

## Changing Times and Social Justice, 1958-1977

Rev. Stanley Borden was called as pastor of First Baptist in 1958. He arrived at a time when church attendance was still riding the wave of postwar Protestantism. Average attendance for 1958 was 221, and the Roger Williams Club had over 40 members. Within a few short years, however, participation in the Roger Williams Club (renamed Baptist Student Fellowship) dropped off dramatically. The 1960's was a time of social change and increasing unrest on campus, and student interest in "organized religion" decreased significantly.



**Rev. Stan Borden**

In 1960, as this trend was just beginning, an opportunity came about to purchase the house next door to the church at 304 Lynn. It was a Sears and Roebuck house, and the church purchased it for \$25,000 for use as a Covenant House. It would serve as the residence for the Associate Pastor/Campus Minister, Frank Murdock, and include student apartments, office space, and meeting space. It was to serve as a place for an integrated program of study and worship for students. The Covenant House continued for several years, but the project ended when Bill Belli was called as Associate Pastor in 1965. At that time the house became the parsonage for the Associate Pastor, and campus ministry was increasingly done ecumenically together with the Presbyterians, UCC, Disciples, and Mennonites through the United Christian Campus Ministry.

The church responded to cultural changes of the era by increasing involvement and leadership in community ministry. Working with child development faculty at the university, First Baptist began the first nursery school in Ames in 1961. Johnie Hammond served as chair of the Ames Community Nursery School Board (which often meant unpaid director). The school was well-regarded and seen as a model by state inspection officials; at their suggestion our board wrote a "how-to" manual for other groups contemplating beginning a nursery school. Because of our existing nursery school, the church was able to get in on the ground floor soon after federal legislation to establish the Head Start program, and in 1965 First Baptist became the site of the first Head Start program in Iowa.

Rev. Borden encouraged the church to pursue such social justice initiatives. Another effort related to senior adults. Northcrest Retirement Community was founded through the initiative of the Golden Age Cooperative. Rev. Borden was chosen as the first president and continued in that capacity throughout his time in Ames. A site was selected in 1962 with groundbreaking in 1964 and the first residents in 1965. The board had difficulty getting a loan for the construction cost of \$430,000. Finally, Des Moines Savings and Loan agreed to make the loan. Rev. Borden was instrumental in bringing in the Iowa Baptist Convention and American Baptist Home Mission Society as guarantors of the loan.

Rev. John Anderson became the first full-time administrator of Northcrest in 1967, and his wife Elaine became the bookkeeper. The Andersons served for many years at Northcrest and for many years in retirement as faithful members of First Baptist.

Another area of concern and action was affordable housing. Church members were involved in Story County Housing, Inc. In 1969 the church made a \$5000 interest-free loan to Story County Housing. First Baptist was also involved in the formation of Ames Ecumenical Housing, which today includes the Keystone and Stonehaven apartments for low-income seniors.



***Covenant House, 304 Lynn***

Esther Borden, Stan's wife, was a musician and served as church organist. The music program, long a strength of the church, continued to thrive even while students no longer made up the bulk of the choir as they had a generation before.

In 1962 the church began providing a meeting place for the fledgling Jewish congregation in Ames, which met in the church lounge until 1972. Church members remember fondly assisting with bar mitzvah and bas mitzvah celebrations in the church fellowship hall. Ecumenical and interfaith services with the Jewish congregation and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic church were held. The space for the Jewish congregation continued the pattern began when the church welcomed the Friends congregation to meet in the church in earlier years.

Another initiative related to the students in our neighborhood. The church building was open late at night as a quiet place for students to study. Desks were placed in rooms around the building, and many students from neighboring Greek houses took advantage of the opportunity. Looking back, one member commented, "The place was hopping."

Back in 1936, the church had established a Board of Deaconesses for women, alongside the Board of Deacons. The boards had for some time met together as a Diaconate. In the decade of the 60's, the question began to arise as to the role of women on the board. Longtime member and life deacon Christian Thomsen, at a deacons meeting in 1965, made the motion that women as well as men serve communion. The annual report from that year says that no one spoke against the motion, but neither would anyone speak for it. The motion died for lack of a second. It might be noted that women as well as men were a part of this meeting.

