments of his high school choirs and their successful Florida tours with several musicals including "Friends Forever," "Celebrate Life" and "Godspell." The Chancel Choir completed two unforgettable European concert tours in 1988 and 1992. During its 2000 trip to Washington D.C. the choir not only presented concerts at National Christian Church and Washington National Cathedral, but also had the honor of singing during morning worship at the National Cathedral.

In addition to his duties at the church, Ronald Jenkins has taught courses at Denison and Ohio Wesleyan Universities, participated in Presbyterian Association of Musicians conferences at Montreat,



conducted the annual "Messiah Sing-Along" and Holiday Pops concerts by the Columbus Symphony, and since 1982 has been conductor of the 130-voice Columbus Symphony Chorus. The church has been very fortunate to have many symphony musicians play for our worship services on numerous occasions throughout the year. Indeed, we can count several of these talented instrumentalists as members of First Community Church.

Building the Center for Extended Ministry on Dublin Road in Hilliard, now known as the North Campus, brought the challenge of designing Sunday worship services at two locations with one staff. Experimenting with several formats has led to the present schedule of two services at each location. The familiar 8:30 a.m. communion service at South Campus remains basically unchanged as does the traditional 11:00 formal service with full choir. This service is televised and the choir anthem plus sermon are broadcast as "First Edition" over WSYX-TV the following Sunday. For several years First Community Village sponsored the radio broadcast of the complete 11:00 service. It is now possible to watch the 11:00 service live on our Web site, [www.fcchurch.com](http://www.fcchurch.com). The 9:15 service at North Campus with music by the Chamber Singers is usually identical to the 11:00 service at South Campus. A second service at North Campus is more informal in style with contemporary music and guitar accompaniment coordinated by Kurt Smith. A brief experiment with contemporary worship on Saturday evening did not prove to be as popular as expected.

No history of this segment of our church life would be complete without paying tribute to the immense talent and musical gifts of Robert Griffith. Bob has served as church organist since 1974 with only a brief two-year hiatus in the mid-1980's. He is also professor of music at Ohio Wesleyan University where he has taught for thirty-nine years, and served with distinction for nineteen years as chair of the Department of Music.

A highly gifted addition to the music department arrived in 1995 when Sally Beske was appointed Assistant Organist and Director of Youth Choirs. Sally took over direction of the Cherub Choir from Becky Hinga who had served in that capacity as a volunteer for 10 years. Sally currently directs four choirs of enthusiastic youngsters from kindergarten through high school age: Cherub Choir, Junior Choir, Youth Vocal Ensemble and Youth Bell Choir.

She is also a published author and composer of nine musicals for children. Each Christmas season the congregation eagerly awaits the children's latest production. Sally's delightful pageant based on the history of First Community Church, "Our First Century: A Musical Celebration," was presented on February 22, 2009, as part of our Centennial Celebration.

By 2003 the organ had become increasingly unreliable, therefore it was decided that a partial re-build would be essential to keep it in playable condition. This was a complicated process that took several months to complete. All of the pipes were removed from the organ chambers and washed. Thousands of dollars in labor costs were saved as a result of volunteer labor provided by many members of the Chancel Choir, church staff and congregation. While the pipe work was out of the organ, the wind chests and floors were thoroughly vacuumed and washed. Most of the pipes were revoiced to give the organ a stronger voice and provide more dramatic support for the choir. The electrical switching systems were replaced with state-of-the art, solid-state electronics, and all of the wind reservoirs were re-leathered. The console shell was refinished, while the electrical components and manual and pedal keyboards were completely replaced. There is still some work to be done, but according to Bob Griffith, "the organ is now mechanically reliable and speaks with a stronger and more thrilling voice."

As a congregation we are indebted to all who have contributed to the tradition and spirit of worship at First Community Church. In a 1960's brochure, "Music at First Community Church," Lowell Riley wrote, "Throughout humanity's search for divine guidance and inspiration, men have turned to music for the expression of their deepest feelings." Indeed, since Oliver Weist organized his first choir in 1916, the music program of our church has greatly enhanced the spirit of worship. He established our tradition of musical excellence and we have been blessed by outstanding choir directors whose creative leadership has molded "many voices, blending through common effort, into a mighty instrument of untold possibilities." Evelyn Silbernagel served First Community Church in this capacity from 1921-1941, Lowell Riley for the next 30 years, David Spicer for one year, and Ronald Jenkins since September 1973. Each has made unique contributions to our musical heritage and to the inspirational worship experience that is to be found at First Community Church.



## THE WOMEN'S GUILD

Within three months of the founding of Grandview Heights Congregational Church and before ground was even broken for the building, seventeen women met on July 27, 1910, to form the Ladies' Aid Society, an organization that is now known as the Women's Guild of First Community Church.

By January 1912 the group had a membership of 44, and selected Ella Zell as the first president of the Ladies' Aid Society. Their initial undertaking was to assume the responsibility for raising money to purchase an organ for the church. A number of social events were held to earn money. In 1916 they sponsored the sale of a cookbook that was advertised as "the best collection of eats that 50 cents can buy."

On February 7, 1917, the constitution was amended to rename the group "The Women's Guild." This was in response to the belief that the organization should have a broader program. Their idea was to centralize all women's activities and to make all of the work, departments of one great organization rather than separate societies. For instance, there was a need for a strong missionary society, but rather than a separate organization, they thought it was far better to claim the attention of the entire Guild from time to time in missions than to organize those who were especially interested in that project alone. Initially there were five departments: missionary, literary, finance, civic welfare and relief, and membership and flowers.

The constitution outlines in very few words the work of the Guild. "The object of this organization shall be to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the church and the community." Whatever the needs of the times were, the women of the Guild have responded. During the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 they cooked and delivered food to families when everyone was ill and no help was available. After World War I, they adopted two French orphans and supported them at a cost of \$72 per year. Many Italian immigrants came to work in the Marble Cliff Quarries and settled in the Grandview area. The Catholic Welfare Board undertook an Americanization project through home visits to teach them the English language as well as American ideals and customs. They learned that many of the Italian children had to remain in first grade for an unusually long time because they couldn't speak English. In April of 1919, the Guild

took on the task of finding a kindergarten teacher and paying her salary to work with these children.

In the fall of 1922, there was much interest in establishing a community library. However, there were so many other important bond issues on the ballot that it was thought best not to vote on the library district at that time. Consequently, the Women's Guild stepped into the breach to fund and continue operating the library that had been in existence at the church since 1916. It was the women of the Guild who cooked meals for so many church events, raised money to fund countless projects that were beyond the church budget, and whose willing hands rolled bandages for the Red Cross or put together the annual Easter Seal mailings.

In the early years, financial aid from the Guild was needed to cover a large share of the regular expenses of the church. By 1921, the church was put on a pledge basis and, according to Oliver Weist's report, "the women have been rightfully released from this responsibility and are free to do things of their own planning." At this time, the Guild budget was \$3,100, which was equal to the entire budget of the church when Weist came in 1915.

The Women's Guild pioneered many projects. As soon as their experiments proved worthwhile and other organizations could take them over, the women pushed on to new fields. One example was a teacher of religious education in the public schools. The Guild carried on this work during its experimental stage then turned it over to the church as soon as it became permanent. For many years First Community Church financially supported this program of religious instruction in the elementary schools of both Upper Arlington and Grandview by paying the salaries for the two teachers. This was entirely a voluntary program, with parental consent required before a child could be enrolled. Participation was nearly 100%. Parents, P.T.A. groups, the Northwest Kiwanis, superintendents and elementary principals of both schools, and all Tri-Village churches supported the program.

By 1922 Guild membership had grown so large that it was divided into four groups geographically. Members of Group A lived in lower Grandview, Group B in mid-Grandview, Group C in upper Grandview and Marble Cliff, and Group D in Arlington. The Guild met as a whole five times a year and with their respective Groups on alternate months.



A 1929 report illustrates the diversity of interests and concerns of the Guild. The nine standing committees were Finance, Membership, Mission, Welfare, Program, House, Fellowship & Hospitality, Legislative & International Relations and Young People. The January meeting, to which all women in the community were invited, was held jointly with the Norwester Club and was arranged by the Legislative and International Relations Committees of both organizations in order to further the cause of world peace and understanding. The Welfare Committee worked with the church in caring for the needy. When a call was issued for sewing, the women brought their portable machines to the church while hand sewing was done during the programs at regular meetings. Those who wished to study missions met six additional times a year. Because they were aware of the most urgent needs, this group disbursed the money set aside by the Guild for mission.

A *Tri-Village News* article reported in 1937 that the Women's Guild of First Community Church was the largest organization in the entire Tri-Village area. By 1954 over 800 women were members. Today it is the largest organized group of lay workers within the church with approximately three hundred members in twelve Groups.

There is no way to place a value on the service rendered by the members of the Women's Guild over its long history. Oliver Weist said in 1921, "A single page cannot tell the story of this organization and its worth to the church and community." Their motto could well be "Sharing and Caring." They have shared their ingenuity in raising money through myriad ways to support the church and worthy projects at home and abroad. They have shared friendship and loyalty with one another and beyond First Community Church because they care. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been earned and given away through the years. But along the way a very special bond has been forged. In working together, these women have developed a sense of fellowship and purpose as they have sought to grow spiritually through their commitment to serve.

Membership in First Community Church is not a requirement to join a Guild Group. Much of the strength of the Guild comes from the intimacy of the individual Groups. Following the geographical division into Groups A, B, C and D in 1922; Mrs. King Thompson, who believed that the young

women of the church should have their own group, organized Group E in 1931. For several years they put on variety shows in which their husbands and children took part. This Group grew so rapidly that the Grandview members split off in 1934 to form Group F. Group G. had its genesis in 1937 and was composed of young women who had begun married life as Depression brides.

Because Group E had grown so large, Dr. Burkhart asked five of its members to form Group H. Early in 1938 Group I was organized as the first evening group for business and professional women who could not attend daytime meetings. By 1942 some members of Group E had lost their enthusiasm for show business, so separated to form Group J. Group K came into existence in 1943. They spent so many years serving church dinners that the members felt "K" stood for "kitchen." Group L originated in 1947 as a group of single working gals who met in the evenings. They initiated the Mother-Daughter Banquet, which seemed such a good idea that the entire Guild adopted it and made it the annual spring tradition.

Group M began as an active group of young married women with young children. It was an offshoot of Group G whose membership had increased to the point that it became necessary to divide it and form a new group in 1949. Other members of Group G were asked on a volunteer basis to form Group N in 1950. To reinforce the fabric of friendship within Group N, three small interest circles or "B Groups" were organized for "Bridge, Baking and Bible."

The first meeting of Group O, for organ, was held in 1953. Their efforts were pledged to the purpose of raising money and sparking interest for purchasing a new organ for the sanctuary. Many of these women were already deeply involved in the church's music department as members of the choir, music committee or Vaud-Villities. For years they prepared and served the November turkey dinner as their chief fund raising activity.

In 1955 Groups A and C combined to become A-C. Group R was organized as an evening group in 1958 because of the ever-present problem of baby sitters for these young mothers. A closely-knit group of good friends, who were mothers of school-age children and shared a keen interest in youth, joined together in 1959 as Group Y for Youth. Funds from



their annual auction have gone mainly to support Camp Akita and other youth oriented projects.

During 1959 when Mary Miller was Guild president, she proposed that new Guild Groups be formed by drawing on volunteers from established Groups as well as by recruiting new members. These Groups - 1, 2, 3 and 4 - were to shuffle their membership every two years to foster new friendships and to provide a variety of ages and interests within a Group. Because of project interest and congeniality of a constant membership, they shuffled only once in 1961. Groups 2 and 4 merged as Group 2 and then joined with Group F in 1972 to form F-2. For a number of years Group 3 worked with the wives of foreign students at OSU, hosting an annual luncheon and helping them in numerous ways to adjust to their new lives in the United States. Groups 1 and 3 merged in 2004.

Group X was organized in April 1966. This letter was chosen because of the many Christian symbols it represents. Group Q, for Quest, was formed in 1967. That same year saw the birth of Group 7, which took its name from the year. Group Z was formed in the spring of 1971 as an evening group since most of its members worked or had young children.

Groups B and D joined forces in 1974 and became Group B-D. They still had a membership of 22 in 1985 and met five times a year at First Community Village where many of them resided. Although all were in their 80's and 90's, they continued to draw on their talents and long association to hold two mini-bazaars each year to fund their favorite mission projects.

In 1976 Groups H and A-C combined. A number of working women established Group WW in 1976. Group 10 was organized in 1979 and took its name from the number of original members. Group S, for Share, came into being in 1980 and merged with Group R in the mid-80's. One of their projects for a number of years was preparing food to sell to cast members of Vaud-Villities during show week. Several mothers of young children met in March 1988 to establish a new Guild Group and adopted the letter O. In 1989 Groups R, S, and Z merged their membership. Group V was organized in the fall of 1990. The two newest Groups, A and C, came into being in 1996 and 1998 respectively. Group C, composed of mostly of working women, has made their main focus on friendship.

Women of the Guild have always been involved in cooking and serving meals at the church. They helped to plan the kitchens and each Group pledged to the Kitchen Fund. When the church employed a kitchen staff, the Guild committee worked with them in planning and serving meals to both church and outside groups. For the past 35 years, they have served meals for the monthly Men's Luncheon Group.

The range of Guild projects and fund raising events is as diverse as the interests of the members. Group M's annual card party and style show, a fundraiser initiated in 1953, continued for nearly 40 years until it became a project of the entire Guild. Groups Y and 7 each held auctions that raised amazing amounts of money. Group Q has also been noted for its auctions and even organized a silent auction to sell everything in First Avenue House before it was demolished, including vintage plumbing and light fixtures, bubble windows and oak woodwork. Over the years various Groups have furnished and refurnished the Wicker Room, sent a cow and bull to India, collected food for the needy, purchased a piano for Camp Akita and two grand pianos for the church, helped the wives of foreign students adjust to life at OSU, sponsored concerts, supported Central Community House, contributed to the education of numerous foreign students, produced variety shows, held bazaars and auctions, published a cookbook and membership directory, designed a heritage calendar, financed significant projects at Akita, refurbished the narthex and bride's room and Zell Chapel, repaired a stained glass window in Burkhart Chapel, purchased a mill to grind corn for a village in Uganda, and supported First Community Village and other worthwhile projects from Cambridge Boulevard to the world beyond our walls. Also it was the women of the Guild who founded the Tri-Village Trading Post.

In addition to the many activities undertaken by each individual Group, the entire Guild meets together periodically. For the past few years this event has been a spring luncheon at Scioto Country Club. Formerly the Annual Mother-Daughter banquet was a popular springtime event, and the fall luncheon featuring an inspirational speaker always drew a large crowd. For many years members from every Group gathered in Brownlee Hall to prepare the annual mailing for the Easter Seal Society. This probably began after Bill Taylor, our beloved Minister to Children, left the church staff to become director for the Easter Seal Society. It



was a wonderful opportunity for the women to work together on a project that required little effort, but lots of time for conversation and helped a worthwhile cause as well.

On several occasions the Groups combined their efforts to raise money for Camp Akita or some other worthy project by staging huge bazaars in Brownlee Hall where one could buy everything from baked goods, frozen casseroles and soups to handcrafted items, antique dishes or fancy aprons. The annual Book Fair was another tremendous undertaking. Books were collected throughout the year, then stored and sorted by Guild members and their husbands in the church basement. Group L helped to prepare for the two-day sale by setting up the tables in Brownlee Hall and unloading the many boxes of books. Customers and book deal-

ers came from all over the city to browse and buy, earning many thousands of dollars for the Guild treasury before the tradition ended. The goal for all these projects was to raise money, but the fun came from working together.

It is impossible to tell the story of all that the Women's Guild has accomplished in the nearly 100 years of its existence. Perhaps a definition from one Group's annual evaluation sums up most succinctly the essence of the Guild in the eyes of its members. "We are a friendly, caring group of dedicated women who are concerned about each other, our church and our world. We are constantly striving to grow spiritually and personally, and we serve with the joy that comes from being a part of the Women's Guild of First Community Church."



## YOUTH MINISTRY

From its founding, this church has placed such a strong emphasis on the importance of our children and young people, that it would take an entire book to adequately relate the history of First Community Church's ministry to youth. Therefore, this treatise will reflect only highlights of our story and will try to relate the essence of the church's philosophy during different eras in our history.

Our beginnings are rooted in the Sunday School that was established in 1909 for the children. A booklet prepared by the Board of Deacons, Board of Women and Board of Trustees in 1921 attempted to explain the nature, philosophy and programs of the church. This publication stated very clearly that the families who settled in the villages of Marble Cliff and Grandview Heights did so with the welfare of their children in mind.

"The success of this church in uniting so many people of varied denominational backgrounds is due largely to two facts: First, because we have a community largely of young families to whom denomination does not mean what it once did to older people; and because these people have come to the community largely for the children, and believe that the best results can be obtained by uniting our forces for one common purpose."

In 1921 they were already dreaming of building a larger church. The chapter on young people's work begins, "When we build our new church, one of the things that we hope to have is a huge fireplace so that we may spend Sunday evenings together by the fireside...One of the needs of a fast-growing community is to help the young people get acquainted and a social hour is well planned to accomplish the purpose." Sunday evenings were devoted solely to programmed activities for the youth of the community and included group singing around the piano, a speaker followed by group discussion and prayer, a meal served by the Scouts or one of the Sunday School classes, and finally everyone assembled to watch a movie.

Because Oliver Weist held strong convictions about the importance of music, he included children and young people in his choir and orchestra and was considered to be a gifted music teacher. Pageants were a favorite mode for religious education and expression. Evelyn Silbernagle was noted for the elaborate pageants presented by her choirs at

Christmastime after she became the choir director in 1921. Other activities sponsored by the church included troops for Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls. Camping sessions for both boys and girls took place at Oliver Weist's family farm. Proceeds raised by the annual Field Day supported a number of community youth activities during the summertime. The depth of youth involvement in the life of the church was clearly illustrated when Arthur Markel's Sunday School class of high school boys was given responsibility for planning and carrying out the activities associated with groundbreaking for the new church building in 1924. One of the important features of the new church was the gymnasium where basketball was a favorite pastime. Bowling alleys had been planned for the church basement, but were dropped for budgetary reasons.

In tribute to the attention and interest showered on his young people by our first minister, Fred Brownlee, the youth programs of First Community Church were reorganized and named the Brownlee Society in November 1926. He had returned to participate in the dedication ceremonies for the new church earlier that year, and renewed acquaintances with his former flock who held him in high esteem. Each grade from seven through twelve was a distinct Brownlee group with its own advisors or leaders who planned the programs along with the students. Brownlee Kick-Off was a joint meeting of all grade levels in the fall to introduce the proposed activities for the coming year. Brownlee programs might include speakers, panel discussions, recreational programs, movies, fireside sessions in a member's home, visits to other local churches or agencies, or extension trips to churches and communities outside the Columbus area.

During the summer of 1934 five young people from First Community Church attended a camp conducted by the International Council of Religious Education where they heard a talk given by Dr. Roy Burkhart. They were so impressed by him that upon their return to Columbus, they convinced the committee searching for a successor to Rufus Wicker that they must add his name to the list of ministers under consideration. Thus, the man who had decided to dedicate his life to working with youth became the minister of First Community Church because of the youth he intended to serve.

When Dr. Burkhart came to Columbus, the church was deeply in debt. Not long after his installation in



January 1935, he initiated a strategy that very successfully began to rebuild the congregation of First Community Church. He visited the principals of both Arlington and Grandview High Schools with the goal of identifying the student leaders and attracting them to the church. They, in turn, brought along their friends who were drawn by his idealism, innovative programs and personal charisma, and soon their families followed as well.

The Block of Wood program, described previously in the chapter on Roy Burkhart, was introduced not long after his arrival, and it remains as one of the cornerstones of our youth ministry. This tiny cube of wood is given to young people when they join the church and serves as a reminder to the wearer to never reveal its meaning in spoken or written word, but to live in such a way that others will come to know its meaning. Thus it becomes a very powerful symbol.

## BAR NONE

The Bar None was another tradition begun during Burkhart's ministry that impacted thousands of young people over the years. "Bar None – no bar and none barred. Creating their own place to have a good time was the method chosen by the young people of First Community Church to fight the 92 night clubs in Franklin County", according to an article by Dr. Burkhart in the August 7, 1943 issue of *The Union Signal, A Journal of Social Welfare*. Several sources agree that the idea for the first Bar None was conceived in 1938. Originally it was an affair held at the church several times during the year to provide entertainment for youth in a wholesome setting.

In the beginning several fundamental principles were laid down. The party must be conducted on a high level and no liquor was allowed. Only couples who were at least high school sophomores could attend. Younger boys and girls served sandwiches and soft drinks to the crowd seated at tables around the edge of the gym and in the balcony. The dance lasted from 9 to 12 with an orchestra for dancing and a 45-minute floorshow. Over 100 young people worked on the first Bar None and the 400 who attended deemed it a howling success. When the party ended, the boys took their dates home, then returned to clean the church before services on Sunday morning.

The fifth Bar None, "a gala winter carnival" was held on January 27, 1940. Tickets were \$1.25 per couple with dancing to the music of Walter Knick's orchestra. Publicity in *Youth Edit*, the bi-monthly newspaper published by the youth groups, promised fun, floorshow and food for the biggest and best Bar None in the history of FCC. Profits raised by the dance would be used to send more young people to Canada during the summer where they spent inspirational time with Burkie at his vacation retreat and planned activities and programs for the coming year. According to an article in the December 16, 1962 issue of the *First Community Church News*, the 1940 Bar None hit the big time. "A picture of the 'Winter Wonderland' chorus line, a major part of the floor show, was published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, accompanied by an interview with Dr. Burkhart explaining the theory behind the show and dance. At that time it was quite unusual to hold dances in a church, especially with chorus lines."

In 1942 the Bar None was held on New Year's Eve and continued to usher in the New Year throughout the remainder of its history. All aspects of the event were handled by the youth, with minimal counsel from anyone on the church staff. There were committees for decorations, publicity, arrangements, floorshow, food and tickets. A senior boy and girl, one from Grandview and one from Arlington, were chosen as co-chairmen each year. Nearly every teenager in the community worked on some aspect of the Bar None. There was a tradition to uphold, and each year the committee tried to surpass previous decorations and program. Right after Christmas the transformation of the gym, and later Brownlee Hall, began. An article by Beth Riley in the December 29, 1963 issue of *The Columbus Dispatch* described the tropical paradise created the previous year complete with jungle, hanging gardens, volcano and waterfall. A wooden walkway was built to provide entry through the plastic-lined, water-filled hall. Many candles burned on the flower-covered altar in Burkhart Chapel. "There during the evening groups of young people came to sit quietly, giving thanks for the old year, saying their prayers for guidance in the new year, and then returning to the dance."

