



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Plymouth Congregational Church of East Moline, IL was organized in 1904 by 25 people who had been worshipping in the John Deere Schoolhouse. Plans began immediately to build their own church and the congregation celebrated its second anniversary in the basement of the new structure on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, the first church to be build in East Moline.

It was a very active congregation for 17 years. There was always a desire to be involved in missions. By 1920 there were five churches of the Congregational denomination within a radius of four miles, and each church was limited to a small area in its work. The Presbyterian denomination had broader field of mission and had not yet formed a church in East Moline.

On November 11, 1921, with a unanimous vote, Plymouth Congregational Church severed its ties with the Congregational denomination and was received into the Presbytery of Rock River as the First Presbyterian Church of East Moline, Illinois with 103 members. Others joined by the end of the year and all 179 became the charter members. The Rev. William M. Boaz, Congregational minister was approved by the Presbytery to continue as the pastor.

The original Women's circle grew to three groups. They hosted many fund-raisers to assist with the church finances. A Married Couples Club originated in November 1940. This group joined the Presbyterian National Mariners in 1944 as The Paddlewheelers and became the first chartered "ship" in Illinois. The Christian Endeavor youth group, choirs, Sunday School, and midweek or Sunday evening worship services provided education & fellowship.

Plans to build a larger church had fallen through in the forties but in May of 1947, the congregation again began a campaign to raise \$60,000 for a new church building, and a building committee was authorized in July. As many new housing areas were growing south of 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the decision was made to build "on top of the hill" at our current location. The cornerstone was laid on June 15, 1951. The church manse was built in 1959. The membership was growing, Sunday School classes overflowing, the church needed more room. A Christian Education building on the north end of the church was dedicated in April 1965. The membership peaked in 1972 at 587 members. The Presbyterian Women had grown to 6 circles, music expanded to 2 adult & 2 children's choirs and each Sunday School class had its own space. Rev. George Steele was the pastor during this time. A partnership with Dubuque Presbyterian Seminary in 1970 enabled the church to hire six Interns for one year terms, under Rev. Steele's supervision. After 17 years as pastor, Rev. Steele retired in 1976.

An elevator was installed in 1984 near the north entrance. A parking area for the handicapped was made across from this entrance. Handicapped Accessible restrooms were added, as well as space for wheelchairs in the sanctuary.

In 1921, the congregation wished to change to the Presbyterian denomination because of its broader scope of work. First Presbyterian has maintained its concerns for mission and for the community over the years. Over the years, many programs have used our facilities for their meetings, including Head Start/Project Now classes (now in its 32<sup>nd</sup> year), Alcoholics Anonymous, Smile-Awhile Preschool, East Moline Women's Club, and Scout troops. Outreach missions added more recently include serving meals once a month for the Churches United Meal-Site in East Moline, a tutoring program with Ridgewood Elementary School, working with Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Q.C. Together, held neighborhood Easter Egg Hunts, rang bells for the Salvation Army, and worked with the First Day Fund. The Labyrinth, one of the first in the Quad-Cities, is still visited by many. A Prayer Shawl ministry has made and given away over 200 shawls to those needing comfort, support and prayers.

Worshiping together is our foundation as a church family. Many people help to enhance our services: adult vocal choir, children's choir, bell choir, puppet ministry, a team assisting the pastor with sermons and a congregation who "Loves God, Loves Each Other, Reaches Out to Others."

FPC recently celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary honoring those who have been members the longest and members who are descendants of our charter families. All donated historical papers, stories, and photos are on permanent display in our Heritage Room.