Three years later, the deacon board decided differently. Writing in the 1968 Annual Report, Deacon Chair Ross Talbot commented, "Necessity being, at least on occasion, the mother of invention, we did institute the practice of having lady deacons serve communion. The cake of custom cuts hard in our church, but the congregation seemed to accept the innovation." It might be noted that before this time, the group was referred to in Annual Reports as "Board of

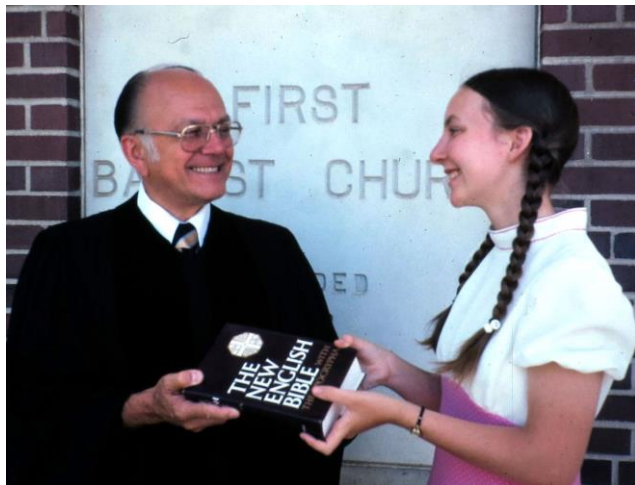
Deacons and Deaconesses,” but afterwards simply as “Board of Deacons.” Lorene Hoover and Donna Cleasby were among these first women to serve communion.

While campus ministry was now done ecumenically, the church continued its own efforts with students through Church School classes and its Student Life Committee. In 1970, the University class taught by John McCully reported a high attendance of 25 students. Average worship attendance for the year was 159 and average Church School attendance 111.

The Borden years represented a significant time for the church, and First Baptist reached out in ministry to the community in a variety of ways that are still felt to this day. Rev. Borden’s progressive, activist ministry was appreciated by many members and was a good fit for the times. Many members grew in their understanding of Christian service and the ability to see Christ “in the least of these.” At the same time, his approach, if not his theological commitments, did not agree with everyone.

On the Sunday before Christmas in 1969, Rev. Borden preached a sermon that called for a reassessment of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. The sermon was immediately controversial. As was the custom at the time, it was available in print form and found its way to the *Ames Tribune*, which printed the sermon. The publication only served to increase the sense of crisis in the church. Some families left the congregation, and there was a real sense of conflict and unease.

After a significant and eventful 12-year pastorate, Rev. Borden resigned in July 1970 to accept the call to the Trinity Community Church (ABC) in Minneapolis. Rev. William Davison, a retired ABC minister, served as interim pastor, and his caring and calming presence was just what the church needed during a time of transition.



***Rev. Huyck presents Bible to Jean Seidel***

In 1971 Rev. Kenneth Huyck came to First Baptist from University Baptist Church in Minneapolis, another university congregation. Huyck also had a social justice orientation and had marched with Dr. King in Selma. His wife Elnora was a professor of Home Economics. She led workshops at the church on topics including “Communication in the Family” and “Death and Dying” and preached on occasion.

Rev. Huyck began the tradition of Christmas Eve services as well as the Christmas Vespers service at Northcrest. With reduced numbers of children in the church – a trend

of many years - the church began conducting Vacation Bible School together with Collegiate United Methodist Church, and later in cooperation with Ames UCC and First Christian Church.

The church continued to make its facility available to community organizations. Those using the building in the 1970’s included Alcoholics Anonymous and al-Anon, the Chinese Bible Study

group, the Lay Theological Institute, and a Neighborhood Bible Study as well as the continued operation of the Ames Community Nursery School.

In 1974 church members including Rev. Bill Belli (now employed solely by UCCM), Jenna McCarley, and Johnie Hammond were part of a group studying ways to help those in the criminal justice system. The Committee on Criminal Justice eventually became what is today the Center for Creative Justice. Beginning with a \$10,000 start-up grant from American Baptist National Ministries, CCJ provided community-based probation services as well as mediation services.

First Baptist's missional orientation extended beyond the local community to world mission. The church continued to be a leading church in the region in financial support for mission work, and in 1976 the church sponsored two Tai Dam refugee families from Southeast Asia. The church provided housing, clothing, home furnishings, English lessons, and more, as well as assistance in navigating all that comes with entering into a completely new culture. The relationship with the families continued for many years.

In February 1977, Rev. Huyck resigned as pastor. The Huycks moved to Manhattan, Kansas where Elnora assumed a position as Assistant Dean at Kansas State University.