Although not planned as a moneymaking project, frequently extra funds were earned and shared with others. Profits from the 1960 Bar None were sent to Dr. Tom Dooley to help with his work in Laos. A Korean orphan boy was adopted in 1962 and



financially supported the following year. Sadly, the tradition of Bar None died in 1976, but not before two generations of youth from our community had the opportunity to experience this wonderful phenomenon that grew from the roots of a unique idea born in 1938. They still reminisce about how much fun young people from all over the city could have on New Year's Eve without drugs or alcohol.

## IN SEARCH OF FAITH

Roy Burkhart was a teacher by training, which meant that he was grounded in educational techniques. Psychology played an important role in his work and relationships with young people. High school freshmen took the Bernreuter Personality Inventory to gain personal insights and took it again as seniors. This test was administered once again as part of a couple's pre-marital counseling. Because of his open attitude and his willingness to spend time talking out problems with all those who sought his help, the young people of First Community Church knew that they could consult him about anything and they were comfortable doing so. Whether in his office or seated on a hillside at camp or sharing a coke at the drugstore counter, he was their friend and counselor who always had a willing ear. These are among the reasons why 96% of the high school students in Grandview and Arlington participated in the youth programs at First Community Church during the 1940's and 50's. Another magnet that drew many high school girls was the opportunity to sing in Lowell Riley's Cloister Choir. Not only did they sing every Sunday morning, but there was also the prospect and glamour of performing in the annual Vaud-Villities production.

Throughout the history of First Community Church, camping has played a vital role in our youth ministry. Before Camp Akita was built, we utilized other camps and adjusted our schedules to the dates that were available. Whether during retreats or summer sessions, there is something about being in God's great outdoor cathedral that helps us go deep within our souls to find ourselves and also to become more aware of our God and our relationships with one another. Mark Johnston, a former Akita counselor who later became a teacher wrote, "No matter who you are, or how old you are, Camp Akita is a place that once experienced, becomes an everlasting part of you." And THAT is why it is so very important for First Community Church to

provide camping experiences that enrich the lives of its young people and help them grow.

Dr. Edward Rydman, who served as Youth Minister and the first Akita Director from 1947-54, has shared his recollections and insights from that period in our history. "Because of the large number of kids in our youth groups, we divided them according to school grades 7-12, college age, and Cambridge Club for those beyond college. Each grade level had an adult couple or pair of advisors/leaders. Each of these Brownlee Groups was loosely governed by curricula that gave structure or coherence to the weekly meetings and discussion groups that met on Sunday evenings. The leaders not only met with the Sunday evening groups, but also held occasional meetings for mutual support, for understanding the needs of youth, and for program help with the appropriate spiritual, psychosocial and educational levels of the kids. Every summer the church staff spent a week in Canada at Burkie's cabin on Blackstone Lake to consider and integrate the entire church program for the year: church school, nursery school, junior and senior high school, college and adult programs, music and sermons. The staff person would present, defend, evaluate and modify his or her program area with the entire staff. This was part of the genius and comprehensiveness that made FCC one of the 'Great Churches of America', according to the *Christian Century*. Holiday programs and events were introduced and discussed, including youth programs and trips, Bar None, camps, etc. There was a high degree of flexibility in the program and discussion planning for each grade group. My plan included teaching and urging youth to learn all that they could about themselves and what they believed in. Kids were taught religious stories and traditions in their early years of church school. In their youth they were urged to question, develop philosophies, learn what others thought (Jews, Catholics, other churches). Our youth groups met with others and had speakers who helped them explore and question. We took trips to other communities, New York, Chicago, etc. to explore the way others lived, worshipped, believed and behaved. We lived in well-ordered stable communities, but the rest of the world was not like that. Question, observe, conclude. These were important. Our speakers and discussions in each group encouraged such."

With Dr. Burkhart's focus on prayer and the organization of numerous prayer research groups, the high school and college age youth began meeting



in "Prayer Cells." One evening a week they quietly gathered in the sanctuary to meditate and pray for an hour. Then they took their sack suppers and adjourned to an area where they could meet with Burkie or one of the other ministers for discussion and prayer. There was peaceful solitude in this experience, yet the fellowship of being surrounded by others who were also on a journey of seeking and self-exploration.

The Church of the Block of Wood came into being in the 1950's. It was the seventh and eighth grader's church-within-a-church where they learned by doing, as they experienced what it means to become a church member. Under the leadership of Michael Vance, who ministered to the Church of the Block of Wood, a thirteen member Board of Trustees guided the CBW program. Serving on boards and committees that paralleled the adult activities provided training for the junior high students in how to run their own 250 member junior church with its project groups, two weekly worship services, dances, camps and evening programs. The Church of the Block of Wood met on Sunday mornings in Lincoln Road Chapel for a half hour in groups to confront the basic areas of Christian concern and how these concerns are lived. A worship service followed, when all youth had the opportunity to participate as leaders as well as in the worshiping congregation.

In the Maxfield years, the 7 Keys program for 9th graders was the final year of First Community Church's three-year confirmation program where they learned Church history, symbols, doctrines, worship, and the history of First Community Church. One way of implementing his program was through monthly visits by the Traveling Freshmen to churches of other denominations to observe their form of worship, then return home to discuss their observations. The 5-15 Series was for grades 10-12 where the entire group was divided into smaller groups of 15 students who met together for five weeks pursuing a given subject with a resource leader. Every 6th week they chose a different subject to study as they explored how to find a meaningful witness to the world. From this came "Youth-On-Call," a service group of 9th through 12th grade volunteers who were on call 24 hours a day to be of service however they were needed to fulfill requests received by the ministerial staff. The Youth Council, made up of representatives elected from each high school grade, worked with Youth Minister Gabe Campbell in planning and oversee-

ing the entire youth program. Biblical content for the Church of the Block of Wood classes came from the Graphic Bible. Study of this text was designed in 1964 as a home study program. Each week a teacher's guide and lesson plan were sent to the CBW parents, allowing them to spend time in Bible study with their children. Bill Morris remembers how Gabe built strong relationships among the students that still exist today, because he discouraged cliques and insisted that they were all friends. Kids could hang out at First Avenue House, then called The Seven Keys Club and serving as a teen center. The Annual Report issue of The First Community Church News of January 24, 1965, announced that during the previous year there were at least five occasions when more than 500 Tri-Village young people were gathered at First Community Church for fun, fellowship or worship.

As the tumultuous decade of the 60's came to an end, the youth team of Rev. Richard Horn was ministering to junior high youth and Rev. Richard Hardy to senior highs. When Dick Hardy returned to First Community, where he had grown up and served on the Akita staff, he found the young people fragmented among themselves, feeling alienated from the main church, and isolated by their facilities in First Avenue House and Lincoln Road Chapel. The church was also embroiled in the divisive issue about building on the Reed-McCoy property. While holding major programs for youth dealing with controversial issues such as an emerging drug culture and options of military service, youth council and adult committees explored ways of integrating youth activities into the ongoing life of the church, in the choir, in the operating funds drive, and as youth readers during worship. Combined efforts transformed Center Basement of the church into youth facilities and offices. Dick Horn concentrated on helping junior high youngsters become caring persons through the caring adults who supervised and participated in their activities.

During the Raines era a youth page was added to the First Community News and two youth representatives were added to the Governing Board, although they did not become voting members until 1972. A new experimental form of ministry to youth began when the Center for the Affirmation of Young Life launched a team ministry in January 1971. This concept sought to meet young people with a new model for understanding and discovering creative ways of expressing and living life with others, for gaining perspective of the alter-



natives and consequences of appropriate decision making and problem solving, for finding a faith that is made coherent at the individual's level of experience, and finally for discovering meaning and purpose for the direction of one's life. *The First Community Church News* of January 24th summarized the scope of this ministry. "We can outline a youth program that offers Bible study, discussion groups, camp retreats, trips, music, personal counseling, introduction to the arts, recreation, guest speakers, service projects and worship. We can cover a variety of interest, such as religion, politics, social issues, athletics, world affairs, vocational choices, personal growth and leadership skills. But through them all our essential task is to offer a relationship that calls a person towards fulfillment, allows him to stretch and grow and encourages directions for his own destiny that is ultimate."

As the 1970's rolled along, the youth program reverted back to its more traditional roots in 1973 with Rev. Tom Mozley serving as Minister to Junior High and College Age Youth, and Rev. Mark Pawlowski as Minister to Young Adults and Senior High Youth. Adult committees and the Youth Council took active roles in helping to plan and carry out activities and provide leadership for retreats. Tom described the goal of the Junior High Ministry in terms of developing a community of persons who accept themselves, who are responsive to the needs of the people around them and who are seeking to center their lives in the power of the Good News of Jesus Christ. "The strategy for realizing these objectives must be as multi-dimensional as the needs of the early adolescent themselves." Block of Wood seminars were held every Sunday afternoon to cover the essentials of the Christian faith, and a Block of Wood retreat was planned in the spring for all 8-10th graders who were eligible. The Seven Keys program once again became a two-year program for freshmen and sophomores with the keys being received at the end of the sophomore year. Mark's enthusiastic, out-going nature brought a spirit of excitement to the teens as well as the adults who worked with them. Ron Jenkins, our new Minister of Music, organized a high school choir to sing at the 9:15 service. Every four years his youth choir staged a musical production that they took on the road (usually to sunny Florida) and also presented to the congregation of First Community Church.

In 1977 a long-time dream was realized when garage sale profits made it possible to purchase a used bus for transporting the young people to Akita and

around town. Juniors and seniors examined what it means to be a disciple today in a new program called "Crossbearers." A youth service task force compiled a list of fulfilling individual and group service projects. They had the opportunity for some real hands-on experience when Youth Minister Rick Sebastian received a call from a seminary classmate describing the ravages of flooding in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The following Sunday he announced that he would like to fill the bus with volunteers and cleaning supplies to help with the clean-up. Supplies poured in along with money, food and free tetanus shots. A second trip brought to 54, the total number of adults, college and high school students who helped with the relief effort. After serious flooding in Frankfort, Kentucky, the next year, Rick again organized an expedition of volunteers to provide assistance.

The first of several "Mountain T.O.P." (Tennessee Outreach Program) trips took place in 1978 as 18 of our young people went to Appalachia to build, repair and paint houses and outbuildings. Six students also went to Latin America as missionaries with Project Amigos, and were followed by three more the next year. The junior high Super Tuesday Program (STP) involved students in visiting residents of First Community Village where they forged some enriching relationships. Youth Minister Bob Rhymer continued these programs into the 80's and added a few more - Bible study, CROP walks, and many new opportunities to serve the needs of others.

The year 1983 saw the arrival of Rev. Dick Flynn as Youth Minister. One of his first assignments was to organize an alcohol-free New Year's Eve party reminiscent of the Bar None of previous years. With help from 120 adult volunteers, 500 young people enjoyed ACT I and declared it a great success. The following year many First Community youth, plus helpers from other churches, planned and decorated for ACT II which drew 804 participants from several communities. This new tradition endured for several more years.

A Youth Planning Task Force determined in 1984 that there was a need for more trained leaders, which led to establishing the Lay Institute in Youth Ministry to train adults to work with young people. One of the cornerstones of the high school ministry since the mid-80's has been the dedicated adult leaders who make a four year commitment to stay



with a class from their freshman year all the way through their senior year.

A new symbol was added to the youth curriculum in 1986 when the FCC rose was adopted for the 11th grade program. The major emphasis of their class, "Disciple" was sharing one's faith through missions of the church. They discussed such topics as "What is my mission? What are mission issues? How does mission activity relate to me?" After giving each other a rose pin to symbolize their commitment to mission, they affirmed a responsibility to share and suffer with those less fortunate. The focus of the Rose program is essentially to live like a good Samaritan.

Dick Flynn brought some Young Life principles and helped to develop the fun and faith filled experience that came to life under his guidance. He was also instrumental in developing the camp program structure that is still in place today. John Ross, who joined the staff in 1991, brought a great deal of energy to the growing youth program. His work and leadership helped to develop the Akita staff as well as youth ministries in the 1990's. Jason Barger became a fulltime member of the church staff to further develop the Akita staff and youth ministries in 1998 and remained until January 2008 when Ryan Brownfield stepped into that role. Currently Scot Nicoll is the Director of Youth Programs and Scott Walker is Director of Middle School Ministry.

First Community Church is committed to responding to the needs and issues that are present in adolescence. Some specific issues that we focus on during Crossroads sessions and personal talks are family life, self-esteem, acceptance, service and a healthy social life both in the church environment and at home. We approach the youth with the same love, grace, and authenticity that is central to the mission statements of the greater church family. Our greatest goal is to provide an emotionally and spiritually safe environment for Middle School students to explore relationships and their faith wherever they may be in their journey.

Each summer our high school graduates can choose to be part of a ten day backpacking trip in the Adirondack Mountains with La Vida, an outdoor Christian education program affiliated with Gordon College. La Vida is an experiential learning opportunity, a metaphor for our faith journey that challenges participants to learn about their faith through living out a metaphor "walk." First Com-

munity Church has sent groups of ten to forty every year since 1991.

Our young people have undertaken so many mission projects in the past several years that there is now a position on the youth staff to oversee them. Ryan Brownfield holds the title of Director of Camp Akita and Youth Missions, and before Ryan, Jason Barger held that position. In 1996 First Community Church began partnering with AMOR ministries to build houses in Mexico for needy families. This has been a life-changing experience for many of the 1,827 high school and college students and adults who participated in building 120 houses and one kindergarten between 1996 and 2007. This opportunity to act out their faith by serving others has connected in profound ways with the adults as well as the students. Another foreign mission began in 2004 with small group trips for juniors and seniors to the Casa Hogar Sion Orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico, which cares for more than 100 orphans and also runs a church and soup kitchen. The goal on these trips is to support the orphanage's small staff while experiencing their culture and what it means to be a servant-leader in our faith.

Akita graduates in the "quarter life" of their faith journey have taken the Akita Spirit abroad to bring love, compassion and shelter to the Dominican Republic. This year will mark the fourth of these trips to build houses in partnership with the Village Mountain Mission Project in Puerto Plata, a nondenominational service project that grew out of a desire by some people in the Boy Scouts of America to provide a high adventure opportunity that is more than just having fun. In the hope that all who come in contact with the unconditional love and spirit that is experienced at Akita will carry it into the world, Akita campers and staff members have partnered with the Community Action organization in Hocking County for the past two years to adopt several low-income families and provide enough food to sustain them for over a month.

In 1999 after Ada Martin, co-founder of the Take It to the Streets Foundation, spoke to the Rose class of juniors about the homeless people in Columbus, some of the teens and adults decided that they wanted to go along and see just what she was talking about. Jason Barger thought that perhaps this was a project that First Community Church might undertake. Initially about six to eight people distributed 20 or so meals every Thursday evening. By 2008 around 60 students assisted in distributing



at least 120 meals each week. Three or four adults prepare meals for around 40 people and deliver the food to North Campus every Thursday evening. Then the students pack the meals into paper bags, load them in vehicles and drive to various homeless camps around town to deliver them along with blankets, hats, gloves, sox, flashlights and batteries. Another project that has evolved from this weekly mission is an annual Thanksgiving celebration. In the past seven years nearly 500 people have joined in providing food and supplies to more than 200 homeless persons each Thanksgiving. Also in 2007 church families delivered thirty Thanksgiving baskets to Gladden Community House where they were distributed to needy families through the combined efforts of our grade school children and high school youth. The young children collected food then gave their offering money to the Rose class who bought the turkeys.

The youth team concept began to take form in 2005 as the programs and ministries continued to grow while the staff was getting smaller. Youth assistant Gabe Flynn and Rev. John Ross had left the state and administrative assistant support for the

youth department was shrinking. The youth team concept was designed to bring a team approach to the growing youth ministry to help meet the demands of the expanding work. Pooling skills of different people enabled the youth ministry to continue to grow in a healthy and responsible manner without losing its core. This was identified as the future model for youth ministry at First Community Church.

Throughout the history of this church's ministry to youth, hundreds of dedicated adults have given tirelessly of their love and leadership in mentoring and teaching our teens by what they said, what they did, and how they lived their lives. Some were ordained, some were not; some were paid staffers, others were volunteers; but all shared the same dedication to working with our kids whether in church or at Akita. Contact with one of them may have changed a life or set someone's feet on a different path. So let us salute all of those special people and acknowledge with gratitude their gift of self and the legacy of faith that they have perpetuated.



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## THE COMMUNITY CHURCH MOVEMENT

The question has been asked, "Did we initiate the idea of a community church, or were we influenced by an external movement?" A 1921 publication by the Board of Deacons, Board of Women and Board of Trustees indicates that as the idea of organizing a church spread through the community in 1908, the majority of residents were in favor of founding a church that was community in nature, but were afraid that it might not be successful unless it belonged to a denomination. The broad ecumenical background of Oliver Weist's childhood and his experiences in various denominations while a seminary student helped to forge his strong belief that one large church with more staff members could better meet the needs of a community than a number of small churches with a single pastor. He believed that greater things could be accomplished by a united effort with emphasis on cooperation, efficiency, economy and community service. Our reorganization as First Community Church came about mainly through the efforts of Oliver Weist and key members of the congregation who shared his beliefs.

Grandview Heights Congregational Church was founded in 1910 through a democratic process in which each household was given the opportunity to indicate a choice of denomination and express willingness to join whatever church was agreed upon by a majority of the residents. Establishment of a Methodist church in Grandview five years later indicated that other denominations would soon follow. Mr. Weist later wrote that this prospect did not appeal to citizens of the area and, thus, a proposal to unite with the Methodist church was made in December 1918. When the Methodists declined this offer, our congregation voted on January 24, 1919, to "establish a community church, undenominational in relation."

While community churches were known in the 1800's, the new concept appeared around 1915 and became significant as the Community Church Movement. The earliest book on the subject was published in 1919, according to the Rev. J. Ralph Shotwell, who served as executive director of the National Council of Community Churches. A booklet about First Community Church written in 1921 by Mr. Weist quoted comments of both clergy and lay leaders on this idea.

The movement's first national organization, The Community Church Workers of the United States of America, was formed in 1923 as an association of pastors and lay workers in community churches of various types. First Community Church hosted the initial biennial conference in May 1926. Our weekly worship bulletin announced that the church and community had been asked to entertain several hundred people for lodging and breakfast. The announcement further noted, "The kind of churches represented will be Denominational Community Church, whereby one denomination goes into a field and all other denominations agree not to intrude; the Federated Church where two or three denominational churches go together and form one church with each denominational group retaining its denominational connection; and the independent group represented by our church." Oliver Weist became associate secretary and field worker for the Community Church Workers at the conclusion of his pastorate here in 1931.

Between 1935 and 1945 attempts were made to obtain recognition and membership for community churches from federal and international denominational councils. When this was unsuccessful, a statewide movement spearheaded primarily by Dr. Roy Burkhart resulted in an organization of community churches so that "orphan" churches could have a sense of fellowship until denominations discovered a way to give them leadership without absorbing them or destroying their community centered quality.

The following year representatives from 72 churches in 19 states and the District of Columbia met at First Community Church May 7 - 9, 1946, to form The National Council of Community Churches. Roy Burkhart was chosen as president. In 1950 this Council merged with the Black Biennial Council of Community Churches to become the International Council of Community Churches (I.C.C.C.). Ralph Jordan, a member of First Community, was the new organization's first treasurer and in 1958 he became the first layman to be elected president. The Council's scholarship fund for college and seminary students is named in memory of Mrs. Jordan.

"Inclusiveness not exclusiveness . . . unity without uniformity . . . unity in diversity . . . diversity without divisiveness . . . celebration of differences . . . use of differences in ways that will promote the unity for which Christ prayed." The genius



of the Community Church movement is represented in these words, according to the Rev. Ralph Shotwell's history of the movement, *Unity without Uniformity*. These pages describe a Community Church as a congregation in which denominational loyalties have been made subservient and toleration of religious opinion is coupled with earnest faith in Jesus Christ. The basic attitude embraces a broad approach to Christianity with a belief that "our statements of faith will be as personal and as varied as our individual experiences of God. We believe in the living Christ at work in the heart of the individual and tolerance of another's point of view and in respect for the sincere conviction of every human being. A Community Church, by its democratic and life-centered character, is adapted to make itself a vital and functioning member of the living organism which is the Body of Christ at work in the world today. We do not demand uniformity. We rejoice in differences, recognizing that they infinitely enhance and enrich the life of all, when people have an opportunity to share them with each other, without trying to convert or convict each other." Dr. Burkhardt noted "a church can be called a Community Church only if all forms of religious expression are permitted. The word 'community' means more than seeking to minister to all the people of a given neighborhood. It means also the spiritual relationship of those who accept membership in such a church. It is an openness which does not set boundaries for investigation or expression. It works to achieve a unity of spirit, while at the same time striving to express the spirit of unity. Sincerely believing that the basic tenets Christians hold in common are far more positive, unifying and effective than those that would tend to divide, members of a Community Church agree to differ, resolve to love, unite to serve."

The *First Community Church News* of November 1, 1957, explained the basic governmental differences between Community and denominational churches. "The Community Church, with its complete autonomy, creates a program to serve the needs, beliefs, and interests of its personal membership. The denominational church professes an organic relationship with a super body, utilizes a governmental hierarchy and has a program which is either suggested to or imposed upon its membership." The article went on to note that First Community Church was at that time the largest white Community Church in America with 5,782 members. It was exceeded in size only by The Black

Metropolitan Church of Chicago with a membership of 16,000.

From the very beginning First Community Church was deeply involved in the International Council of Community Churches, with staff and members active in all aspects of the work. The church provided office space and the secretarial assistance of Alma Shoemaker. An annual camping program was held at Camp Akita for several years. When a high school youth fellowship was added for the 1950 conference, the Rev. Rudy Thomas served as director and the Rev. Fred Doty as advisor. Both were on the staff of First Community Church as was Rev. Keith Kerr. Fred and Keith were also early editors for International Council of Community Churches' official publication, *The Christian Community*. The Rev. Richard Porter left the staff of First Community Church to become minister-at-large for the Council in 1953, a post he held until 1966. First Community Church delegate Libby Stein, daughter of former staff member Rev. Richard Stein, was selected as one of the first officers of the young adult program in 1974.

Understanding our First Community Church heritage enhances understanding of the national movement, for they are inextricably intertwined. Although many Community Church leaders are quoted in Rev. Shotwell's book, much of the philosophy expressed echoes the writing and ministries of Oliver Weist and Roy Burkhardt at First Community Church. Both men were active in guiding the national organizations of their era. Therefore, it is natural that they were influential in shaping the movement. Awareness of the early history of our own church during the Weist years sounds very familiar in this later statement by a Connecticut pastor, "A Community Church grows out of the needs and aspirations of the people of the community. It is a native product of the life of the community. It serves all the community and claims the whole of the community as its parish." This concept, pioneered here by Rev. Weist, continued to flourish. In 1949 First Community Church's membership included 5,000 of the 15,000 residents of the Tri-Villages and 96 percent of the high school students, according to an article in the February 5th issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

When the visionary members of our church adopted our new constitution and creed as First Community Church in February 1919, we were a thriving, active flock of 350. Today as we survey the



effects of that momentous decision, it is apparent that much of what has transpired in the lives of our people, our city, our country and the world happened because our church dared to take that step in a venture of faith.

## DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

In 1910 our founders chose to organize as a Congregational Church. Nine years later the membership elected to sever that bond and reorganize as a Community Church of no denomination. Forty years after that decision, the congregation decided to affiliate with the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ. For what reasons did a church that originated as part of a denominational body, and then became non-denominational, choose to become interdenominational? Dr. Arthur Sanders has provided many insights in defining answers to this question.

The congregation of First Community Church was already imbued with the spirit of a community-minded church when Roy Burkhart came in 1935. Many members were drawn here because they were happy to be free of the organizational structure and squabbling that so often occurred in denominational churches. Dr. Burkhart's work with young people, faculty and students on the Ohio State University campus, social agencies, and business and community leaders served to broaden our horizons even further. Many outstanding clergymen and stimulating speakers of national and international stature were invited to speak from our pulpit. Dr. Burkhart was an ecumenical person who was interested in the wider church beyond our own local church. He was a nationally recognized figure himself and much of his time was given to leading workshops and lecturing across the country. His role in helping to form the National and International Councils of Community Churches has already been noted, and First Community staff and lay workers were heavily involved in those organizations.

However, many doors were closed to us because there was no denominational tie. According to Dr. Sanders, members of Community Churches could not take part in any activity of the National Council of Churches, since it did not recognize Community Churches as a denomination. They could not participate in any decision-making or leadership and could not be part of the ecumenical movement.

The National Council of Churches was actually a council of denominations rather than a council of churches. Thus, First Community Church could have no say in any statement about the position of the church nationally, about what was being done in seminaries or how ministers were trained, or about the content of curriculum material for the Sunday School program.

Denominations frowned on any clergymen going to a church that was not affiliated, because ministers must have credentials in a denomination. In order to fulfill this requirement, our ministers had to become members of another church in order to serve First Community. Dr. Sanders noted that Roy Burkhart, Otis Maxfield and Terry Smith held membership in First Congregational Church downtown, as well as First Community Church.

Dr. Sanders observed that these were the main reasons why Burkie finally realized that no matter how great the Community Church idea was, it had reached its fulfillment. "It had brought many, many churches together. He had achieved what he wanted to achieve in the Community Church movement and now he was ready to begin moving toward a denominational approach again."

At the Annual Meeting of May 20, 1957, Dr. Burkhart presented a suggestion for congregational consideration "that the Board of Trustees be authorized to appoint a committee to consider the possibility and advisability of First Community Church seeking a relationship with as many denominations as possible; not losing its autonomy but, by its relationship with these groups, becoming a part of the grass-roots movement for the united church, and giving the members and ministers a sense of participation in the far flung activities of the organized church."

In June 1958 he further elaborated on the pioneering spirit of our church and why he felt that this should be the next significant step. He considered it to be a move toward a united church locally, answering the prayer of our Lord "that they all may be one." Through such action we would become part of the official church family; our leaders and youth would be linked with those of the affiliate denominations; doors into the national and world church would be opened for our staff; and we could be more influential in the church life of the world.



For two years the committee appointed by the Board considered the possibilities and the plan by which our church could be community in nature, yet could become related to a number of Protestant denominations. According to Dr. Sanders, the decision was to become a "multi-denominational" church. That term is really far more accurate than "inter-denominational," the term usually used in describing First Community Church. The committee searched for denominations that would allow local autonomy. At that time there were only two real possibilities, the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ.

The United Church of Christ itself was the product of a merger of the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical and Reformed Church in June 1957. Our church already had a strong bond with the Congregational Church from our earliest history. Three ministers who later joined our staff were present for that historic merger in Omaha, Nebraska. Otis Maxfield, Don Smith and Art Sanders were representatives of the Springfield, Massachusetts Conference of the Congregational Church. Art recalled that one of the most moving experiences for him at that meeting was witnessing the pageant that brought two denominations into one. The script and music had been written by First Community Church member Helen Kromer.

Art also noted that we came very close to having the Presbyterian Church accept our autonomy and allow us to be a part of their denomination. Eugene Carson Blake was very much in favor, but the Presbyterian hierarchy wasn't quite ready. The government of the Evangelical and Reformed Church was very similar to that of the Presbyterians, which was why they gave us a long, hard look before saying, "Not right now."

A congregational vote on the issue was scheduled to take place at the Annual Meeting of May 18, 1959. Sessions were held for all those interested in discussing the proposed affiliations, and members of the staff were present to answer questions. Prior to the balloting, Dr. Maxfield, who was now Senior Minister, and Dr. Burkhart presented the following reasons favoring affiliation.

All of us are dedicated to the proposition that FCC ought to pioneer in ecumenicity, or the establishment of a United Protestantism beginning at the grass roots. Being non-denominational, we have

no power in the National and World Councils of Churches. Denominations are represented on the Council and through them we would have a voice. The Community Churches have no seminaries in which to train ministers, consequently they depend on seminaries supported by the denominational structure.

Churches that stand alone are "orphan" churches and not part of the organized church. We can point the way by which these orphan churches can grow into a kind of relatedness that will give more point and meaning to their existence and ours. Affiliation with the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ would permit us to maintain our autonomy. It would mean preserving freedom for all forms of religious expression and keep our local independence, yet it would bring us within the family of the church.

The vote was overwhelming in favor of requesting affiliate relationship. The October 11, 1959, *First Community Church News* reported that the Ohio Central Association of Congregational Churches voted unanimously to accept our affiliation. Dr. Maxfield commented, "This request represents no basic change in the direction of First Community Church. Over the years it has been the philosophy of this church that its witness is precious and ought to be maintained. It has been the feeling of many of us, however, that at this point in time we feel the need to experiment in other areas that will make our total witness more relevant. Therefore, we take this step to move across, and I hope, beyond denominational structure."

On November 15, Dr. Fred Hoskins, co-president of the United Church of Christ, preached at the morning services and brought the official welcome from the Church-at-Large. A very special service was held that evening at which the Rev. Dr. Arthur Sanders was installed and the Rev. William Mathews of our staff was ordained into the Presbyterian ministry. Dr. Maxfield noted, "Seldom does a church have a chance to document its ecumenical witness in such a short space of time."

Although our second affiliation occurred earlier, it was officially recognized on April 23, 1961, when Dr. Gaines Cook, executive secretary of the International Convention of Disciples of Christ, preached at our morning worship services in honor of the occasion.



## PRE-SCHOOL

Another of First Community Church's pioneering ventures was in the field of educating very young children. As early as September 12, 1926, an announcement appeared in the weekly bulletin about a new service of the church to the community with the establishment of a weekday pre-school. Parents had already enrolled twenty children, and other units would be established as this idea grew in popularity. The teacher was Miss Flo Gernandt of New York City.

A springtime announcement stated that this work would continue if enough parents were interested. In the fall of 1927 thirty-six children were enrolled. Unfortunately, there are no further records in the archives to indicate just how long this experiment lasted. Eighteen years later Roy Burkhart stated his belief that because nursery school is usually the first group experience for most children, our church cherishes the opportunity to help shape this first experience as a part of our ministry across all the seasons of life.

In May 1945 Richard H. Bell, who had been serving as elementary principal of the Upper Arlington schools, was hired to fill the newly created position of Director of Children's Work and Parent Education for First Community Church. An additional duty was to serve as editor of the *Community Church News*. His first responsibility was to attend high school camp at Camp Ohio and conduct classes to train high school girls for working in the summer vacation school and participating in the children's church school in the fall. During the eight years that he spent on the staff of First Community Church before leaving to take a position at Highlights for Children, Dick Bell contributed significantly to shaping the future direction of programming for all children through 8th grade, as well as in training activities for their parents.

An article in the September 1945 issue of the *Community Church News* referred to children's experience in nursery school as laying the cornerstone in helping them to develop a sense of security. Because the strain of being left alone to adjust to a strange place, a new group of children, and a "teacher" can weigh heavily on a young child, the church devised the concept of a Day Nursery School to provide guidance and build confidence. The plan was for a child to come to the school for one, two or three days a week and spend three

hours each day with a teacher, toys, and play equipment scaled to size. It was described as also preparing a child psychologically for religious education by removing the fear and insecurity of being left alone in the Sunday School classroom. The first session of First Community Church's Day Nursery School opened on July 16, 1945, and operated for six weeks, becoming a permanent part of the children's program on October 1st.

The October 1945 issue of the *Community Church News* announced that Mrs. Dorothy Mohrman had been hired as the director of the Day Nursery School, which had proved to be so popular with parents during the past summer. The school, meeting in Lincoln Road Chapel Monday through Friday mornings from 9 -12, had an enrollment of sixty-five children, ages two to four. Another seventy-one attended the Sunday sessions, making a total of 136 nursery children in the active file. The program included time for outdoor and indoor play, conversation periods, rhythms and song, dramatic play, rest periods, and mid-morning snack. The article noted the scarcity of facilities in the community for this age group. Public school kindergarten facilities were not yet available at this time.

By January 1946 two assistants had been added to Mrs. Mohrman's Day Nursery staff. The school devoted four days a week to the two and three year old youngsters, and one day a week to an activity program for four and five-year olds. The tuition rate was \$7.00 per one day a week per quarter. The Nursery School was to serve not only the child, but also the parent in child guidance counseling. By continuing and expanding the parent program, Mrs. Mohrman planned additional individual parent conferences and parent group meetings.

The second step in the long range plan of providing professionally trained leadership in each of the areas of the Children's Department was taken with the hiring of Mrs. Lois Godlove to direct a new week-day kindergarten and the Sunday morning Beginner's Group. She had a broad range of experience and had just returned from service in England with the Red Cross. The *Community Church News* reported that the kindergarten which opened on January 9, would meet five mornings a week from 9 to 12 in the Church House on First Avenue. Open to all children of 4 and 5 years of age, the program offered a complete kindergarten experience at a tuition rate of \$35 per quarter. The kindergarten focused on the four-fold development of the child



mentally, emotionally, socially and physically with emphasis on a "readiness program" preparing the children for public school.

A number of changes in our program ensued in the fall of 1949 when the Grandview school system opened a kindergarten and ceased the midyear admission of students. Now first graders must be six years old by January 1st. First Community discontinued its kindergarten and divided the pre-schoolers into two groups. One was for children 24 – 42 months of age, and the other 42 – 60 months or whenever the child was eligible for public kindergarten. Miss Marianne Fenner became the full-time director for the lower age group, while Mrs. Ralph Howard was in charge of the older children.

Announcement was made in the *First Community Church News* of September 25th that Dick Bell had become a licensed minister and would now assume the duties of parish pastor ministering to men and women. Miss Nelle Wiley was hired as the new Minister to Children and would be in charge of the church school, teacher training, Tuesday night clinics for parents of pre-school and elementary children, and would also direct all the summer camps for children.

Much of the following information is taken from "A Brief History of the First Community Church Early Childhood Programs" compiled by Donice Wooster, current Director of Early Childhood Ministry, for the 50th anniversary celebration of the Weekday School in 1995.

In the early years some classes were also held in the carriage house of the church house on First Avenue. This meant sharing space with the church school classes and the offices of the intern ministers. Often the interns lived in First Avenue House and some of their wives were teachers in the Weekday School.

The education wing of the church was added in the early 50's and dedicated on December 7, 1952. The two early childhood classrooms on the first floor that still house three and four year olds were built as state of the art spaces for young children. These rooms, 109 and 110, were a powerful statement from the church community that young children were valued. From that point on, the history of early childhood at First Community Church is a continuing story of response to community need

and innovation in the field of early childhood education.

Gradually afternoon classes were added, challenging the idea that all young children napped in the afternoon. A 5-day morning class was added, occupying the whole west side of the second floor front hallway (where the business office and ministerial offices are now located.) The next church expansion in 1974 added space over Rooms 109 and 110, and a new 5-day classroom was built with innovative features such as an observation room with a one-way mirror.

Hired as a teacher during the early years of operation, Mary White Evans was Director of Early Childhood Ministries until 1991. Her dedication to providing appropriate experiences for young children, her deep understanding of their particular needs, and her commitment to parent support and education were hallmarks of the early childhood programs throughout her tenure and beyond. Mary received her Master's degree in Family Relations and Child Development in 1965, when she began leading Parent Growth, a weekly parent information and support group that is still active.

Recognizing this church's role as a leader in early childhood education, Mary Evans and the teaching staff created the Teacher's Seminar, held for a number of years each fall as in-service training for teachers of young children. Mary also provided workshops and training for Head Start teachers and for other early childhood centers in the community. When a staff writer from *The Christian Century* visited First Community Church to see how we were faring 40 years after being declared one of the twelve great churches in America, he noted that Mary was the only member of the church staff who had a regular column in the church newspaper. For several years her articles on parenting also appeared in the suburban newspapers.

As parents observed teachers in the classrooms and attended Parent Growth, they began to ask for an experience in which a consistent teacher could observe them and coach them in their parenting. The Parents/Twos program began in the early 1970's, created and taught by Beverly Brown and later by other teachers. Twos, who are not yet ready for a solo school experience, attend with a parent. Parents enjoy the school experience with their children, and also receive daily feedback on parenting skills.



The Early Childhood Department responded to another need in the community by proposing a full-time Child Care Center. Teacher Mary Ellen Powers and Mary Evans created a detailed proposal for the Governing Board that met with some fear of housing children in the church all day throughout the week. After much discussion, the Governing Board agreed to the proposal, the First Community Foundation provided seed money for equipment, and the Center opened for 24 children in the fall of 1975. Mary Ellen Powers was the first Administrator of the Child Care Center. In 1991 after the church built the Center for Extended Ministry, or North Campus as it is now known, the Center moved to two classrooms in that facility doubling its capacity. It was renamed the Mary Evans Child Development Center in honor of Mary Evans, who retired that same year.

Parents have always been especially important to the early childhood staff. A newsletter for parents, "The Early Times" was begun in the mid-1970's. In addition to Parent Growth and the Parent/Twos program, each class holds monthly parent meetings, annual parent-teacher conferences, a Parent Night, and family picnics twice each school year. The Child Care Center holds two parent conferences and other family events throughout the year.

Some of the innovative practices begun at First Community Church in both the Weekday School and the Child Care Center include the concept of team teaching, revision of structure and curriculum as more is learned about how children think and learn, use of video as a teacher training tool and for talking with parents, and the use of puppets in the classroom as a tool for children as they work through feelings and conflicts. Unlike many centers, all the Mary Evans Child Development Center's teachers have degrees in early childhood education.

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the number of young children being diagnosed along the autism spectrum. This showed up in early childhood classrooms, and the preschool has been working with families to help find early intervention. In some cases, the best placement for children with autism disorders was to stay in the preschool classroom, assisted by an aide who could help the child interpret social cues and classroom routines. Children with Down syndrome have also been welcomed to our classrooms.

Ohio launched a pilot program in 2006 to award early childhood programs that met benchmarks for quality above basic licensing standards. Programs with better child/teacher ratios, more teacher education, ongoing training and rich classroom environments could apply for higher status through the Step Up to Quality initiative. Both the South Campus Preschool and the Mary Evans Child Development Center were part of the pilot program and have continued to maintain a star rating, which brings annual funding to the program budgets in return for maintaining a quality program.

The preschool was approached in 2007 by the Franklin County Education Services Center, an entity that contracts with school districts to provide services for children with disabilities. They were seeking a preschool in which they could house a mainstream program for young children with hearing impairment. After looking at numerous preschools, they chose First Community's for its developmentally sound curriculum and emphasis on social and emotional growth. Since placing several hearing impaired children in our preschool with their own specialist teacher as part of our team, we have refined this program together for the mutual benefit of the hearing impaired and hearing children.

After noting the success of First Community Church's Day Care Center, the Upper Arlington school system hired its director, Mary Ellen Powers, to establish a center for the city of Upper Arlington. Marilyn Streng Cordle succeeded her at First Community. In 1991 Vickie McVey replaced Marilyn. Bev Sherrill was the next director, and currently Jamy Zambito heads the Mary Evans Child Development Center. Jamy formerly taught at Wickliffe Elementary and in the early childhood program at Burbank School. For the 2008-2009 school year, a total of eleven full-time and two part-time teachers plus three assistants work with about 75 children ranging from infancy to kindergarten age.

Currently there are 101 children enrolled in the Weekday Preschool at 1320 Cambridge Boulevard who are taught by a staff of ten teachers. The Early Childhood programs of First Community Church continue to thrive by remaining open to change, and committed to the same profound values about young children that have always been their foundation.







## THE DREAM OF A CAMP

Since our first campers trekked to Oliver Weist's family farm, who knows how many lives have been changed by the camping experiences provided by First Community Church? Children and young people, men and women, members and non-members, singles and whole families, counselors and campers have departed from their camping sessions with a new sense of spiritual enrichment. They have been searchers in learning who they are and how they want to lead their lives. They have discovered new dimensions in their relationships with God and nature and fellow human beings.

"Camp! The smell of smoke . . . the breaking dawn . . . songs of birds and scent of wildflowers . . . singing around the tables . . . appetites keen. The fire circle, the study groups, the fellowship with nature, the voices of the night, the worship at vespers, the meditation at morning watch. You! Finding richer life, learning the joy and thrill of service, finding a finer friendship, discovering the secrets of effective leadership, building with others a community that is a tiny replica of the world of which all of us dream, finding new experiences of God in nature, in meditation, in work, in play, in study, filling each day to the full." So wrote an enthusiastic young journalist in May 9, 1940's edition of the *Youth-Edit* newspaper about the camping experiences anticipated for the summer.

Dr. Burkhart had always been an advocate of church camping and began leading our young people's retreats and summer sessions in 1936. Although able to use the facilities of Camp Ohio, Tar Hollow, Camp Indianola, Wildwood or Big Brothers' Camp, our program had to conform to their camp schedules. Burkie and others in the church dreamed of having our own camp.

The March 21, 1940, issue of *Youth-Edit* described one promising site near Mt. Sterling that had been explored by Bob Murphy, Bob Pickett and several other young people. Behind the small house that they planned to convert into a lodge was a huge chicken coop that they believed could be made into a perfect mess hall, since it had never been used for its intended purpose! There was a dam across the creek that would allow fishing, swimming and boating. Nearby was the perfect spot for campfires. The next issue of the paper reported that upon further exploration, the camp-hunting committee found that site unsuitable. Perhaps the

chicken coop idea didn't fly! However, they promised to examine other possible locations in Hocking County. The search was still on.

The first Leadership Training Camp was held in 1938 at Burkie's cabin at Blackstone Lake in Canada. In later years he took the church staff and their families there. Money raised at the Bar None dances was used to send delegates from First Community Church to other camps at Geneva, Wisconsin; Winnepesaka, New Hampshire; and Minnawanka, Michigan.

The dream of our own camp persisted. In 1944 Howard Powell donated the first money toward a camp. Also, a special building fund was begun by setting aside a portion of all money contributed to the church.

Finally in the February 15, 1948, *First Community Church News*, Burkie was able to write in his "From the Study" column, "For many years there have been two deep personal desires stirring my heart. One was to have a campsite where our children, young people and men and women could go for spiritual retreat and training in Christian leadership. And the second was to have a place in the hills in God's out-of-doors where we could go for one day a week to find renewal and inspiration. The second has already been realized. In February of this last year, Mr. John Galbreath gave us a farm in the Hocking Hills. It has 160 acres of ravines and valleys and up-reaching hillsides. I have named it 'Camp Hellen' in honor of Mrs. Galbreath whose name was Helen, and my mother, whose name was Ellen. The spirit of the gift and the growing wonder of the place led me to the conclusion that we could never sell it. So this leads to the realization of the first goal. We have now dedicated this land, plus 40 more acres which we hope to purchase, to be held in trust for our church to use as a camp site. We will keep the cottage that is there as a year-round place of rest and renewal, but 500 yards back of the cottage we will build the camp. Here we will not only find spiritual renewal, but through the years it can become the church in God's out-of-doors, where children and young people and those of us who are older can find life's deeper secret and a faith greater than life. Nothing could make me happier than to help our children and young people find the spirit and faith that Helen Galbreath and my mother lived by."



Burkie's daughter, Jeanne Selby, shared this vignette of family time spent in that little cottage on that special piece of land. "We'd go tramping around the place, the rest of us with our eyes on the brambles and tangled thickets in our way. But Pap's eyes were on the hill, seeing the lodge he wanted to build there or off in the distance where he envisioned a lake."

And so, at the Annual Meeting on May 22, 1948, the congregation voted to purchase the extra 40 acres of land. "Akita," the Sioux Indian word for "searcher" was chosen as the name for the camp. Through the enthusiasm, interest, talents and gifts from many people in the congregation, the dream would become reality.

The Camp Committee that guided the planning and construction of Akita included Chairman Todd Tibbals, Warren Armstrong, Ben Bare, L. B. Burrell, Ken Fishel, Jim Humphreys, Loring Huntzicker, Glenn McClelland, Fred Slager and Emerson Wollam. Todd offered to serve as architect for the project and Ben was the engineer. Their plan called for building the lodge at the top of the hill and flooding the valley to form a lake. They encountered a major problem almost immediately. Pete McLin, a farmer who owned the land next to the camp, would not allow access to the property. In her 1974 25th anniversary tribute to Akita, Beth Riley recounted the solution to this dilemma as told by Emerson Wollam.

"He was adamant. That farmer simply was not about to sell us an easement. Burkie pleaded and prayed and cussed, but the fellow still wouldn't sell. I really didn't blame him; it was his best land. We'd just about decided to build the camp in the valley when a bunch of us on the Camp Committee went down to see what we could do. But the man still wouldn't budge. Later on that day I went out to the field where he was putting up fence and got to chinning with him. 'What do the men around here use for farming?' I asked. 'Horses?'

'Mostly horses,' he replied, 'except for one fellow who has a tractor.'

'Why don't you use a tractor?' I said.

'Don't have money for one, and, even if I did, where would I buy one?'

"You see, it was right after World War II, and there just were not any tractors to be had. But I could tell he really wanted one, so I said to him, 'If we would deliver a tractor to you, here, in your barnyard, within 30 days, would you sell us the easement?'

"He went home to talk it over with his wife, and it didn't take long. In five minutes he came back through the door and held out his hand. 'You've got yourself a deal,' he said.

"So I went back to Columbus and told Burkie that it was in the bag. All we had to do was come up with a new tractor. And he did."

No one knows just exactly how Burkie was able to pull it off, but in June 1948 Pete received a phone call from the Ford dealer in Logan saying that he had a tractor with his name on it. Since the dealer's allocation of tractors was only one per year and he had already sold it, Pete had to justify this delivery. With aplomb he explained that some big wheels in Columbus had gotten it for him!

Ben Bare not only supervised work for construction, but he also described to Beth how his engineering skills were utilized in laying out the lake. "I think I spent every weekend for six months surveying for the reservoir, designing the dam, clearing and grubbing out the undergrowth, planning the water supply, laying out the sanitary facilities for the lodge and cabins, supervising construction of the dam – all before any building could take place. Every one of us contributed our labor. Later on there was money for wages, but not at first."

The Board of Trustees gave their approval for building the lodge and dining hall in October 1948. By this time, the dam was nearly finished. Ben continued, "We were fortunate to have some heavy rains so that the lake filled very quickly. There are several natural springs in the drainage area. The church now holds deed to all the property in the watershed as a protection to the lake." Before Thanksgiving the well was in and the water reservoir was under construction.

Todd designed the buildings so that they would fit into the contour of the hills as naturally as possible. He chose an Adirondack lean-to style, low in the back and high in the front so the roof would drain. They were built of local peckerwood lumber by men who lived in the surrounding area. The members of Couples Circles #1 and 8 each built a



cabin with the sweat of their brows and the blisters on their hands.

Youth Minister Edward Rydman was Akita's first camp director and lived at Akita every summer with his wife and four children. Eddie shared these memories of Akita's beginnings. "One of the reasons I was asked to come to FCC in 1946 was to develop a camping program. I had studied camping in my professional training and had worked at camps all over the country. I was a member of the American Camping Association and used many of their standards to influence the early stages of developing the camp with Todd Tibbals, Ben Bare, Icky Wollam, Ken Fishel and others who were instrumental in giving their professional skills. Todd Tibbals and I walked over the land again and again to stake out where cabins, showers and other facilities were to be located to meet the differing needs of the many camps for children, families and adults. I remember my unsuccessful efforts to double the size of the lake. I urged Ben Bare to build the dam at the narrow spot at the lower end of the athletic field. Ben resisted, saying that he didn't want it to be so close to the Burkhardt cabin. The winter that we built it was the wettest winter in years and bulldozers and earth movers were sunk in mud and unable to move for several months."

In addition to those already mentioned, many other people contributed and helped in so many ways to bring the dream of a camp to reality. Several men from Ohio State University offered to lay out the land for the camp, and Al Short of the Department of Conservation offered his services. John Galbreath promised two bulldozers to help build the lake. Loring Huntzicker made a study of the land to determine where to get adequate water and arranged for digging of the well that made all of the water supply possible. Layne Ohio Co. donated their services to dig the well. Senator John Bricker and Buck Ryder of the Conservation Department supplied bass and bluegills for the lake. Pete Linch provided rough sketches for the lodge and dining hall. Clifford Rice of Westgate Electric gave the wiring of the camp and Gustave Hirsch furnished the material. A combination truck and station wagon was purchased with money contributed by Ken Fishel and Paul Davies. Guild Group L donated a movie camera so that a record of the construction could be made. The price tag for building Camp Akita in 1949 was around \$150,000, but the cost would have been far greater if so many people had not contributed their time and talent.

Other donations came in many forms. The Kroger Company gave a walk-in refrigerator and Mills Restaurant, the dishes. Through the combined efforts of Don Rice of Westgate Electric Co. and Wanda Wagoner, a large dishwasher was acquired. Even the kitchen sink was a gift from Bill and Jayne Guthrie. When the Outdoor Store offered to get four rowboats at cost, Guild Group F, the Men's Brotherhood and Mrs. Wendell Griffith each gave money to purchase one boat. Guild Group B paid for two more. The rustic hickory furniture for the lodge, which many of us remember with nostalgia, was a gift from Guild Group E. The swimming float came from Group I, while Group D bought a potato mixer and donated enough money to build a cabin. Doddington Lumber Company offered to prepare material for dining tables at cost. Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Short bought the flagpole. Other financial contributions for equipment came from Village Little Theater, the 1948 Book Fair profit, and Guild Groups B, G. and K.

#### AKITA COMES ALIVE

The day of dedication finally arrived on Sunday, May 22, 1949. A caravan of cars assembled at the church to leave at 1:00 p.m. for Akita. This would allow everyone the opportunity to picnic and explore the camp before the Service of Dedication began at 4:30. Along with the many individuals who played a major role in bringing the dream of our own camp to reality, the Cloister Choir also took part in the service. Lowell Riley had set new words to "Bless This House," and for many of the Cloisters, "Bless This Camp" and "Green Cathedral" became their own special music for Akita. Dick Bell gave the invocation. Other speakers included Todd Tibbals, Glenn McClelland, Bobbie Loveless, Burkie and Ed Rydman

It seems fitting to repeat the words of dedication here because their promise continues to be a challenge to the thousands of people who have walked those hills since that day.

"Be still, Hear the voices of day and night. Be silent, Know thy true self. Be aware, Find the secret. To the worship of God at vesper time, in calm before sleep, in the morning alone; to a growing knowledge and appreciation of the wonder of the outdoors; to the building of healthy bodies and to the achievement of healthy minds, the ramparts of peace; to each camper that he may find the secret



of life and love; to the building of Christian homes and a mighty church in every community; to the training of persons of all ages who shall be big enough to fashion a way of life all over the world with a democratic ideal; to the discovery and training of a dynamic leadership for the home, church, school and all phases of our republic and for the world that is to be; we dedicate this camp."

From Dr. Edward Rydman, the former youth minister who played such an important role in planning the camp and establishing its philosophy and program, came the story of the origin of the beloved plaque over the fireplace in the lodge. During the dedication ceremony Bobby Loveless presented the plaque, given by her bridge club, in memory of Helen Galbreath whose husband, John, gave the land on which the camp was built. Both Bobby and Helen were members of the bridge club and of First Community Church. These words are familiar to Akita campers throughout our history. They have been the theme for worship, inspiration for poetry and words to follow for boys and girls, men and women who first experienced them at camp.

*Be Silent*

*Hear the voices of day and night,*

*Be Still*

*Know thyself,*

*Be Aware*

*Find the secret.*

The lake created by the dam was fed by natural springs and covered 4 1/2 acres. It was named Wantanopa, Peace on the Waters. Two groups of six cabins meandered down the hillside on each side of the lodge. Akita was one of the few camps in this part of the country to be winterized for year round use. Originally the ground floor of the lodge was designed to serve as a craft shop and meeting room during the summer and dining room and kitchen in the winter. There was a room on either side of the lodge that was used as the camp office in the summer and limited dormitory space in cold weather.

The first camping session was filled with 120 high school youth. At the end of that week Burkie wrote, "The young people have taken great pride in the camp site. They look upon it as a sacred gift and they are treating it as if it were very precious. I hope that those who come in future years will have the same feeling of those who came into the heart of Camp Akita in the beginning. There are places in

the world that have had historical and far-reaching significance. The most important one is Bethlehem. Camp Akita can become one of those places of great significance. From the heart of this camp can go young people into every walk of life, into all the corners of the earth. It has the spirit, the vision, the power to shape the new world. In the closing night of the first camp the campers sat on the hill overlooking the lake with the stars overhead in a great service of worship. Lives were touched and someone dared to breathe that Camp Akita might mean to the future something of what Bethlehem has meant during the past two thousand years. At least the spirit of Bethlehem can become vital at Camp Akita."

By the end of the fifth week of the initial 1949 season, 524 campers had attended Akita and 9,088 meals had been served. It was impossible to keep track of the number of visitors who came during weekends. In addition to the people from our own church, there were camp directors, counselors, ministers, and board members from many agencies who wanted to observe the facilities. There were sessions for children and teens as well as two family camp weeks and a family weekend. The final session of the season was college camp during Labor Day week, before students went off to their various campuses, knowing that they would be reunited again at college retreat over the New Year's holiday.

The first men's retreat was scheduled for September 24 and 25 and was open to the first 200 to register at a cost of \$3.00 per person. In retrospect, it is amusing to note that this conflicted with the OSU-Missouri football game, so an alternate date was set for October. Sixty women attended the first women's retreat on May 7 and 8, 1950.

Eddie Rydman continued his recollections. "One important thing about camp – one week of a camping experience was worth years of one hour of Sunday School each week. I did not want camp to be seen as an extension of Sunday School but, instead, an entirely different total living experience and program. As a professional in the field of camping, I so wanted to make camp a living, working, playing, growing experience, in addition to providing a unique spiritual experience in the out of doors and in a group living situation. I emphasized to the counselors, in all of our meetings before and during each camp, that they must especially be aware of the forgotten person, the boy or girl



or adult in the family and adult camps, who was not included in activities, or was an 'outsider.' To have an individual go home from a week at camp without growing in relationships with other campers, without growing in self-esteem and self-worth, and in relationship with God, was intolerable. To a high degree we succeeded in our goals. We had a great group of counselors, year after year.

"Members of the church wanted to give gifts to the camp, but some were hard to justify. A family gave an old upright piano that was unusable without spending a lot of money to refurbish it. I kept it in a corner of the lodge. The counseling staff urged me, yea begged me to get rid of it, but I resisted. They held a staff meeting without me and agreement was reached. About 2:00 a.m. they gathered together and muscled the piano over the rail of the lodge porch and great was the fall thereof!! If you have never heard a piano fall about 20 feet, you ain't heard nothing! The crash and cacophony of those many strings vibrating created a sound that awakened all the campers and perhaps all the residents of the Hocking Hills for miles around. An appropriate ceremony was held the next morning and the remains were carted off for burial.

"We moved to camp as soon as school was out and stayed until time for school to begin. We lived in a little cabin across the hill behind the lodge with no facilities except an outdoor privy. Our children lived their early years at Akita. Two of them learned to walk on the rough camp trails. We lived in primitive conditions in our little cabin over the hill, but I guess that they survived well. In addition, I spent almost every weekend at camp during the rest of the year concluding camps in time to rush home for Brownlee groups on Sunday evenings at church. Exciting and busy years and Jean and I loved it, strenuous as it was. They were great years. The family camps were especially rewarding for the families that participated and for our family. For me, all the camps were exciting.

"Many of the youth of the church would go down on weekends to cut logs and place them across where water would run down and erode our hill-sides. That was hard, physical labor and was often done in the midst of rainstorms so we could find the erosion spots when they were beginning. Boys and girls alike would spend hours with picks, shovels and other tools in hard back-bending labor. The hours that they put into camp were never recorded and acknowledged. Boards, committees

and groups were easily identified, but the individual work went on unsung. However, they know who they are or were, and the joy was in the doing. Akita is a place where many have made life-changing decisions, established relationships, and made discoveries. It is a precious place, hallowed by the campers who have spent time there.

"Everyone will remember our camp chef, Sylvester Taylor, a warm, loving cook who prepared such wonderful food. Remember his corn fritters? We had many fine kids who worked in the kitchen peeling potatoes, helping Sylvester with kitchen chores and running the dishwasher. We were lucky to qualify for surplus commodities from the government. Surplus food that was distributed to social agencies included large 50 pound wheels of cheese and lots of powdered milk. Sylvester tried to use the powdered milk in as many ways as possible. Being a very frugal camp director, I urged that leftovers be carefully refrigerated and kept for future use. My enthusiasm for leftovers one time exceeded the willingness of the staff to save them. They collected beans, spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, etc. and put them in a large bowl. They called me to the walk-in refrigerator and, as I opened the door, this mixture of leftovers was ceremoniously dumped on my head. It ran down over me with spinach draped over my ears. I was a sight to behold, but I got the message. Leftovers can be kept only so long!"

Creativity spawned by the spirit of Akita found expression in varied ways. One year a group of college students wrote and broadcast a weeklong series of religious radio programs over WOSU under the direction of Dick Bell, who was both Director of Communications for the church and on the staff of WOSU. Another year some of these same students planned and conducted the entire worship service, including the sermon and music, for Lee's Creek Community Church. This was their way of thanking its minister, Rev. John Selvey, for his inspiring guidance as a resource leader at Akita that summer. Work on the camp itself was another method of expressing appreciation. Trails were laid, cabins built, railroad ties hauled into place, and improvements made to the site itself. Many young people, through the inspiration and leadership they received at Akita, made the decision to enter the ministry.

Others outside our church family enjoyed the beauty and spirit of Akita . . . The Ohio Laymen's Fellow-



ship on Stewardship, the Ministers' Workshop in Group Dynamics, Scouts, interracial and intercultural camps, the Council of Community Churches and the Upper Arlington Marching Band to name a few. For many years the international students at Ohio State held a three-day orientation program at Akita. In the fall of 1955, the facilities were donated to the Boy's Industrial School at Lancaster for a week. Rev. Charles Harrison, program director of Boy's Industrial School, had occasionally served as a resource leader for college camps. This was the first time that such an outing had been undertaken by the school, and it was an experimental effort to determine what benefits could be derived by the boys through a camping situation. The 49 teens who were chosen to attend received little attention from their families, but their experience at Akita was a gratifying one. The following spring, five of those boys returned to camp to build the Director's Cabin, designed by Kent Brandt and now known as Sky Valley.

Kent designed other buildings too . . . the craft A-frame that stood on the hill below the lodge and a small cabin that was planned as a hangout for the counselors. He recalled that while they were building the cabin, Paul Selby bent so many nails in the hard oak lumber that they decided to call it Bent Nail. The name stuck and inspired Ben, a retired farmer who lived down the road and served as camp caretaker, to make bent nail rings for all the kids from horseshoe nails that summer.

During the early years of Akita, whoever was youth minister of the church usually served also as camp director. Eddie Rydman fulfilled that role, as did Mike Vance in later years. Mike was noted for some of the dramatic worship services that he and Fred Leary created . . . miles of wire strung all over the hillsides . . . the loud speaker . . . the fireworks when they did the story of creation . . . the Hawaiian luau in the dining hall with flowers and cascades of water and roast pig and the works . . . and the time they took all the cabin doors out of storage and built a structure about an inch under the surface of the water. That was Mike's famous walking-on-water service.

Some of our most vivid memories of Akita center around worship services at the lake - sometimes at sunset, more often under a canopy of stars. The pathway to the lake might be outlined with lighted candles. Once Sarah Miller Smith danced The Lord's Prayer on the raft in the lake. Sometimes

Burkie went out in the boat while campers sat on the shore and listened as he preached the Sermon on the Mount from memory. Many vespers were built around silence . . . chimes played over the PA system, or someone sang from across the water. And after the service everyone gathered in a circle, held hands and sang "Taps."

Burkie tried to spend as much time as possible at Akita when camps were in session. He loved the time spent singing around the tables in the dining hall after meals. He was the one who always led a very spirited rendition of "Alouette." That was his song, and nobody else ever tried to lead that one. He would sit under the flag pole, or on the diving platform or out under his favorite tree, Lonesome Pine, and the kids would come to him to talk about their plans and their problems, sharing their troubles and their dreams. In December 1959 he relinquished the rights to his cottage that Bill Taylor named Cabin in the Glen, and gave it to the church.

David Griffith was hired to the newly created position of full-time director in 1961. He was a natural for the job, having helped clear the land when Akita was built. Later he was a camper, worked on the kitchen staff, was a counselor and served as business manager in 1953. In addition to a degree in recreation, Dave was a program specialist with experience as director of a large YMCA camp. By his time Akita had grown to 326 acres with the purchase of more land by John Galbreath.

One of the most significant additions to the Akita property came with the acquisition of Rock Stalls. Beth Riley recorded former Children's Minister Bill Taylor's story of how he and Burkie had walked there one day in 1957. "On the way back to camp Burkie introduced me to the owner, Harold Hughes, an exporter who lived in Detroit. He had inherited the farm and spent a month there every summer. After that, I took all the kids there on hikes. If Mr. Hughes was home, the kids would crowd up on the porch with him and he would tell them stories about the history of the place and the Indians who used to roam the woods, how they had used the contours of the land as a natural trap for wild animals and a corral for their horses. We all got to be great friends. In the summer of '59, when I had a bunch of kids over there on a hike, Mr. Hughes waved me down to talk. He told me that a group of businessmen from Newark wanted to buy his land and put up cottages all around the rim of the



canyon. The State of Ohio had also approached him about buying it for a state park. He wanted to sell it, but not to them. 'The kids love it so much,' he said, 'I think the church should have it.'

"We called Dr. Otis Maxfield, who was in Colorado at the time, and he said, 'No way.' I would have bought it myself, but I didn't have the money. Yet somehow I just could not see that land with cottages all over it. Mr. Hughes said he would help me finance it. I wrote out my personal check for \$30 and we scribbled on the back of a restaurant placemat a contract that gave me a six month option to buy 70 acres that included Rock Stalls canyon and Indian mound for \$7,000. As soon as Otis came home I dragged him down there. Of course, he realized its value as soon as he saw what was there, and the church picked up the option. We paid Mr. Hughes \$20 an acre less for his land than he had been offered by those businessmen. He just wanted us to have it. He was a man who loved Camp Akita and he loved our kids."

Bill Taylor recounted more of his story about the Stalls when he returned to Akita for the 40th anniversary celebration. "Harold had told me about his aged uncle, Hap Hughes, who was born in 1869 and knew more about Rock Stalls than anyone else alive. Then he arranged for me to meet with Hap and himself for a trip into the Stalls. Hap said to me, 'Harold tells me that you are a preacher and that you like kids. Now, you pay attention, and then you set those kids down and tell them all about this place.'

"He led us along the rim of the cliffs overlooking the Indian mound and the stream. He said that around 1920 some archeologists from Ohio State came to study the mound. Hap came to observe their work and even volunteered to help them a few times. Later when we were in the canyon, he showed us where a narrow 'V' excavation had been made on the stream side of the mound and told us how carefully they restored the cut. He also said that they had done some boring on the mound. 'They were looking for relics and human remains, but found none, which indicated that the Indian mound was not constructed for religious purposes.' The archeologists had concluded that it was 400 to 600 years old, which meant that it followed the earlier mound building Indian cultures of the Adena and Hopewell. Moreover, it was built to make a smaller canyon with its own water supply into which deer

and other animals could be stalked, trapped and kept for 'food on the hoof.'

"As we strolled along the rim above the mound, Hap pointed out the sandstone 'slide' as he called it, with the toe holds etched out of the cliff which aided the Indians as they lowered themselves to the top of the mound and climbed out again. He showed us a terraced hillside from which they had dug dirt with sticks and flat stones, piled it on mats of branches and pulled it to the edge where they dumped it below to painstakingly build the mound. At the narrow opening between the waterfalls, large heavy stones were levered from the canyon bed to a large pile. From that point to the 'slide' area, the mound was built with dirt scooped from the terraces. Hap noted that only a few stones larger than fist size were encountered by the archeologist's borings.

"Hap led us northward along the trail until we came down into the valley of the canyon. He talked almost all the time...the adrenalin was flowing. It was as though he knew that his life was nearing its end and he wanted to share what he knew of Rock Stalls and his love for it 'for those kids who will come here later.' When we reached the large shelf cave with the fire pit and the old smoke streaks fanning the cliff outwardly and upwardly, Hap told us that when he was a child, many relics and Indian arrow heads were found near the fire pit cave. It was there that Indians cooked their community meals and smoked the leftover meat. From the stream side of the mound, Hap pointed out the sag in the middle of the mound and stated that it probably was level across the top when it was completed. Then we walked to the 'doorway' to the stall where he used his cane to point at the stone base at the end of the mound with stepped areas to support the end of the enclosure logs. He pointed out where supports for the enclosure logs were etched out of the sandstone cliff across from the end of the mound. I had never noticed these before, but they clearly support the theory of the mound serving as a trap for large animals. He then led us into the stall, walking close to the small waterfall which seeps enough water even in times of drought to hold a pool of water at its base. He said that the animals drank from this pool, and he commented on the ingenuity of the Indians and how they fed the animals by throwing grasses from the upper rim.



"As we followed him out of the stalls he said, 'When I was a boy and even up to the time those archeologist fellows were here, you could take a spade and dig into the dirt and find bones. They weren't human bones, but mainly parts of antlers, hoofs, long bones and pieces of back bones from deer.' Up the treacherous gully trail we went, pausing occasionally to rest. At one stop he briefly told us the story of Forest Rose, a young girl who lived in Lancaster during pioneer days. While fetching water at the spring below Point Pleasant Mountain, she was abducted by Indians and carried a long distance on horseback. A novel about the story, *Forest Rose*, tells of her ordeal while kept captive in a canyon that sounds much like Rock Stalls. I asked Hap if Rock Stalls could have been the same place from which she was rescued, and he replied, 'Could it have been any place else!' Lancaster still boasts a street one block east of Route 33 that is named Forest Rose Avenue.

"Just before we reached the top of the gully trail, Hap slipped and fell to his knees on the wet clay bank. 'Damn,' he shouted. Then he turned to me and said, 'Sorry, preacher, sometimes I use a religious word or two when I get mad.' Hap Hughes died in his sleep of 'old age' only a few months after our hike into Rock Stalls. What a blessing that hike was for me! He did leave a legacy for 'those kids of the church' and for the rest of us too."

The purchase of land that included Rock Stalls was completed in 1961. A gift of 445 acres from John Galbreath doubled the size of Akita the following year. This land included a small coal mine and a natural gas well. Also in 1962 new plans were unveiled for 24 hardy teenagers to live under primitive conditions at a Trailblazers Camp on Rock Stalls property.

When Dave Griffith departed in 1964 to pursue graduate studies, the nature of the camp staff position was altered. Program responsibilities for each camp session were assigned to the ministers.

On May 1, 1964, Joel Hawley became camp manager. Capitalizing on his skills in budget preparation and control, and supervision of food service, personnel, maintenance and construction, Joel's job was to manage and improve facilities and services and promote use of the camp. In 1964 alone, more than 2,600 people utilized Akita. He negotiated arrangements, first with the Chillicothe schools and later with others, for holding outdoor

education programs at Akita. He also stimulated interest among members of the church in spending work weekends at camp.

Another story told by Bill Taylor recounted the tale of the camp dinner bell. Mr. Fern Vale, a retired railroader who lived at First Community Village, spearheaded the yearlong search for a steam locomotive bell. It was salvaged from a Chesapeake & Ohio Railway locomotive and believed to be the last available among eastern railroads. When found, the bell had no clapper, so a new one was forged by the Norfolk & Western Railway. In a special ceremony on the church lawn, the bell was presented by the Railroad Community Service Committee on July 22, 1964, and has been summoning campers to meals ever since from its location outside the dining hall.

During his fifteen and a half years at Akita, Joel witnessed many changes. Outpost Camp, with its kitchen shelter and tents on wooden platforms, opened in 1965 for the more rugged campers. A major renovation of the main camp was begun in 1974. The dining hall was winterized, the kitchen remodeled and meeting space was added under the building. In the lodge existing dormitory space was converted into shower and bathroom facilities, two story additions capable of sleeping 80 persons were built on both sides, and an infirmary was added in the basement. Great care was taken to preserve the rustic atmosphere. Rock Stalls was officially declared a nature preserve. Open houses brought back campers and counselors to recapture Akita's spirit for a day. Kids who had attended Joel's early camps now held their weddings there.

Through the years so many gifts have been donated to Akita by individuals, Couples' Circles and Guild Groups. Most importantly, John Galbreath not only gave the first gift of land to Burkie, but he also purchased every acre of land for us as surrounding farms became available. His wife, Dorothy, made possible the acquisition of Pete McLin's farm in 1979, at last giving us ownership of the access road. Other donations have included everything from a new piano for the lodge to kitchen equipment to new benches for Vesper Hill. Camperships for our own young people who needed financial help or for inner city children who might otherwise never have a camping experience have been another way of spreading Akita's joy.



Tom Wood succeeded Joel Hawley in April 1980. His background in natural resources and ecology of the area were great assets. Hiking to Rock Stalls while Tom pointed out wildflowers was a rare treat. Nature trails were marked and cider pressed under his tutelage. Folk festivals at Outpost proved to be popular events, especially for former counselors who gathered with their guitars for a day of fun and fellowship.

Interim Senior Minister John Cairns reported in the August 8, 1981, issue of *First Community Church NEWS*, "The summer staff of Akita helps those of us who serve as weekly program directors to carry out our program. Akita is part of our curriculum design. There are things we can do, experiences we can share, learning we can generate at camp that cannot be duplicated in another setting. It is our learning laboratory for Christian community, for stewardship education for faith development. The person of Jesus Christ takes on reality in a way that leads to commitment."

After Tom Wood departed in 1983, a new direction in Akita leadership was instituted. Rev. Kline Roberts III joined the staff as Minister of Renewal at the end of 1983. Rather than being based at camp and traveling to Columbus weekly, Kline was part of the church staff who spent time at Akita. Then in 1985 Kline Roberts was named the Coordinator of Pastoral Care upon the retirement of Dr. Arthur Sanders, who had held that position for many years. Rev. Lyndon Whybrew, whose Family Life Ministry scheduled many retreats and activities at Akita, was the next minister charged with responsibility for the camp.

New buildings sprouted across the face of Akita. A modern two-level cabin named Dogwood was built next to Sky Valley to replace Pinecone, the cabin that was destroyed by fire. A conference center where small groups could meet was built in the open area across from Lonesome Pine and received the name Toad Hall. Both Cabin in the Glen and Sky Valley were upgraded and modernized to better accommodate families and small groups who wanted to rent some private space at Akita. Rental of these facilities, as well as use by schools for band camps and environmental camps, helped to support and subsidize the upkeep of Akita.

During summer 1986, under the leadership of youth minister Rev. Dick Flynn, Akita staffers took on some very commendable mission projects. Elev-

en teens formed an Alpha Group, a discipleship adventure in servant-leadership, and committed themselves to the Biblical concept of servanthood through daily Bible study and taking on total responsibility for the needs of the campers. They also rolled several tons of logs up hills and then split enough to yield 32 cords of wood that was sold to support Akita's Counselors-In-Training program. In August, a group of youthful veterans of previous Mountain T.O.P. experiences set out to design a service and fun-at-Akita camp that would help some of the folks in the Akita neighborhood who could use the ministry of service our kids offered. During the Good Neighbor Camp nine FCC young people and five adults worked with the pastor and youth from Ebenezer United Methodist Church near Logan to scrape and paint the outside of the little white church that has greeted generations of Akita-goers on their way to camp. At the conclusion of the project Dick Flynn said, "I'm really excited about this camp becoming a regular part of our program - reaching out in friendship to our Akita neighbors. Any young person ready for a real challenge in building faith and a richer awareness of the church's mission should consider attending the Good Neighbor Camp."

Camp Akita's 46 year history was recounted in a summer 1995 issue of *Upper Arlington This Week*. An interview with John Ross, Director of High School Ministries, revealed the recent growth in attendance. "Since 1983, we've realized an annual increase of 20 percent growth a year. In '83 there were 153 primary campers; in 1994, there were 1,050," he said. "It's important in everything that we do at Camp Akita to meet the young people where they are... to help them take their next step of faith. They have an opportunity to build a relationship with someone they know cares about them." Campers enjoy athletic fields, hiking, a challenge course, a climbing wall, a basketball court as well as swimming and canoeing in the lake. An average day is balanced between activities and time for reflection.

A portion of the funds raised in the 1995 Creating Spiritual Space capital campaign were designated for the camp, but as the time approached to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Akita, it became very apparent that major improvements were required. As described by Dick Wing, "We had loved it to death and it needed to be recreated." Even as plans were being formulated to stage a magnificent celebration of Camp Akita's golden anni-



versary, an ambitious campaign, "Akita recreation" was launched with a goal of 3.5 million dollars. Dick Wing and Jody Phillips, daughter of John Galbreath, were designated as honorary co-chairs with Dick Vesper named as general chairman. Rev. John Ross was promoted to Minister of Education and Camp Akita in April 1999, and was then selected as campaign director.

Evaluation of current camp facilities revealed the necessity of expanding and renovating the dining hall, constructing a new lodge, and building sixteen brand new hillside cabins. The re creation of Camp Akita was driven by a desire to offer the finest facilities possible while maintaining the rustic atmosphere of Akita. The plans for new facilities would bring a level of user-friendliness and accessibility unmatched in the history of the camp.

The campaign was scheduled to conclude on Sunday, May 23, 1999, when the fiftieth anniversary of Camp Akita would be celebrated when the congregation gathered in the field near Burkie's cabin. A huge tent was set up at Meadow in the Glen for the worship service. This was the first time that the congregation had worshipped together at Akita. It would be fifty years and one day after the original dedication. The Historical Committee contacted former counselors and staff members and collected their stories, poetry and pictures for display in Brownlee Hall and the Akita lodge. Bus transportation was arranged from both north and south campuses of the church, but scores of cars made the trip as well.

It was announced that the campaign had been a great success with pledges of 3.6 million to date and deferred gifts of \$950,000 for endowment. The June 6, issue of *firstnews* reported, "The Hocking Hills were alive with music, worship and fellowship as 1,200 people gathered to celebrate Camp Akita's 50th Anniversary and planned rejuvenation of the camp. Every age group from each campus of the church was represented. From the perfect weather, complimentary coffee and rolls when arriving, a wonderful service filled with inspirational music and messages, and delicious lunch, to the tours and walks through the camp, the day was one that will be remembered by all for many years to come." Many former counselors and campers enjoyed reconnecting and sharing memories and current news.

The Construction Committee co-chairmen Bob Prior and Bob Hill, plus architect Ray Harpham and a few committee members took part in the ground breaking on September 9, 1999. In less than a month they reported that construction bids were far higher than had been anticipated. Perhaps they might need to delay expansion of the dining hall. However, by November the Governing Board was able to approve funding for all three building projects because several church members had made commitments so that the entire project could move forward.

The initial work undertaken was reworking grades and contours in order to create a heightened sense of arrival and to connect visitors immediately with a view of the natural setting. Removal of underbrush and some of the trees below the lodge allowed an unobstructed view of the lake as it had been 50 years earlier. By year's end all major projects were on schedule and on budget for completion by the beginning of the 2000 camping season. One enterprising group collected wood from the old lodge and cabins and fashioned commemorative picture frames. The old Akita logo was laser-burned onto them before they were offered for sale as unique Christmas gifts.

The new cabins are designed for eight campers and two counselors with a gathering area in the center with floor to ceiling screened openings. A network of landscaped steps descends gradually down the hillside to the lake. The entire back wall of the dining hall was removed to make way for new construction so that the expanded room can seat 200 campers at round tables. The new lodge accommodates 96 people in four sleeping areas. Each area includes six semi-private rooms for four, a lounge and bathrooms with four showers, six sinks and five toilets. The main room boasts a large fireplace and sound system and can seat 150. A broad deck filled with rocking chairs stretches across the lake side of the lodge. The Akita Café, camp store and infirmary are located on the lower level with access to the hillside patio.

When the staff and counselors arrived on June 6th for staff training, no food, water or restrooms were available. It did not seem possible that camp could open the following week. Against all odds and just three days before opening day, three mandatory inspections were passed. When the kitchen was completed a week later, it also passed with flying colors. Safety fencing was put up around the con-



struction area, and the staff arranged for catered food for the first four days. High School Camp #1 with 245 campers and staff opened on time June 11, shattering all records for the number of campers in one session and marking the beginning of the first summer in a recreated Akita. The sight of the new Akita was a shock to many long-time campers, but by the end of the week they were beginning to recognize that the Akita spirit was still alive and well.

At the August 2000 Governing Board meeting a report indicated the total estimated cost of the construction to be \$4,455,000 vs. the original projection of \$4,323,000. Most of the variance was attributed to unforeseen and unbudgeted expenditures related to the dining hall renovation. In the *firstnews* of October 15, Rev. John Ross recounted the selfless work done by his camp staff in maintaining a fire watch throughout the summer. New building codes required an automated fire alarm system linked to the phone service. However, because the lodge was incomplete when camp opened, there was no system, so we were not supposed to open. At the suggestion of architect, Ray Harpham, a fire watch was set up. After working all day, staff members volunteered to stay awake each night in two hour shifts and maintain a watch for fires. This was supposed to last only 10 to 14 days, but in reality continued until the very last camp session. Much gratitude was also owed to members of the Akita's permanent staff, Bill McComb, interim property manager, and Kenny Roley, maintenance supervisor who played such a significant role during the renovation process and initial camping season.

After the first camping season and amidst the splendor of brilliant leaves glinting in the fall sunshine, around two hundred people gathered in front of the lodge on Sunday, October 22, to witness the rededication of Akita. Jody Phillips cut the ribbon across the entrance to the lodge with the help of Dick Vesper and John Ross. Dick Wing prayed, "God, we have been silent in this place and have listened to the voices of the day and night and have been blessed. Help us to seek silence in this place now in a very noisy world. We have come to this place to be still and have been encouraged. Help us to have the courage to be still before acting in this hectic world. We have come to this place and have sought to know ourselves. After our exploring we have concluded that whoever we are, we are yours. Help us never to forget that. We have come to this place seeking to find you, and you turned

the tables on us and you found us. Help us to be open to your next surprise. We now rededicate the new Camp Akita to necessary silence, to the power of silence, to the freedom in knowing and being known, to allowing ourselves to be found by the tasks you need done in our time and in your time. For what has been, we thank you. For where we stand right now, we praise you. For where you will lead, we say YES! Amen."

Recent additions to the schedule of activities available at Akita include mountain biking, experiencing the high ropes adventure complex, playing basketball or Frisbee golf, paintball, or dancing to music bouncing off the hillside during Prime Time activities. On the other hand there are still quiet opportunities to talk with one of the college counselors, soak in the serenity of Vesper Hill, or enjoy the peace of gliding silently across the lake in a canoe.

In 2003 Jason Barger succeeded John Ross as Director of High School Ministry after serving as John's assistant and as head counselor and staff director at Akita. The mission statement adopted in 2004 states "Camp Akita exists to be the greatest summer camp experience for youth that communicates God's love for all people. Our focus and implementation of that statement become realized by...the compassion we share with campers and staff as modeled by Christ, the value we place on celebrating and growing with God, the ability to laugh and play together, the desire to sit with those in need, and the authenticity with which we live our lives back home. To help guide us along the path of this mission, we look to these five goals: safety, fun, message, affirmation and community, with the final challenge for the full camp community to shine in the world outside of the Akita gates." Under Jason's leadership the campers and staff continued the practice of ministering to the neighbors near camp, sometimes delivering food packages. In a paper prepared for Georgetown University, Jason described summers at Akita as an innovative environment for kids of all ages to have fun, deepen friendships or build new ones, reflect on the blessings and opportunities of life and celebrate the loving and compassionate people that we were created to be.

Currently Ryan Brownfield is serving as the Director of Camp Akita and Youth Missions. In summer 2008 Akita is robust and thriving, with anticipated



attendance of more than 1,550 during this camping season

The kids tend to think of Akita as their camp, but it's not. It belongs to all of us, young or old, or in between . . . anyone who loves it. What they may not realize is that their parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles have had the same sort of wonderful and inspiring "Akita moments" that they may have experienced this past summer. Family camps as well as men's and women's retreats have offered opportunities for the "big kids" to pray and play and search for that special experience of God's presence that is to be found at Akita. For forty years Sally Pape organized and planned the semi-annual women's retreats, and Lee Solis was in charge of retreats for the men. In gratitude for that leadership the deck by the lake was built in honor of Lee Solis, and the women collected money to build a deck for Sally near the dining hall for her thirtieth anniversary as retreat planner.

Wise Akita leaders who have gone before us have said, "At camp there is not so much talk about God as there is an experience of His presence; there is

not so much discussion of religion as there is a vital knowledge of its meaning. Akita rubs off, gets inside of, sticks in, penetrates and becomes a part of you. Words are symbols, but experience is concrete. Akita is experienced. Something is there, what is it? Only you will know by searching. No one can do the searching for you, you must do it. You alone must meet God."

Those who have experienced the spirit of Akita are drawn back to it again and again. The grandchildren and even great-grandchildren of the first campers in 1949 now enjoy the beauty and wonder of that special outpost of the church where everyone is a searcher. Akita – a place to seek refreshment and renewal for the soul – to find inspiration and closer communion with God – to see Him revealed in nature and in others. The lake, Vesper Hill, Green Cathedral, Bald Eagle, Lonesome Pine, Outpost, Rock Stalls, all those favorite secret spots are hallowed ground - hallowed by the spirit of God as it touches the hearts of boys and girls, men and women, who have joined together in fellowship at Akita for sixty years. Akita – our precious heritage to preserve and pass on to future generations.



## FIRST COMMUNITY CHURCH AND THE MEDIA

### RADIO

Our church has experienced a long and colorful history in broadcasting and publishing. WBAV, the first radio station in Columbus, went on the air in April 1921. Rev. Oliver Weist immediately recognized the importance of radio as it took Columbus by storm. By the mid-1920's, he was inviting interested members of the community who did not own radio sets to gather in the Guild Room to listen to religious broadcasts on Sunday evenings over the church's radio. These were often followed by waffle suppers.

Our involvement in broadcasting dates back to 1935. On November 10, Dr. Burkhart was the first speaker in a series of programs by recognized youth leaders and young people over WBNS, sponsored by the State Youth Council of the Ohio Council of Religious Education. On December 29, he was in charge of that week's morning devotional program on WBNS. That same year Dr. Burkhart began a 15-minute daily radio meditation program on WBNS called "The Lighted Window." An article in the May 9, 1941, *Youth Edit* newspaper described a luncheon and fellowship of "Lighted Window" listeners with expressions of tribute as to how much the program had meant to them and how it had helped in times of trouble. One woman had made a crocheted tablecloth, which she had worked on for two years only during the program. Each square stood for one of the broadcasts and the circles in it represented the "Lighted Window," with the threads joining the blocks portraying the airwaves carrying the message to the radio audience. In 1947 "The Lighted Window" was broadcast by WHKC. The January 4, 1949, issue of *Community News* noted that this program was sponsored a month at a time, by various men of the church: Wayne Brown and Big Bear Stores; Howard Hawk, Richard Argo and Argo Lehne Co.; and Harlan Davis and Scioto Savings and Loan. In January 1950 it moved to WRFD where it aired six days a week.

First Community was featured on the April 20, 1947, program "Church of the Air," a weekly CBS coast-to-coast network broadcast. A 16-voice mixed chorus from the Chancel Choir sang an anthem and hymns and Dr. Burkhart gave the sermon.

Our young people participated in our radio ventures also. A 1941 *Youth Edit* article told of a radio

program written and presented by the young people over WBNS. This was a question and answer format with Dr. Burkhart discussing the concerns of youth. In 1947 a group of First Community Church campers wrote and broadcast a weeklong series of meditation programs over WOSU. This was an outgrowth of their experience at camp and was done under the direction of Richard Bell, who was in charge of communications at the church and also was affiliated with WOSU radio.

Beginning November 7, 1948, a Sunday morning service of worship was broadcast from 12:30-1:00 p.m. on WRFD. Dr. Burkhart gave a weekly meditation and the Chancel Choir with Lowell Riley at the organ provided the music. A new station in town, WVKO-FM, established a policy to broadcast services from a different church each month and selected First Community's 11:00 service to begin this program as they commenced operations in December 1948.

Regular appearances on WBNS's daily radio show, "Open Mike," were scheduled for our ministers beginning in early December 1962. This program sought to answer questions phoned in by listeners after a guest speaker outlined his thinking on a subject of wide general interest. On the Tuesday afternoons that First Community ministers were on the show, the subject matter took a counseling approach to questions of a personal nature. Dr. Otis Maxfield, Rev. Don Smith and Rev. Bob Bles took part in this program.

A unique radio series, conceived by laymen from several Columbus churches, was launched in October 1957. Dr. Floyd Faust of Broad Street Christian Church, Dr. Boynton Merrill of First Congregational Church, Rev. Walter Sillen of First Baptist Church and Dr. Roy Burkhart of First Community Church created a series of addresses on the life of Jesus. "The Cradle of Christianity" covered the ancestry, heritage, boyhood and adult life of Jesus, and culminated in a discussion of His teachings and their influence on modern society. All music for this program featured the First Community Church Chancel Choir on weekly broadcasts over WBNS. It was anticipated that the program would be carried by at least twenty stations across the nation.

WRFD initiated live broadcasts of the 11:00 service from our sanctuary on March 3, 1963. WRFD was a 5,000-watt station owned by People's Broadcasting Corporation, a subsidiary of Nationwide Insurance



Co., with a broadcast range covering 72 of Ohio's 88 counties; some of Indiana, Michigan and Kentucky; and occasionally it could even be heard in Canada. The president of this station was Herbert Evans, a member of First Community Church. The worship service in its entirety was broadcast free of charge. An article in the *First Community Church NEWS* dated March 3, 1953, stated, "Both the station management and the FCC Governing Board are agreed in the purpose of the broadcast – an uninterrupted radio broadcast of a complete service for those who are otherwise unable to participate in a worship service." A letter from Mr. Evans commented on the dignity of the service and remarked that many of the people who listened had already attended the earlier service.

A new dimension to this programming was added on April 12, 1964, with "Talk Back," a fifteen-minute question and answer period at 12:15, which was broadcast from Lowell Riley's office immediately following the service. The format of this program called for questions from members of the congregation who assembled in the choir room, questions sent in previously by mail, and questions that were phoned in via the switchboard to Lowell's telephone. These questions usually pertained to the sermon and were fielded by Dr. Maxfield or the preacher of the day. The sermon was the backdrop against which the talkback format was used. It was felt that this program, in a reverse way, helped to build a radio audience for the preceding hour of worship. The free one and a quarter hour of airtime from First Community Church continued until October 1971 when WRFD altered its profile of programming.

After termination of the live worship broadcast via WRFD, arrangements were made with WVKO-FM. These broadcasts began on October 27, 1972, following a year's research and study of alternatives. Resumption of broadcasting the service was made possible by an anonymous gift of \$3,640. Other gifts and donations also helped to support this air ministry. Due to the shortfall in operating pledges to fund the church budget in 1975, the broadcasts were terminated at the end of December 1974. However, due to the great demand for this ministry to shut-ins and others, the Trading Post voted to fund the program with a grant of \$3,740 in January 1975. Their support continued until the station changed format and discontinued our broadcast in 1982. For many years the Trading Post continued to fund this live broadcast over WBBY-FM.

Another popular and inspirational program was broadcast early on Sunday mornings for a number of years. Ministers and other staff members taped meditations and devotional messages in Lowell Riley's office, then Lowell added appropriate organ music to the sound track. These programs were aired on WTVN radio.

During the tenure of Dr. Arthur Teikmanis, we were involved in a program on WBNS that presented First Community Church on Don Pendel's program. This opened with material about the church in general as background for Rev. Jim Bidle's running commentary on the history, size, scope and philosophy of First Community Church. Then various ministers presented illustration of youth work, counseling, and the ministry of First Community Village.

In late 1975 we became a part of the "Columbus Church Hour," WRFD's multi-denominational church service program. Live broadcasts of the worship service offered messages by four of the most highly recognized ministers in Columbus: Dr. Harold Englund of First Community Church, and ministers from North Broadway Methodist, Broad Street Presbyterian and First Congregational churches. This program was cancelled after a year and a half due to the death of the person who funded it. Until the summer of 2008, First Community Village sponsored a pre-recorded broadcast of the 11:00 service on WMNI-920 radio on the following Sunday.

The contributions of First Community Church through the medium of radio have been many. For more than seventy years the spiritual life of the community has been enriched through programs offering opportunities for worship, inspiration, counseling, music and meditation.

## TELEVISION

Less than five years after television reached the market, First Community Church began its involvement in this new medium. The January 8, 1950 issue of *Community News* noted that Dr. Burkhart could be seen that afternoon at 5:30 as he conducted his third program on WBNS-TV. "The Family and You" was the name of the program planned by Dr. Burkhart, the church and members of the WBNS staff. It dealt with marriage and the fam-



ily and was scheduled to continue for an indefinite period of time.

When the church placed its closed circuit television equipment into operation on September 15, 1957, we became the only church in the state of Ohio with this capacity. Even with three Sunday services, worshippers arriving late usually had to find overflow seating in Brownlee Hall. At that time a stage occupied the space that is now Gallery Court, blocking view of the chancel. Four 24" screens were installed in Brownlee Hall, which enabled every viewer to be within 5 feet of a monitor on which the chancel area, including the pulpit and choir loft, was visible. Initial experiments a few months earlier had indicated the necessity for installing a new lighting system in the sanctuary for adequate transmission. Lowell Riley recalled that the picture was not so good, but the stereo speakers provided great sound. A portable camera, which weighed only ten pounds, was mounted on a tripod located in the balcony. It could also be operated from a spot next to Zell Chapel. Picture transmission without auxiliary equipment was limited to approximately 2,000 feet, but plans included the possibility of adding monitors in the Burkhardt Chapel, Weist Room, and choir room. Universal Service installed the system and also supplied an operator. Lay members of the church were to be trained in equipment operation.

WBNS-TV launched a new venture in television on Sunday, January 4, 1959. "Talk Back" was a fresh approach to religious television designed to bring the viewer into encounter with typical problems in everyday life. A different problem was presented each Sunday for 13 weeks in a 15-minute dramatization followed by a 15-minute panel discussion of the significance of and solution to the situation by local leaders and families. A synopsis of the story to be dramatized the following week was printed in *Community News* with questions to stimulate further consideration. Viewers were then encouraged to discuss the program as families or groups to find personal solutions to the dramatized problems. The Rev. Charles Harris of First Community Church was in charge.

In June 1958 Dr. Burkhardt provided leadership in communications to an Atlanta conference of ministers that was sponsored by the Protestant Television and Radio Center. Following his return to Columbus, at the request of WLW-TV, he began a weekly program series on June 29, entitled "There Is An

Answer to Your Question." Later the name of the program was shortened to "There's An Answer."

For a week in September 1958 Dr. Otis Maxfield was featured on a daily WLW telecast sponsored by the Columbus Area Council of Churches. Counseling was an integral part of the philosophy of First Community Church during the Burkhardt and Maxfield eras, and this fact was reflected in the television programs on which our ministers appeared. A half hour weekly program, "This Above All," originated on November 7, 1960, and was presented every Monday afternoon at 3:00. It was co-sponsored by our church and WBNS-TV. Program format consisted of a few minutes of "religion in the news," an interview with someone currently in the limelight in the field of religion, presentation of a specific personality problem by Dr. Maxfield and Dr. Walter Hofman through drama or other means, and a closing summary by Dr. Maxfield. This program aired for at least two years as a time change was noted in a February 1962 issue of *First Community Church News* when it moved to an 11:00 a.m. time slot on Thursdays.

"House Divided," a program that Dr. Maxfield shared with Rabbi Jerome Folkman, debuted on September 11, 1962, on WBNS-TV. This program at 7:30 Tuesday evenings was designed to give insights to dealing with personal and family problems. The press labeled it, "the best program of its kind ever produced locally." Many people came to First Community Church because of seeing this program, and the church was pressed to enlarge its staff of counselors in order to meet the need for counseling people outside of the church family.

Another television program was added on October 1, 1962, at 8:30 Monday nights on WOSU-TV. Dr. Maxfield hosted a public affairs program created in the manner of "CBS Reports," Church member Winston Hill produced the show. Titled, "Insight", this program included filmed interviews, news film and direct interviews to give added dimension to current social questions. Some of the topics addressed were aging, the question of sterilization, the U.S. and U.N. and an inquiry into the realities of civil defense. By the end of 1962, in addition to these two telecasts, Youth Minister Rev. Gabe Campbell could be seen on Sunday mornings at 9:30 on Channel 4's "About Religion" program. While a staff member of First Community Church's Pastoral Counseling Center, Rev. Alvin Zunkel participated in a series of shows produced by WBNS-



TV from September to December 1970 called "The Counselor." Scripts were written by the director and featured three counselors from the Columbus area. The format was to dramatize a personal, marital or family problem and then have the actors appear with the counselor to "solve" the problem. Dr. Nancy Clatworthy of the O.S.U. faculty and Rabbi Folkman appeared on the program. Al did the pilot and at least five episodes as the Protestant representative. He recalled that the program was videotaped in a live, one-shot approach with no rehearsals and no retakes. It was fun and fairly well received, but was replaced by football programming.

During these years the church maintained a Communications Department that published the First Community Church NEWS and directed all programming. Glenn Campbell was Communications Director and was assisted by a lay Communications Committee. In 1961, one of the duties outlined for the Director was to improve communications of the church through news, radio and television. This department functioned until 1974 when a number of staff positions, including that of Communications Director Roger Lambert, were eliminated due to fiscal problems and under-subscription of the church budget.

Our Christmas Eve worship service was televised by QUBE in 1980 and the following year it was pre-recorded during a choir rehearsal and aired over WOSU-TV on Christmas Eve.

When Dr. Barry Johnson became Senior Minister, he brought his experience and avid interest in television to First Community Church. On May 23, 1983, the Governing Board recommended formation of a task force, composed of members of the Board, staff and congregation, to investigate the possibility of a TV ministry at our church. After intensive study by this group, the concept of a media ministry received Governing Board approval in August. In October the Governing Board approved a funding campaign to cover the anticipated costs of initiating a television ministry for First Community Church. Projected plans would enable the church to purchase cameras and equipment for filming and editing, to make necessary modifications in the sanctuary, and to build a control room.

Arrangements were made through First Community Church member, Gene D'Angelo, for WBNS-TV to videotape the worship services on December 11. The editing facilities of the station were used to

develop a 30-minute tape, which Channel 10 telecast on Christmas Eve. This tape also served as a model in demonstrating the nature of the planned television project to the congregation.

Media Director Randall Rocke joined the First Community Church Program Staff on October 1, 1984, at the same time that our equipment started arriving. By late November the initial group of volunteers began training as production technicians.

"First Edition" made its debut on WTTE-TV, Channel 28, on Sunday, April 14, 1985. Beginning on September 29, 1985, the program was carried on WBNS-TV at 8:30 Sunday mornings. Basic format for the weekly telecast included the previous week's edited sermon and an anthem by the choir. In addition to remarks by Dr. Johnson, a mission message or information about a facet of the church program was included.

As this latest venture into the world of television unfolded, many additional projects became possible. Concerts, weddings and other special events have been videotaped. Our media ministry became a model for other churches. As Dr. Johnson stated in a position paper presented to the United Church of Christ in 1984, "Basic to the involvement of the mainline church in creative television ministries is the recognition that its message needs to be heard. Television . . . is the dominant influence on our culture and the prime molder of our value systems. It is the key to the renewal of the mainline church. Electronic communication is here to stay."

Many significant projects have been undertaken through our media ministry. They include ten programs with the United Church of Christ on church growth; live telecast of the Woody Hayes memorial service, portions of which were seen and heard around the world; two documentaries about the work of Casa Materna, an orphanage in Naples, Italy, that has been visited and supported by several First Community members, infomercials on the new programming at Camp Akita; 22 years of Christmas Eve special broadcasts; two documentaries on the work of the Onawales Deep Griha program in Pune, India, that has long been supported by our church; a documentary of the youth department's 1997 Mexico Mission trip; and 20 years of Spiritual Searcher videos which are in the process of being edited and made available.



In 2009 "First Edition" is currently being broadcast over WSYX-TV, and includes introductory remarks by Dr. Wing, a choir anthem and the previous week's sermon. Total average Sunday viewership is estimated to be 80,000 to 100,000 persons in three states: central Ohio, northern Kentucky, and western West Virginia. This is an estimate, but Nielsen is fairly confident and considers their projections to be conservative. One Christmas Eve broadcast was measured at 47,000 households. An average of 100,000 viewers watch the Christmas Eve broadcast each year.

Funding for the media ministry comes from the congregation, contributions from the Telemission Team, sponsors and special gifts. An average production crew includes eight persons: six volunteers and two professionals. Post-production is usually performed by the director.

The Mission through Media department founded the church's Web ministry, when the website was established in 1996. This was done to provide an access point for our video and audio programs to be seen outside of this market by "streaming" our productions online. Now the internet is a basic tool of ministry for most churches, and that early foray allowed First Community Church to establish a strong foothold. The Media Department also established the first websites for Camp Akita and Deep Griha. Live video Webcasting was established as a weekly venue for the 11:00 a.m. worship service in 2007. It is possible to watch this service live on our Web site, [www.Fcchurch.com](http://www.Fcchurch.com). A Webcast can now be created at any time and can be used for weddings and lectures.

## COMMUNITY BOOKS

On April 13, 1945, Community Books, Inc. was formed by the trustees of the church as a corporation, not for profit, under the General Corporation Act of Ohio through a special gift of \$500 from Roy Burkhart. In the first year of its existence, earnings were \$362 and donations of \$100 were received to help pay for literature sent to those in the services. During the war years the church stayed in close touch with our men and women in the armed forces and Red Cross. Newsletters, titled "Beyond the Gates," were edited by Bill Guthrie and mailed to those away from the church. They contained letters from Burkie and the staff, news about what was going on at the church, jokes, articles of interest

and excerpts from letters received by Burkie from recipients of the newsletter. By November 1944, there were 523 names on the mailing list. Copies of the sermons were also sent. This was a unique way of keeping them in touch with the church and with each other.

Community Books published and distributed the books, pamphlets, worship guides and brochures that were developed by the church staff. By 1949 profits exceeded \$2,122. In 1965 business ran just under \$10,000. Book sales for 1978 totaled \$10,730. Community Books tried to give at least \$1,000 each year to the church.

From its inception, Helen Pickett served as accountant, sales correspondent and book-wrapper for the publishing arm of the church. She kept the records and information on Community Books and also ordered all books used by the ministers. Helen had joined the staff in 1945 as Church Secretary. As well as handling the business for Community Books, her job grew to include all church scheduling and later coordinating weddings. Over the years until her retirement as wedding coordinator in 1964, she was the fairy godmother to 1,625 brides.

In her capacity as chief salesman for Community Books, Helen stayed alert to possibilities for promoting our book titles. When articles and books focused national attention on funeral practices in 1964, she reminded the many ministers on her mailing list that *If It Were Not So* was an excellent resource for persons dealing with bereavement. Almost \$700 was earned from that mailing alone. Much of the success of Community Books was attributed to Helen's diligence in marketing.

For many years the church made printed sermons available at no charge to students, shut-ins and persons in military service. In 1964 sermon subscriptions by members and friends produced \$1,200 of income to Community Books. The following year, approximately 25,000 copies of sermons were mailed, with 720 of those requests coming from the radio audience. Volunteers from First Community Village handled the mailing operations for the subscription list, and Grace Lane single-handedly took care of mailing to non-subscribers. When Helen Pickett retired after 21 years on the staff, Helen Wilson briefly took charge of Community Books before turning the job over to Grace Lane. In her 1978 annual report, Grace noted that sermons



were mailed to 35 states, five Canadian provinces, and three foreign countries. Community Books also handled the 559 non-member subscriptions to the *First Community Church NEWS*.

Operation of the "First Day Book Center" began during coffee hour following Sunday worship on November 27, 1978, with an expanded selection of reading materials that included Bibles, adult and children's books, and gift books. The Christian Education Council took the initiative in organizing and manning this new enterprise that was designed to provide easy access to good reading for all members of the congregation.

Beverly Telfer succeeded Grace Lane after her retirement in December 1982, and, in turn, Pat Furber took over the helm of Community Books in December 1984 when Bev moved away from Columbus. The most recent publishing effort of Community Books was the ninth printing in June 1986 of Roy Burkhardt's book, *If It Were Not So*. Following Pat Furber's death, our bookstore was renamed in her memory, and since 2007 has been operated by Ann Eliot-Naille, who has greatly expanded the inventory to include gift items and choir recordings as well as books. Ann has also increased the amount of time the bookstore is open.



## VAUD-VILLITIES

The two assignments given to Lowell Riley when he was hired by First Community Church in May 1941 were to organize a youth choir that would sing for the new early service on Sunday morning, and to form a men's chorus. No one could have predicted that the men's chorus Riley was asked to organize would evolve into Vaud-Villities, the oldest and largest musical variety show in the nation, which staged its 67th annual production in 2009.

As Lowell recounted the story, his chorus had learned a lot of music and wanted an opportunity to perform in public. The 27 singers decided on a minstrel format for their show at Upper Arlington High School on March 12 and 13, 1943. In addition to the chorus, there were two chorus lines of dancers plus a handful of variety acts including a tap dancer named Wally Phillips. Lowell asked Bob Murphy to help him provide piano accompaniment for the song and dance numbers. The show was deemed an immediate success worthy of repeating, so in 1944 the chorus was enlarged and renamed the Tri-Village Men's Glee Club and the girls of the Cloister Choir were added to the cast. In addition to the excitement of wearing stage makeup and frilly formal gowns during their section of the show, the girls took part in specialty acts and chorus lines.

Lowell and Bob moved their twin piano numbers on stage, and a local show business phenomenon was born that became a Tri-Village tradition that just kept growing and becoming more popular every year. Local musicians in the community volunteered to provide orchestral accompaniment at no charge for the show. In fact some even had to pay their union dues in order to play for free.

The show was under the auspices of the First Community Church Music Department, and proceeds purchased many items that were beyond the church budget: choir robes, the carillon, recorders and sound equipment, the Whitechapel hand bells and the choir chimes. Most of the Chancel Choir members were also involved in Vaud-Villities during the years that Lowell served as Choir Director. Several ministers from the church staff were involved in the show. Dick Norberg and Mike Vance were MC's, and Dick Stein, Howard Huntzicker and Harold Englund sang in the Men's Glee Club. Harold's wife, Enid, was a member of the Women's Glee Club. Even Roy Burkhart appeared in a comedy sketch in the late 1940's that brought the

house down because it was such a surprise to see him onstage.

When the minstrel format was dropped and the show expanded into a variety show featuring various musical and comedy acts along with the choral music of both men's and women's glee clubs, the name was changed to Vaud-Villities. Initially the show flourished as an annual Tri-Village tradition, but as the size of the cast grew, so did the audience. More performances were added, but it became impossible to meet the demand for tickets. It was apparent that Vaud-Villities had outgrown the high school facilities and needed to find a larger venue. In 1961 after giving three performances at the school, the show moved to Veterans Memorial Auditorium for a performance the following weekend, and that has been "home" ever since.

With a cast, crew and staff of around 300 members from all over central Ohio, Vaud-Villities occupies a unique niche in the cultural life of the metropolitan Columbus area. Each member contributes time and talent to handle all the details of set construction, costuming, staging and promotion. Also Vaud-Villities is the only show designed to utilize the entire 70-foot stage at Veterans Memorial. The Vaud-Villities cast is a huge family with many siblings, couples and two-generation families participating. There have even been a few three-generation families including that of Lowell and Beth Riley, their children and spouses, and most of their grandchildren.

What began in 1962 as an invitation for children and adults with disabilities to attend a final dress rehearsal evolved into Community Benefit Night, a free performance for a very special audience designated by social and community service agencies. Senior Citizen Night was added in 1977, the same year that Vaud-Villities was awarded the George Washington Honor Medal by Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge for the Bicentennial Show, "'76 Celebration USA."

Beginning in 1972, Vaud-Villities was no longer part of First Community Church's music department, but continued to operate under the umbrella of the church with its own separate Board of Trustees that reported to the Governing Board of First Community Church. In order to achieve 501(c)(3) status as an independent charitable organization, it became necessary for Vaud-Villities to separate completely from the church in 1985.



Lowell Riley served as musical director of Vaud-Villities for half a century and retired in 1992 after a blockbuster 50th anniversary show with a cast and crew numbering more than 400. For the last time he and Bob Murphy walked onstage to perform their twin piano magic that had captivated Columbus audiences for so many years. When the curtain fell on that performance, approximately half a million people had enjoyed more than 4,000 singers

and dancers performing over 1,300 songs. Lowell had written nearly all of those musical arrangements and had conducted every single performance. What a treasure he left to the Central Ohio community - yet another ministry of music born at First Community Church and nurtured through the years by thousands of people dedicated to the joy of performing and perpetuating his legacy.



## TRI-VILLAGE TRADING POST

The Trading Post story is an example of faith made real, of an idea that far exceeded expectations, of yet another instance where First Community Church initiated a program to serve its neighbors.

Many think of the building located between the main church and Lincoln Road Chapel as an annex, or the place to take their toddlers during church services, or where one can buy or sell used articles or clothing. However, all too few people realize that the Tri-Village Trading Post is truly a mission. Not only does it provide a service for underprivileged people throughout the city, but also it gives very generously to the church.

One evening in 1952 when Roy Burkhart was visiting Richard and Dorothy Argo, he spoke of wanting to add a psychologist to the church staff. Unfortunately, there were no funds in the budget for this purpose. Then with his characteristic wry smile, he asked Dottie whether, as president of the Women's Guild, she thought the Guild might be able to raise the money needed to hire someone.

The thrift shop idea was provided by Louise Freeland who had known of its success elsewhere. In short order the new project of the Women's Guild was underway. An advisory board was recruited to give advice on how to start a business and Dr. H. H. Maynard, a church member and professor of marketing at OSU, agreed to serve as its chairman. Among other board members were Bob Morrison, William Konold, Rev. Edward Rydman, Dorothea Bach, Howard and Louise Freeland, Richard and Dottie Argo. The Governing Board gave permission to use First Avenue House (later demolished to provide more parking space) free of charge if some of their proceeds were turned over to the church.

The first meeting of the Trading Post Board of Directors was held on January 9, 1953. Chairman Louise Freeland outlined the plans recommended by the Advisory Board the previous day for operation of the Tri-Village Trading Post. Mildred Wilcox was elected as secretary-treasurer. A training period for the workers was scheduled for January 22 and 23. As Ways and means Chairman of the Guild, Doris Gerould remembers spending hours on the telephone recruiting volunteers. She also helped Louise and Dottie clean and paint the Church House.

As a community project sponsored by the Women's Guild, the purpose of the Trading Post was, and still is, to provide a central location where good, used articles can be sold at a fair price determined by the owner and where these same articles can be purchased at a reasonable price. Initially, 90% of the price was returned to the consignor while 10% was kept as commission.

Louise Freeland was quoted in the January 11, 1953 *Community News*, "Seldom does a project benefit so many people; the seller, the buyer, the church and the community will all profit from this new venture. The Women's Guild is proud to provide this opportunity for the residents of our community to cooperate for their common good."

All church members and Tri-Village residents were urged to bring their items too good to give away to the Trading Post during the week of January 26 to 31. Merchandise was received in the kitchen, which also served as the office. Workers were kept busy listing, pricing and arranging the array of articles as they arrived. Dottie Argo recalled that Carl Aschinger donated all the display cases. Different rooms of the house held various types of merchandise. Formal gowns were hung from the shower rod in the bathroom.

Opening day for business was Tuesday, February 3, 1953. From 10:00 to 4:30 four days a week, plus Tuesday evenings from 7:00 till 9:00, the Post was open for sales and receiving. Items too large to transport could be listed for sale on the bulletin board. A fresh stock of merchandise was guaranteed, as nothing was kept longer than 30 days before being returned to the owner or reduced to bargain price as Post property.

In response to a request from the chairman of the Children's Hospital Thrift Shop, that articles that had not been sold be given to them, the Trading Post Board of Directors decided at their May meeting to maintain three boxes for charity: the Thrift Shop, Central Community House and Korea. Minutes of that meeting also reported that Ann Hunziker had arranged a great publicity opportunity by having Post merchandise featured on Channel 10's "Fun with Fashion" program.

Although Dr. Maynard willingly offered advice on operating the Trading Post, he had initially been skeptical that they could make any money. Imagine everyone's delight when that goal of turn-



ing \$10,000 in one year was reached in only six months!

By January 1954 the Trading Post had so far exceeded expectations and was growing so rapidly, that its Advisory Board recommended appointing a committee to write by-laws establishing it as a self-governing body. Decisions were made to increase the Post's percentage of sales from 10 to 20% and to donate 30% of net profits to the Organ Fund.

Within the first year 300 men and women had volunteered 13,000 working hours, 1,236 persons had registered articles for sale, approximately \$3,100 had been given to the Guild, \$250 to the church and \$250 to the Organ Fund.

From the very beginning, one-half of all profit went to the Women's Guild while the Trading Post Board of Directors determined how its half would be spent. The first major item purchased with these funds was an automobile. Up to \$1,000 was allocated in February 1954 to buy a car for the use of authorized church and Trading Post personnel on official errands. This Dodge station wagon was still giving faithful service seven years later.

Dr. Burkhardt approached the Guild and Trading Post in December 1957 asking that they assume responsibility for financing \$10,000 in unforeseen expenses not covered when the church budget was adopted the previous May. With the hiring of Otis Maxfield as the new senior minister, funds were needed to cover his moving expenses and to furnish offices for him and a secretary. Other needs included yard work and spring cleaning of the church, seminar expenses, plus obligations to Central Community House and divinity schools.

Once this goal was achieved, the Trading Post Board had the foresight to begin a development fund for future use. By 1956 every corner of the Church House was crammed with merchandise, and check-in operations had been moved to the cottage behind the house. Obviously, it would soon be necessary to expand again. In 1962 plans were made to demolish the cottage and erect a new building more suitable to their needs. Before this project was even off the drawing board, the Trading Post again came to the church's rescue. When plans for five new Sunday School classrooms hit a building code snag, the women suggested adding a second floor to their new structure. They even added \$20,000 to the \$35,000 approved by

the Governing Board for the classrooms, making a total commitment of \$31,000 for the new facility. By early October of 1963 the Trading Post was again open for business, and the high school youth were busily painting and transforming the abandoned Church House into their own Seven Keys Club house.

As a project of the Women's Guild, the Post was initially staffed entirely by members of the various Guild Groups. Each had a Trading Post chairman who scheduled workers from her Group to work on specific days of the week. Today many of the volunteers are not even members of First Community Church, but here they have found a rewarding opportunity to serve their community through this enterprise.

The statistics for this operation are staggering. The March 1962 Financial Statement reported 67,488 items sold for \$60,481 in consignor sales and a net profit of \$13,128 which was divided equally between the Guild and Trading Post. From 1967-1971, \$248,681 was returned to consignors (75% of the purchase price), \$26,196 distributed to the Guild, \$27,106 contributed to the church and \$4,194 paid to the church for occupancy expense and services. Gross sales were \$73,000 in 1971 and \$148,000 by 1984.

The Trading Post will accept almost anything on consignment, but clothing must be clean, in good condition and in style. Receiving hours are 10:00 a.m. till 12:00 noon on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and every Saturday except the first one of the month. Items can also be donated. The basement sales room is open six days a week from 10:00 till 4:00. Merchandise that has been on the floor for 60-90 days is reduced to bargain prices and a 25 cent sale is also held at the end of each season. A discriminating shopper can find all sorts of treasures here from antiques to baby clothes.

For many years the Post funded the live radio broadcast of the 11:00 o'clock worship service at the cost of nearly \$12,000 a year. In addition it annually pledged \$6,600 to the church. After these expenses were met, one half of the profit went to the Women's Guild. Records prior to 1964 are not available, but between 1964 and 1987 the Trading Post made additional special gifts to the church totaling the amazing sum of \$97,664! In addition, items that did not sell were donated to Native Americans and the Volunteers of America. For the



past several years, merchandise that remained after all the markdowns was given to the Kidney Foundation. Post profits have benefited many charities over the years, most recently the Columbus YWCA Family Center and the Rafiki Orphanage in Kenya.

In June 2008 Mary Jean Bradley marked forty years as coordinator of the Trading Post. Add that to her previous ten years as a volunteer, and you have a lady who has dedicated half a century of her life to the Tri-Village Trading Post. She has seen it all, and can tell tales of shivering in cold and drafty First Avenue House or sweltering there in the summertime as they carried merchandise to the upstairs display rooms. She laughs as she talks about ace volunteer, Jane Starkey, who was still working every Friday at age 103! Mary Jean says that Jane can tally up the sales records without using a calculator and never makes a mistake. Perhaps working at the Post is one of the things that has helped to keep Jane young at heart.

The true mission spirit of this unique enterprise is best illustrated through the fast friendships forged among its volunteer workers, and in stories of the people it has served. A family with nine children that was burned out of its home came to the Post to be outfitted with school clothes. An entire Girl Scout troop from an underprivileged area found

uniforms they could not have afforded otherwise. More than one bride has purchased her wedding gown there. Anyone who works at the Trading Post has at least one story to warm your heart.

Sales are promoted every time people have the opportunity to see just what bargains are available at the shop that some workers refer to as "Montaldo's Northwest," alluding to the high quality merchandise that can be purchased for a song. On several occasions style shows featuring fashions from the Trading Post have been the entertainment for Guild luncheons. Transporting Post merchandise to Scioto Country Club for a recent spring bazaar produced brisk sales. Although it requires a great deal of work, Post volunteers have found eager customers when they have conducted sales of holiday decorations and gift items at both North and South Campus during the Christmas season.

Trading Post business has diminished somewhat as other resale shops have sprung up in the Tri-Village area, but many loyal customers do keep returning. The greatest need at the Trading Post is for new volunteers. Many of the faithful workers are way beyond retirement age, and they are hoping that new recruits will find the same sense of camaraderie that they have found by working with this unique mission of the church.







## PASTORAL COUNSELING CENTER

The Pastoral Counseling Center formally came into being on February 1, 1964. However, First Community Church had actually been involved in pastoral counseling from the time Roy Burkhart began his ministry here in 1935. When Dr. Otis Maxfield became Senior Minister in 1958, the emphasis on pastoral counseling continued. Our reputation as the place where people could find help with their interpersonal problems grew. Even more people were drawn to First Community by two of the television programs that highlighted this aspect of our ministry, "This Above All" and "House Divided."

Counseling was being done by nearly everyone on the staff. At first the increased demand was met by hiring part-time psychologists, chaplains and a psychiatrist who worked in the Department of Counseling. Funds for paying these individuals came out of the general ministry budget, as no fees were charged; thus the church was making a sizeable financial commitment. In essence a counseling center was already in place, but there was no structure or organization. From September 1962 through May 1963, 1,476 interviews were held with 1,176 individuals, but only 912 were church members. Many clients were referred by other churches, and a few by lawyers and physicians.

Prior to establishing a fee schedule in 1963, all counseling services were subsidized completely by the church. When the caseload increased, it was necessary to increase the size of the staff, which in turn raised the deficit. Financial support came from a number of sources including the Mission Council, the Trading Post, the Women's Guild, and gifts to First Community Foundation.

A proposal to establish a Pastoral Counseling Center, with Bob Blee as Director, to coordinate counseling and group work was approved by the Governing Board on September 9, 1963. The Institute of Pastoral Care accredited First Community Church as a center for pastoral clinical training that same month. The Center opened its doors on February 1, 1964, complete with counseling staff, consultants and an advisory board. The staff included the chaplain at Columbus State Hospital and a divinity graduate who was a psychiatric intern at Ohio State University, as well as First Community ministers Bob Blee, Robert Guiliano, Otis Maxfield, Arthur Sanders, Don Smith and Terry Smith.

According to Dr. Arthur Sanders, a few ministers who had gone on after seminary to complete extra study and preparation in counseling formed the American Association of Pastoral Counselors in the late 1950's. They were ordained persons who brought a theological perspective to the guidance of human life. One of their aims was to set standards for approving the training programs and to certify continuing education in pastoral counseling. Our accreditation by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors in September 1963 was the first time that approval as a center for pastoral clinical training had been granted to any parish setting in the country. This came about because we had enough certified counselors to staff such a center competently. Dr. Sanders also noted that, at that time, there were no other mental health centers in the city, so First Community Church served a great need in the community.

The Pastoral Counseling Center wished to further professional cooperation of related disciplines and the counseling ministry. Thus, in seeking to attain the broadest possible base of knowledge and expertise for its clients, the Pastoral Counseling Center also utilized the skills of several church members in a consultant capacity. These included Dr. Richard N. Johnson and Dr. W. Hugh Missildine, psychiatrists; Dr. George Borelli, counseling psychologist; and Mrs. Lewis Hess, school psychologist. Additionally, church members representing allied professions served on the Advisory Board.

More than 1,000 hours of counseling with 300 individuals took place in the first seven and a half months. Five group therapy sessions, averaging fifteen members per session, were also conducted weekly. Three of the groups were role-playing and two used classical group therapy. Two-thirds of the clients were non-members who contributed fees to the Center generating an income of \$3,271 for that period. A role-playing group for ministers from all over the state also met weekly.

As described in the proposal for the Pastoral Counseling Center, it was to be "an extension of FCC's expression of total concern for mental health and personality in the full guidance ministry." It would also provide the facilities for a recognized training center to complement the education and experience of both seminary students and parish ministers. Many requests and applications for supervised training in pastoral counseling had been received before the Center opened. Five students were in



training during the summer of 1964. In October Bob Blees and Rev. Don Smith attended the annual conference of the Institute of Pastoral Care to report on our clinical program, seeking permanent accreditation so that ministers could take a full year of clinical training at First Community Church.

Reverend Alvin Zunkel joined the Center on September 1, 1964, as a full-time resident counselor. Ninety percent of his time was spent in the Counseling Center, and for the remaining ten percent he served as a resource person to the program staff of the church. Because the need for counselors was increasing, Al was hired upon completion of his residency with the title of Staff Counselor to distinguish his role from that of a staff minister. Rev. Harry Thomas came as a resident in 1965 and was asked to become a Staff Counselor following his year's residency. Mrs. Kline Roberts, M.S.W., was added to the staff as a psychiatric social worker in 1966.

The Pastoral Counseling Center also played an important role in the Ministers' Seminars that annually attracted 80 to 100 ministers from across the country to First Community Church for training in various aspects of counseling and education. All of the attendees participated in group counseling. An opportunity was also provided for individual counseling sessions where ministers could deal with problems faced in their local parishes.

Because Dr. Otis Maxfield was the only person on the staff accredited as a chaplain supervisor under the Institute of Pastoral Care, it became necessary to discontinue clinical training for pastors when he left in 1966. Due to the heavy counseling load, it was not possible at that time to release Director Robert Blees to finish his 12 weeks of training that would have allowed us to continue this endeavor.

A report prepared by Bob Blees on December 12, 1967, described the philosophy of the Pastoral Counseling Center as maintaining its service function while serving as a training center. The Center's services were available to clergy of all faiths, school counselors and social workers who were invited to a weekly case presentation supervised by the interdisciplinary staff. Beginning in 1963, local ministers who desired training and supervision by the Pastoral Counseling Center staff worked as part-time counselors on a volunteer basis.

Bob Blees was asked to make a training film using role-playing as a method to develop counselors for the armed services. By the end of 1967, twenty-two training sessions had been conducted around the nation for public health and industrial nurses, school counselors, and U.S. Public Health and Forestry Services. The Institute of Christian Counseling in California used skills developed here to establish their training program. Ministers and lay leaders from churches throughout the country participated in our role-playing workshops to become more effective in group therapy and group dynamics.

Rev. Blees resigned in 1969 when the United Church of Christ offered him the opportunity to conduct an experimental ministry in suburban Los Angeles. Rev. Alvin Zunkel was appointed Interim Director of the Pastoral Counseling Center and continued the training program. During 1970 he participated in several episodes of "The Counselor," a television presentation of WBNS that dramatized personal or family problems and their solutions.

Dr. J. Herbert Manton accepted the invitation to serve as Pastoral Counseling Center Director beginning July 15, 1971. His time was divided between the church and private psychiatric practice. For more than a year the Counseling Center was included in the Burkhart Center, an experimental project founded in 1973 as a "Learning Community" concept.

A close relationship developed with Pastoral Counseling Services, Inc. Al Zunkel served on the original study committee for its creation from the Metropolitan Area Church Board. Its counselors were assigned to our Center with Al as training supervisor and Dr. Manton as psychiatric consultant. In 1976 Al Zunkel left First Community to join their staff and Herb Manton moved out of the city. This left Helen Wilson as the only counselor remaining on our staff.

Helen's road to her position as Director of Counseling Ministries is an interesting story. She started as a church volunteer, typing the sermons from tape recordings. Then she became secretary in the Communications Office while working on her masters' degree in counseling. After earning her degree, Helen worked as a trainee in the Counseling Center for 18 months and began work as a full-time counselor in January 1972. Beginning in July 1976, she assumed the position of Director. The purpose of the Pastoral Counseling Center re-



mained unchanged – “to be one resource that attempts to meet the psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of individuals in a Christian setting and to network with other church staff and their programs in a supportive way.”

Gradually over the years, the function of the Pastoral Counseling Center changed until it came full circle and returned to the original 1957 Minister of Counseling concept. This shift in focus came about for a variety of reasons. Dr. Arthur Sanders, one of the original staff ministers doing counseling before the founding of the Counseling Center, makes these observations. “Other senior ministers who followed Dr. Maxfield had no training in the pastoral counseling field, so their interest in this area of church work was not as great. Also the public need for our Center decreased with the formation

of other facilities through tax levies.” We no longer stood alone in the greater Columbus area, but became part of a network of community counseling agencies.

With Helen Wilson’s retirement on December 31, 1987, this chapter of First Community Church history ended. It stands, however, as another of the innovative programs that originated at First Community Church to meet a perceived need in the wider community. Twenty-four years earlier our Counseling Center was the very first center for pastoral clinical training in a parish setting in the entire country that had won approval by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. That accomplishment alone is worth celebrating as one of the achievements in First Community Church’s distinguished history.







## FIRST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

During his ministry at First Community Church, Dr. Roy Burkhart often saw a need and tried to do something about it, according to his long-time secretary, Rosemary Weimer. Generally, whenever he became aware that someone in the congregation required a helping hand, he would simply ask other church members for help. Thus, with Burkhart as the channel, financial assistance was provided for those who had a temporary need.

The Roy A. Burkhart Fund became an informal fund that he personally administered. B. I. Griffith donated a letter to the archives that Dr. Burkhart had written in 1948 to thank him for a contribution. Dr. Burkhart wrote, "It is with great reluctance that I accept this check, as I know that you have had a great many expenses. I have endorsed the check over to First Community Church. It will go into the RAB Fund to feed the hungry of the world."

Gradually the fund expanded as members as well as non-members made gifts to it, often in memory of a loved one. The uses of the fund also expanded as grants and loans were made to help ministers in training or to provide seed money to organizations whose goals were consistent with those of First Community Church.

According to Roy Burkhart's close associates, one of his goals was to launch 400 people into the Christian ministry. He kept a sharp eye on those he met and when he saw a likely candidate he would take him or her aside and announce that he felt that person should become a minister. Many times this was a new idea to the person, but the seed was planted and the Christian ministry is better for it.

The March 21, 1954 issue of *Community News* reported that the Governing Board had adopted the recommendation of the Executive Committee to authorize and create the Roy A. Burkhart Foundation, Inc. to honor his twentieth year of ministry. "Contributions received from church members, couples he had married, persons he had counseled, services of memory, memorials, etc. could be directed to this fund and would be distributed or loaned by action of the Board of Trustees to help young people of the church who would enter divinity school, members in need of financial assistance, Camp Akita scholarships, or other purposes not covered in the budget." The original articles of incorporation, to advance the welfare of mankind

and commemorate the ministry of Roy Burkhart, were dated April 29, 1954.

In 1961 the Foundation became The First Community Foundation, Inc., with the Roy A Burkhart Fund as an unrestricted fund within it. Brochures indicated its purpose was "to broaden and strengthen the endowment and support of First Community Church, its affiliates, and the agencies with which it has been closely allied over the years." Many individual gifts have been made to the Roy Burkhart Fund and gifts are often received from those who wish to memorialize a departed loved one or just continue to honor the spirit of this beloved pastor.

In July 1965 Irene Hirsch gave the church all rights to a \$100,000 life insurance policy. A decision was made that the time was right to reorganize the Foundation with a separate Board of Trustees to administer the funds. Herbert Evans, William Ellis, Jr. and John V. Johnson served as interim trustees. By 1971 the restructuring process was complete and E. E. Barnett chaired the newly organized Board. Total assets at that time were \$213,000.

A donor can make an undesignated gift to First Community Foundation to support the many programs of the Foundation, at the discretion of the Foundation Board of Trustees; or a gift may be designated for a specific church ministry or program, such as Camp Akita or missions or youth activities. The Foundation has 50 different designated funds. The minimum amount required to open a named non-endowment fund, where the entire amount can be used, is \$2,500. A \$10,000 gift will open a named endowment fund where earnings are available for use each year. Donor advised funds established by families or individuals for specific purposes are becoming increasingly popular.

Like most philanthropic organizations, First Community Foundation prefers to have funds, particularly those that will continue beyond the lifetime of the donor, be unrestricted. This avoids the possibility that, at some future date, changing circumstances may render the original purpose of the gift obsolete.

The First Community Foundation funds are intended primarily to support the needs of First Community Church that are not covered by their annual operating budgets or are non-recurring. First Community Foundation funds often provide the seed money for future innovative projects, scholar-



ships for seminary students, or enable a financial response to emergencies. The Foundation operates without discrimination. Trustees acknowledge a priority to fund the needs of the church and its members; however, grants have been made to non-church organizations.

In 1996 the Foundation established the First Community Foundation Heritage Society to recognize and honor those who help to insure a bright future for the church through a current or deferred gift to First Community Foundation. In its first year ninety-five individuals or families became members of the Heritage Society through gifts of cash, insurance policies, annuities, securities, charitable trusts and will bequests. Membership in the Society continues to grow.

In April 1994 the Roy A. Burkhart Memorial Fund had assets of more than \$72,000. They total \$573,832 in December 2008. Among those assisted by the Burkhart Fund are: Beth Kampmeier, John Ross, Terry Barnhill, Daryl Greene, Donna Thomson, Sue Day, Sylvia Draudt, David Carr, Sally Swearingen, Carla Fox, Roberta Campbell, Linda Steelman, Kathy Klamar, Matthew Wooster, Kay Albright and Kate Shaner. Other grants from the Burkhart Fund include those for The Black Ministerial Education Fund, the New Wineskins Center and support for the Sweetheart Luncheon.

Some of the major grants from First Community Foundation in recent years include: the purchase of computers, media equipment and projectors for the church, Akita dam maintenance and repairs, vehicles for the youth department, redevelopment

of the church web site, Faith and American Politics Program support, YWCA homeless shelter, South Campus playground renovation, annual church endowment gift, special church operating budget support, and Gil Rendle consulting services to the church. The largest gifts have been for Camp Akita redevelopment and renovation of the South Campus pipe organ.

Donald Jameson has served as Director of Development for the Foundation since 1992. He has very skillfully focused the attention of church members on the work of First Community Foundation and how they can help the church through supporting the Foundation. He has provided educational mailings, conducted seminars, and brought in speakers on estate and financial planning, cultivated donors, and generally increased awareness of First Community Foundation through his often-humorous columns in *firstnews*. One of Don's dreams for the Foundation has been that it might be able to make an annual endowment to help support the church's yearly operating fund. This finally became possible in 2007.

The following figures illustrate how year-end net assets in the First Community Foundation have increased through the years. The total was \$493,735 in 1978; \$1,529,950 in 1989; \$3,392,488 in 1998; and \$6,049,780 in 2008.

As Don said in his 2007 annual report, "We have a great church. Our world needs churches like ours more than ever. First Community Church requires, and deserves all the support we can give in helping to fulfill its mission."



## CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS THROUGH THE YEARS

The earliest holiday tradition recorded in our archives is White Christmas, first mentioned in 1915. Each year on the Sunday before Christmas the children brought "white gifts for the King." Gifts of food, toys, or clothing were wrapped in white paper and brought to the church for distribution by the Relief Committee to homes that might otherwise not be remembered. Gifts of money were also welcomed to help the needy. In 1917 a special offering was taken to buy sugar so that Mado Shore and her committee could make candy for the soldiers at Camp Sherman. Twenty-one poor families in the community were given food baskets in 1920 and the White Christmas offering of \$360 was sent overseas to help the starving babies of post-war Europe. The 1922 offering was divided between local welfare and the Near East relief work. Sunday School classes took the names of needy families in 1924 and provided them with Christmas dinner and articles of clothing that were most needed. The Christmas offering of 1926 went to the fund supervised by Mrs. John Bricker, Chairman of the Welfare Department of the Women's Guild to provide food and other relief throughout the winter.

In 1915 the old custom of putting a lighted candle in the window on Christmas Eve "to wish its Merry Christmas to passers-by" was revived in the Tri-Villages. The Church Calendar of December 12, 1916 noted, "Nearly every house in the villages had a candle burning last year except where the people forgot, or did not care, or had no candlesticks."

"All who can sing and will" were urged to meet at the church on Christmas Eve in 1917 to go caroling. The community newspaper reminded residents to put a lighted candle in the window then listen for the carolers. It had not been possible the previous year to visit all the streets because of the bad walking, so bobsleds were used. By 1919 the decision was made to sing only for shut-ins, as even two caroling parties riding in hay wagons could not stop at every home where candles burned in the window. In 1921 after caroling to shut-ins, the group boarded the 6:22 streetcar to sing at the YMCA, YWCA and various downtown hotels. A 1924 *Community News* article asked villagers to report to the church secretary the addresses of any homes where there was illness so that none would be missed as the three groups of singers went through the streets spreading their Christmas cheer. Fifty homes were

visited by caroling parties in 1937. Two Grandview Lumber Company trucks provided transportation, and a chili supper was served afterward at the church.

A health ban was imposed on all children's activities in 1918 during the influenza epidemic. This notice appeared in the Church Calendar on December 22. "Since the children of our Sunday School have been denied their annual Christmas service, listen for the trumpeters and sleigh bells. A mounted Christmas tree and Santa Claus assisted by brownies and elves will stop at the homes of children who have been under the ban and deliver a remembrance to them. Since they can't come to us, we are going to them."

It was customary to hold a special Christmas service on the last Sunday before Christmas. The choir and congregation sang traditional carols and the children presented the Christmas message in story and song. For many years the Sunday School gave a \$5.00 prize for the best Christmas story under 1,200 words, which was then read during the service and later, printed in the newspaper. In 1921 they expected so many people to be turned away due to lack of space that two services were scheduled for 4:00 and 7:30.

Beginning in 1924 and continuing for several years, the choir presented the cantata, "Bethlehem" by Maunder. The *Community News* noted that because the baritone soloist could not be present at the evening service, Rev. Weist would sing in his place. The very last service held in the Lincoln Road church was the White Christmas of 1925.

The move to the new church ushered in Christmas Eve services as a new tradition. The pulpit was removed and a stage built out so that 1,500 people could see and hear the 1927 production of the annual cantata from the sanctuary and gymnasium.

A perennial problem was addressed in November 18, 1927 issue of the Church Calendar. "Is the church on your Christmas list? The Board of Trustees is anxious that you wish the church a Merry Christmas. Nothing could be quite so delightful as the church being able to meet all of its financial obligation before the close of the year. This can be done if the members and friends of the church will put the church on their Christmas list and arrange to meet the year's pledge on or before December



31." Ah yes, this is a wish that has continued to echo through the years!

The Christmas Craftshop is a tradition that began under the leadership of Jo Nichols, Minister to Children (and mother of current member, Charlie Nichols). A Christmas workshop was held on December 1, 1953, where teachers in the weekday and church school gave helpful ideas for a family Christmas. Handcraft suggestions were offered and religious books, toys and puzzles were sold. Two years later the event became a two-day affair with classes and exhibitions of Christmas ideas and a family dinner. By 1961 it was a weekend program that included craft instruction where the whole family could join in making decorations following the family dinner. The next day children in grades 1-6 were invited to make their own decorations for a nominal fee. Today the Christmas Craftshop is still a highlight in the lives of our children as they fashion special decorations and gifts during a Saturday in Advent.

Caroling has always been a favorite holiday event. In 1939 the young people from First Community, Trinity Methodist and Boulevard Presbyterian Churches joined forces to carol throughout the community. A new tradition was begun in 1960 when First Community Church invited everyone in Grandview, Marble Cliff and Arlington to participate in a Community Carol Sing at Upper Arlington stadium. The invitation in the *First Community Church NEWS* read, "This is the time when the residents of a community famous for its 'togetherness' will get together, from the youngest to the oldest, not to listen to someone else sing the carols, but to raise their own voices." An open house hosted by the Program Staff followed the Carol Sing the next year and was initiated by Dr. Otis Maxfield's belief that warmth and good fellowship could be heightened by families returning to the church for refreshments. A thousand people were expected to attend this event in 1963 when it was moved to First Community Village with the open house at Hillside House. In more recent years caroling has been carried on by choir members and the young people who sing to shut-ins.

Of special note were the productions of Menotti's opera, "Amahl and the Night Visitors" given from 1965-70. Chet Allen, who portrayed Amahl in the premiere performance on NBC-TV in 1951, played the role of King Melchior in First Community Church's initial production that was directed

by Dr. Roy Bowen and Lowell Riley. Chancel Choir soloists Norman Staiger and Richard Wilson played the other kings and Jevne Kessel Riley portrayed the mother. Rev. Richard Conrad was production coordinator and Nancy Heath designed the costumes that were used for many years in the annual family Christmas services that featured a live nativity scene.

Since the earliest days of our history, the choirs of this church have been outstanding. They have made special contributions to the beauty of concerts and Christmas Eve services. Long time members recall soprano soloist Beatrice Sletto's lyrical rendition of "Lullaby on Christmas Eve" as a highlight of the candlelight service for many years. Lowell Riley's Cloister Choir of 120 high school girls was invited to give a Christmas concert at the Palace Theatre in 1946 and Ron Jenkins' Chancel Choir has performed at the Ohio Theatre. Five choirs under Lowell's direction joined to produce a recording of "Christmas Eve at First Community Church" in 1958. The Chancel Choir, directed by Ron Jenkins, recorded Christmas music in 1976 and Handel's "Messiah" in 1979. The children's choirs have also performed in special concerts and taken part in the worship services. The Chamber Singers, along with members of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, gave their first Christmas concert in 1974 and have performed along with the Chancel Choir and symphony members annually during Advent. The most recent Christmas Concert on December 14, 2008, marked the 35th year for this event. For the past 25 years Ron Jenkins has also conducted the Columbus Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in the annual Holiday Pops Concert at the Ohio Theater in which many of our singers participate. Since 1986 our 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service of lessons and carols has been televised for rebroadcast on television at midnight.

For many years children brought gifts for the Sock and Mitten Tree. From Rev. John Cairns came another touching custom, the Cookie Tree, for which women of the Guilds baked hundreds of cookies to be distributed to the young children from many nurseries and day care centers who came to hear John relate the magic story of Christmas.

Since 1996 Youth Choir Director, Sally Beske, has written and directed original musicals for her cherub, junior and youth choirs and the youth bell choirs. These delightful productions are presented



at North Campus and are eagerly anticipated by the participants and audience as well.

In 2008 volunteers representing Heart to Heart and First Community Church shared the spirit of Christmas by providing food baskets and gifts for 21 families. For the past several years our young people have been involved in another hands-on project where they interact directly with their "adopted families." High school and middle school students have shopped, wrapped and delivered presents to families in need. Each class adopts a family, getting a wish list of specific needs and wants, and then buys the gifts with money they earned from fundraisers and donations, and sometimes from Heart to Heart.

One of the loveliest Christmas customs, that of the Sweetheart Rose, was started by Dr. Roy Burkhart. Originally all the ministers visited women of the church who admitted to being 65 and had asked to be a Sweetheart, taking them a rose as a symbol of goodwill, affection, and Christmas greetings from the church. For many years the Deacons have also assisted in making these calls and some say that, for them, the visits to these special ladies are their most cherished memories of serving as a Deacon.

The Spirit of Christmas and serving others has been nurtured throughout our history and continues to burn brightly as First Community Church prepares to enter its second century.



The first thing I remember is the smell of the old building, the way the light came through the windows, and the sound of the organ. It was a place where time seemed to stand still, and where everyone had their own part to play. I remember the way the people looked at each other, the way they talked, and the way they lived. It was a life that was full of meaning and purpose, and that I will never forget.

During the years that followed, I saw many changes. The old building was replaced by a new one, and the people who lived there were replaced by others. But the spirit of the place remained the same. It was a place where people came to find themselves, and where they found a sense of community and belonging. I remember the way the people looked at each other, the way they talked, and the way they lived. It was a life that was full of meaning and purpose, and that I will never forget.

It is hard to believe now, but I remember the way the people looked at each other, the way they talked, and the way they lived. It was a life that was full of meaning and purpose, and that I will never forget.

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Reflections on our heritage are a way of looking back at the things that have shaped us. It is a way of finding meaning and purpose in our lives, and of understanding the world around us. I remember the way the people looked at each other, the way they talked, and the way they lived. It was a life that was full of meaning and purpose, and that I will never forget.

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## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*"I don't know why they call that the Wicker Room. There's no wicker furniture in there."* That remark, overheard a few years ago, is the impetus for recording this particular portion of our history. Clearly, people visiting First Community Church and many of our members may not know the reason behind the names over the doors. Some also have difficulty in remembering which room is which. Perhaps reviewing the pastorates of our early ministers will solve the confusion.

One major focus of Oliver Weist's ministry was his strong belief that the church should serve the needs of the community. Thus, when the new church was built, it included a large gymnasium separated from the sanctuary by tall, oak folding doors. Here all sorts of community events took place: Men's Brotherhood and congregational dinners, large meetings, basketball games, rehearsals of the community orchestra and men's chorus which Rev. Weist directed, gym classes for the immigrant children, and the weekly movies. During the major renovation completed in 1952, the gym was divided into two sections with the southern portion being raised to stage level while the northern section became a parlor for meetings, receptions and overflow seating for the sanctuary. This room, where so much of his energy was expended, was named for Oliver Weist. During the 1974 renovation, the stage was removed and that area became known as the Garden Gallery or Gallery Court.

In January 1955 the room near the reception office that we now call the Wicker Room was decorated and furnished as an attractive meeting and reception room by the Women's Guild in memory of our third minister, Rufus Wicker. Originally it was the kindergarten classroom, along with the smaller room that is now a rest room, but not too long ago housed Nancy Heath and her Older Persons Ministry. In Nancy's office was the Myrna Cott Smith window. Mrs. Smith was a longtime kindergarten teacher and the window, along with a trust fund to be used for children's ministry, was given to the church by her husband, noted Columbus architect, Howard Dwight Smith. With the latest remodeling, the window was moved to the Wicker Room. The child's head pictured in that window was modeled after their daughter, Priscilla Smith D'Angelo, and in turn that silhouette was copied for one of the windows in Burkhardt Chapel. Now there are plans to copy it once again in the new education wing

at North Campus in honor of Priscilla, a lovely and loving tribute by her husband, Gene D'Angelo.

The 1952 addition built on the southern end of the original building included classrooms, offices, kitchen, parish hall, library and the children's chapel. The Walter Whissen Memorial Library was established by a gift from his widow to honor this charter member who loved books and had been so active in the early life of the church. The parish hall was named for our first minister, Fred Brownlee. Because he was so beloved by young people, the youth groups became known as Brownlee Society in 1926 and bore his name for many years. Upon the retirement of Roy Burkhardt in 1958, the Children's Chapel was renamed Burkhardt Chapel to honor his long ministry.

It is not at all unusual for congregations to honor ministers or members by naming rooms after them. However, our most interesting story deals with the Palmer Room in the back upstairs hallway, which perpetuates the name of Anderson Palmer. Palmer, as everyone called him, was neither clergyman nor member of this church. Yet, he was a very religious man who faithfully ministered to all who came in contact with him. Helen Hively reminisced about Palmer. *"He was everything: a kind, marvelous human being. For whatever was needed, we called on him. He was devoted to this church and during the week he WAS the church. One summer Oliver Weist called and asked for my help so that the staff and a few church families could spend time together at camp. Palmer and I ran the church for a week. I answered the phone and he did everything else."*

Rosemary Weimer, Dr. Burkhardt's secretary, remembered him as a philosopher. *"There was a special quality about him. So often he made sage remarks which were so apropos to people and situations."*

Lowell Riley said that Burkie always called on Palmer for a report at the Annual Meeting. *"He was a gentle man and everyone loved him."*

Who was this beloved paragon? For 27 years Anderson Palmer was the caretaker and custodian of First Community Church. At an early age he left his Georgia home to join a traveling minstrel troupe as an acrobatic tumbler. He did all kinds of work before coming to First Community Church on November 6, 1920. Bob Morrison recalled how Palmer arrived early each morning to stoke the coal furnace so the building would be warm for the staff.



As the years passed, Palmer and the furnace grew old together. It was because this highly esteemed black man meant so much to so many, that a room in the church was set aside to honor him – The Palmer Room.

The small room off the south aisle of the sanctuary, now known as the Zell Memorial Chapel, was intended by the builders of the church to be a baptistery for those desiring to be baptized by immersion. Many of our members may not even know of its existence, while for others it is a very special place. On March 21, 1943, the family, friends and ministers of First Community Church gathered to dedicate *"for all time this sacred chapel as a place of prayer and meditation in loving memory of Ella Artz Zell."* Rev. Fred Brownlee returned to conduct the dedication *"to those who worship here seeking light and life, and to the eternal purpose of this church and all Christian churches, in the name of Jesus, the Light and Life of all men for all time and everywhere."*

Ella Zell was quite a woman. She was one of the original promoters for a church in the community and became a charter member of Grandview Heights Congregational Church. She was our first librarian and the first president of the Women's Guild, then known as The Ladies' Aid Society. It was Ella who planned the kitchen of the church on Lincoln Road and she was there to prepare the hundred of meals served. Both of her children were deaf, but she mastered sign language and went to school with them as a teacher. She acted as their interpreter and traveled with them all over the U.S. and Europe because she did not want the world to escape them due to their deafness. She also cared for her invalid husband. Ella was a Grandview pioneer who helped to attain better streets, lighting, water, sewers and schools for the community.

In the words of Fred Brownlee, *"Ella did her meditating as she busied herself obeying her God of Duty. She did her worshipping with deeds of mercy and kindness. She chose to minister, rather than be ministered unto."*

The altar cross in the chapel is said to be a 7th century Latin cross with Florentine inlay. It was brought from Europe by Mrs. Harriet Kirkpatrick, grandmother of Peter Diehl and Sally Kriska, as a gift for Rev. Oliver Weist, who gave it to the church.

Often during Lent in the era of Dr. Roy Burkhart's ministry, the communion elements were present in

the chapel so that worshippers could partake alone. In 2003 Guild Group 7 completely refurbished this tranquil oasis in the midst of a busy seven-day church. Whatever the season, the Zell Chapel is a beautiful, quiet place to seek inspiration, guidance and hope.

This final chapter of our story has dealt with names...names of rooms...names of ministers...names of individuals who have served this congregation. But what do names signify? Names identify a person, and we as a church are indebted to all those persons who worked so tirelessly to organize a Sunday School and later a church that would serve everyone in the surrounding community and try to meet their needs. In the ensuing years there have been other dreamers as well as workers who have brought those dreams to reality: First Community Village, Heart to Heart, exciting youth programs, television and other innovative ministries, inspiring music programs and our work with refugees.

The people who settled the Tri-Village area were a special breed who exhibited leadership in their professional lives and in service to their community. Fortunately for us, many of them were also attracted to the philosophy of First Community Church. Each of our ministers has left a legacy, but it is the people who have been members of this congregation who have been not only believers, but also doers of the Word. Our people have gone abroad to work with World Neighbors, Project Amigos, AMOR ministry, and Deep Griha. They have gone beyond our walls to serve our neighbors near Camp Akita as well as those in Biloxi and Appalachia, flood victims in neighboring states, and the needy and homeless on the streets of Columbus. Members of all ages have been drawn into the ministry and have found encouragement from their church and financial support from the First Community Foundation.

We have had several names: "the church of the infinite quest," "the church of the open door," "the journey church." What we have been throughout our history is a living laboratory, a place where each person can find inspiration, nourishment for the soul, guidance through all the stages of life, and encouragement to search and grow and become the person God wants us to be. We, the people of this congregation, ARE First Community Church.

Allelujah! AMEN!



*...But there are many other things; were every one  
of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself  
could not contain the books that could be written.*

Paraphrasing John 21:25 RSV



### FIRST COMMUNITY CHURCH TIME LINE

- Apr 18, 1909 A committee of citizens from Marble Cliff organized the first Sunday School classes in the suburban Columbus area. Classes met in the Harding School on Fairview Ave.
- Mar 14, 1910 Meeting to organize church
- Apr 27, 1910 Grandview Heights Congregational Church was chartered after area residents determined they wanted a church, and then chose the denomination favored by the majority.
- Jul 27, 1910 Founding of Ladies' Aid Society
- Sept 3, 1910 Fred L. Brownlee hired as our first minister.
- Apr 23, 1911 Laying of cornerstone
- Dec 3, 1911 Dedication of the church we now call Lincoln Road Chapel.
- Oct 1, 1914 Brownlee leaves to return to seminary
- Sep 6, 1914 –  
Jun 6, 1915 Dr. Nowell L. Sims serves as interim pastor
- Sept 12, 1915 Rev. Oliver C. Weist called as minister.
- Jun 17, 1916 First Field Day
- Dec 12, 1916 Church library opened.
- Feb 7, 1917 Ladies' Aid Society reorganized as the Women's Guild of First Community Church
- Jan 24, 1919 Congregation voted unanimously to drop ties with Congregational Church, believing that a nondenominational church could better serve the community.
- Feb 12, 1919 Congregation approved reorganization as First Community Church
- Mar 6, 1919 Request granted to withdraw from Congregational Church
- Mar 19, 1919 Formal resolution to become First Community Church of Grandview
- Jun 14, 1919 First movie shown at conclusion of Field Day activities.
- May 19, 1922 First issue of area newspaper, The Community News, published in church basement. Sold in 1928 and became Tri-Village News.
- Jan 21, 1924 Groundbreaking for new church at 1320 Cambridge Boulevard.
- May 18, 1924 Cornerstone laying ceremony where Rev. McIlyar H. Lichliter described First Community Church as "the church of the infinite quest."
- Apr 11, 1926 Youth groups renamed Brownlee Society
- Jan 3, 1925 Dedication of 1320 Cambridge Boulevard church building.



## FIRST COMMUNITY CHURCH TIME LINE (CONTINUED)

- Dec 6, 1931 Rev. Rufus E. Wicker called as minister.
- Jan 13, 1935 Ministry of Dr. Roy A. Burkhart begins.
- Fall 1938 First Bar None dance held. Became annual New Year's Eve event after 1941.
- Fall 1941 Couples Circles organized.
- Mar 12, 1943 First minstrel show by Men's Glee Club of First Community Church staged at Upper Arlington High School. Now known as Vaud-Villities.
- Mar 21, 1943 Dedication of Zell Chapel by Rev. Fred Brownlee
- Spring 1942 First Sweetheart Luncheon
- Spring 1944 First Ministers' Seminar
- Jul 16, 1945 Day Nursery School opened.
- Jan 1946 Cambridge Club, first single's group in U.S., was organized.
- May 1946 National Council of Community Churches founded. Roy Burkhart selected as first president.
- Feb 1947 John Galbreath gave a 160 acre farm in Hocking County to Dr. Burkhart.
- May 22, 1948 Congregation approved purchase of 40 additional acres to build a camp on Hocking Hills site.
- Nov 7, 1948 Worship service first broadcast on WRFD radio.
- May 22, 1949 Camp Akita dedicated as a retreat and worship center.
- Spring 1950 A poll of 100,000 clergymen conducted by The Christian Century named First Community Church as one of the twelve great churches in America.
- May 14, 1951 Laying of cornerstone for south education wing of 1320 Cambridge Boulevard.
- 1952 Beginning of Wednesday morning Men's Breakfast. Founding of World Neighbors by Dr. John Peters and Dr. Roy Burkhart
- Dec 7, 1952 Dedication of education wing of 1320 Cambridge Boulevard
- Feb 3, 1953 Opening of Tri-Village Trading Post
- Dec 1, 1953 First Christmas Craftshop
- Fall 1955 New cross and renovations to sanctuary
- Dec 23, 1956 Dedication of new Moeller organ
- July 1957 Reed-McCoy property purchased



### FIRST COMMUNITY CHURCH TIME LINE (CONTINUED)

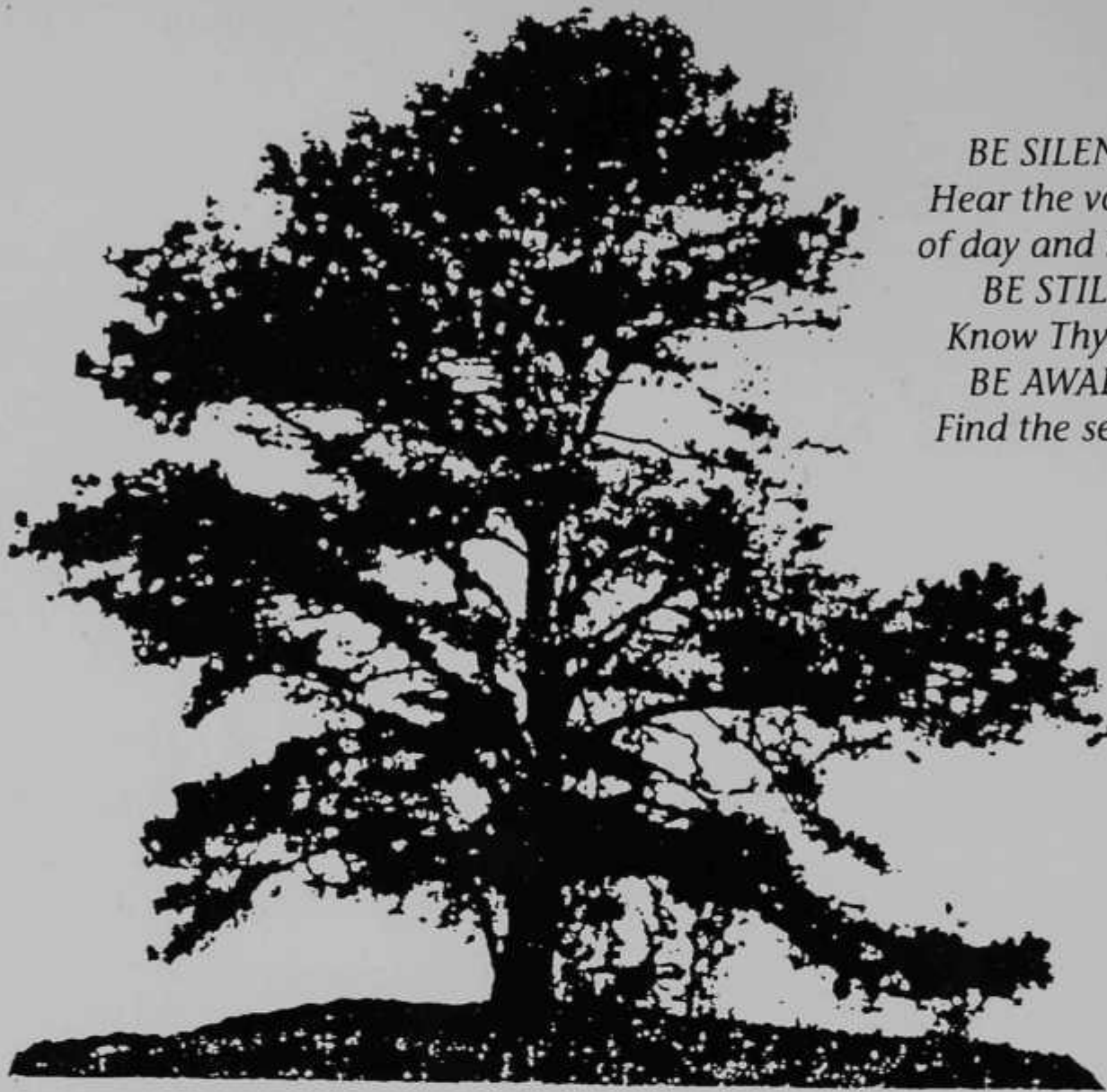
- Sep 15, 1957 First Community becomes the only church in Ohio with closed circuit television.
- Apr 30, 1958 Dr. Burkhart retires to become Minister Emeritus (Active)
- May 19, 1958 Dr. Otis Maxfield installed as Senior Minister
- Nov 6, 1958 First Book Fair
- Mar 1, 1959 "Golden Sunday" fiftieth anniversary service at Veterans Memorial
- Nov 1959 Ohio Central Association of Congregational Churches approves our affiliate relationship.
- Apr 23, 1961 Recognition of affiliation with Disciples of Christ
- 1961 Roy A. Burkhart Foundation, established by the Governing Board in 1954 to honor the 20th year of his ministry, renamed the First Community Foundation.
- Feb 18, 1962 Groundbreaking for First Community Village
- Aug 25, 1962 Initial Project Amigos survey trip to Latin America
- Feb 1, 1963 First residents move into First Community Village
- Mar 3, 1963 WRFD initiates live broadcast of 11:00 worship service
- Jun 15, 1963 First Project Amigos trip to Latin America
- Nov 13, 1963 Named Guideposts' Church of the Year for First Community Village
- Feb 1, 1964 Pastoral Counseling Center opens
- Apr 16, 1967 Dr. Arthur L. Teikmanis called as Senior Minister
- Jan 29, 1969 Congregational vote to remain at 1320
- Apr 26, 1970 Rev. Robert A. Raines named Senior Minister
- Feb 1973 Ministry to Older Persons established
- Dec 1974 First Candlelight Christmas Concert
- Jan 12, 1975 Dr. Harold N. Englund called as Senior Minister
- 1976 New Wineskins Center for Research & Development opens
- July 1976 Reed-McCoy property sold
- Aug 1978 Child Care Center opens
- Nov 26, 1978 Opening of First Day Book Center



**FIRST COMMUNITY CHURCH TIME LINE (CONTINUED)**

Dec 1978	Family Life Ministry established
Dec 10, 1978	Dedication of renovated sanctuary
Dec 24, 1980	Christmas Eve service televised by QUBE
Fall 1981	Refugee Task Force organized
Dec 12, 1982	Dr. Barry L. Johnson becomes Senior Minister
Fall 1984	Monday night meals mission for homeless begins
Apr 14, 1985	Television broadcast of First Edition began on WTTE
Sept 1985	Establishment of Project Adelphos, now known as Heart to Heart
Oct 13, 1985	Soli Deo Gloria music service first performed
Jul 27, 1986	Presentation of Guideposts' award for Family Life Ministry
Apr 23, 1991	Groundbreaking for Center for Extended Ministry on Dublin Road
August 1991	Child Care Center moved to Dublin Road facility and renamed the Mary Evans Child Development Center.
Dec 8, 1991	First worship service held at Dublin Road Center
May 17, 1992	Dedication of Center for Extended Ministry, now known as North Campus. Reconsecration of 1320 Cambridge Blvd, now known as South Campus.
Oct 1992	Rev. Bruce G. Ingles named Interim Senior Pastor
Dec 5, 1993	Dr. Richard A. Wing accepts call as Senior Minister
Spring 1995	First mission trip to Mexico
Jan 1998	Streets Mission Project originated
May 23, 1999	Celebration of Camp Akita's 50th anniversary
Oct 22, 2000	Rededication of Camp Akita's new facilities
April 2002	Design for the Future Task Force established
Summer 2006	Akita International, first mission trip to the Dominican Republic by "the Quarterlifers"
Feb 2, 2007	Live streaming of 11:00 service begins worldwide
July 6, 2008	Groundbreaking for the expansion of North Campus education wing





*BE SILENT  
Hear the voices  
of day and night  
BE STILL  
Know Thyself  
BE AWARE  
Find the secret*

*Lonesome Pine, Camp Akita*

*And now may the courage of the early morning's dawning,  
The strength of the eternal hills and wide open fields,  
And the silent streams  
The beauty of the flowered gardens, the love that makes the family  
And that alone can build the peace of the world,  
The life that is Christ, and the peace of the evening's ending,  
And of the midnight, be with you now and forevermore.*

*Roy A. Burkhart*



South Campus  
1320 Cambridge Boulevard  
Columbus, Ohio 43212  
614 488.0681

North Campus  
3777 Dublin Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43221  
614 488.0681

Camp Akita  
29746 Logan Hornsmill Road  
Logan, Ohio 43138  
740 385.3827

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