



THE STORY OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

During the fall of 1903 the town of East Moline was considered to be worthy and well qualified for the establishment of a church. Under the auspices of the Illinois Home Missionary Society and the First Congregational Church of Moline, the Rev. Frank Hoover was sent to begin a series of services. He soon won several people by his passion for souls, loyalty to Christ, and efficient preaching. After several weeks of services, twenty-five people were received as being ready to enter the covenant fellowship and form a congregational Church "So as to combat the evil rife herein."

A preliminary organization at the John Deere school house on December 31, 1903 adopted the name of "Plymouth Congregational Church of East Moline." Formal organization took place on January 15, 1904, and incorporation of February 28, 1905. The Rev. J. William Davis was extended a call to become the regular Pastor on February 3, 1904 at a salary of \$200 per year. His pastorate continues until September 1, 1905.

Under the pastorate of the Rev. Henry Harris, which began September 10, 1905, plans were immediately begun for the erection of a church, and the congregation celebrated its second anniversary in the basement of the new structure at the corner of 16th Avenue and 6th Street, East Moline. At that time a vote of thanks was formally extended to the Ladies Circle "for their meritorious labors which so materially aided and made it possible for the progress of the new building." Dedication services were held on September 9, 1906.

On January 2, 1907 the congregation adopted a resolution thanking Rev. Harris, who "by his mental, moral, and physical energy, has buried the prejudice of the people against the church, and has won the confidence of the community." The same resolution noted that during the past year there had been an increase of 65% in membership.

The Rev. H. North served as Pastor of the church from October 8, 1907 to August 12, 1908.

In March of 1909 the congregation felt that the progress of the church had been retarded and they were unable to support a Pastor, sustain the indebtedness on their building and the assessments of the municipal improvements to the church property, and other incidental items. They therefore entered into an agreement to share a Pastor with Union Congregational Church of Moline. Then Rev. Frank Anderson served the church until January 14, 1912.

During the pastorate of the Rev. Malcolm Miller (March 29, 1912, to February 9, 1916) thirty-two new members were received. In 1918, new pews were added to the church at cost of \$150.

On November 11, 1921, 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. Other joined by the end of the year and all 179 are the charter members. The Rev. William M. Boaz, Congregational minister, at the unanimous request of the congregation, was permitted to continue as Pastor of the new organization pending arrangements for his transfer from the Congregational Church. The change was made after careful consideration of the broader field of work the Presbyterian Church would cover. There were at that time 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 church is the only one of its denomination in East Moline.

The first meeting of Session of the new church was on November 11, 1921, and Mr. A. D. Taft was elected Clerk by a unanimous vote. The Rev. Mr. Boaz was received by Rock River Presbytery on December 22, 1921, and installed as Pastor on the same date, His pastorate continued until January 1 1924. The manse on 16th Avenue was purchased in 1923.

The Congregation met to elect a new Pastor on February 7, 1924, but since there was no fire in the furnace of the church, the meeting was adjourned to the offices of S. E. and George D. Long in the Manufacturers Bank building. Two Pastors-elect declined their calls. The Rev. E. E. Schroeder, a recent theological graduate was installed May 22, 1924. Minutes of the Session indicate that the Pastor took the month of Jun 1925, for his vacation and also for the purpose of getting married. He resigned April 7, 1927.

The Rev. C. E. Hoff was Pastor of the church from November 1927 to October 17, 1943, in March of 1931 the church participated in a series of union evangelistic meetings held in a tabernacle erected on 16th Avenue between 8th and 9th Streets, By the end of 1932, the membership was 203.

Rev. David Brigham was called as Pastor January 2, 1944. In June of that year the congregation entered into an agreement to of a new building. This resolution was later voided because funds were not available from the Board Of Church Extension.

A Married Couples Club originated in November 1940. This group joined the National Mariners in 1944, The Paddlewheelers became the first chartered ship in Illinois. A Deacons Court was organized April 10, 1947. On May. 25, 1947, the congregation again began a campaign to raise \$60,000 for a new church building, and a building committee was authorized in July. Rev. . Brigham resigned in September.

The Rev. J. K. Patterson was installed Pastor on September 22, 1949. In February of 1950, a congregational and corporation meeting authorized the sale of the old building on 6th Street and 16th Avenue, and the building of a new church at the current site. Architectural plans were approved January 31, 1950, and the cornerstone of the new building was laid July 15, 1951. Five church families took second mortgages on their homes to help meet the building fund drive. The building was dedicated in March of 1952. Membership was now 255. In 1959, a new manse was built just north of the church.

The women of the church had been active in the Ladies Circle, the Nevin Club and the Missionary Society since the beginning of the church. On February 25, 1953, they were organized into Presbyterian Women's Organization, and reorganized July 17, 1957, as the United Presbyterian Women; after the Reunion in 1983 the name was changed to PW.

An electric carillon was installed in memory of Mrs. Hollis Warren by her husband, and was first played on May 13, 1956. Dr. Patterson resigned as Pastor March 16, 1958, in order to take a position on the Synod staff.

The Rev. George E. Steele was installed March 22, 1959. He spent many hours going door to door, visiting with people in the new housing areas springing up near the church. By the end of 1959, seventy new members had been gained. In January of 1961, the Long Range Planning Committee recommended to the congregation that a Christian Education building be built as soon as possible, and additional parking facilities developed as they are needed. A building committee was appointed in March, and building and fund raising plans approved in April, 1963. Ground was broken on August 23, 1963, and the Christian Education Building was dedicated April 11, 1965. The congregation authorized the installation of stained glass windows in the Sanctuary on January 22, 1967. The chancel window, "Come Unto Me," is in memory of Mr. Robert Johnson, an elder of the church, and the nave windows depicting symbols of events in the Life of Christ are in memory of several members of the congregation during past years.

In May of 1962, Mrs. Traute Sloane was elected Church Secretary and the first Assistant in Christian Education, continuing in this capacity until July of 1973. On June 20, 1963, the congregation entered into the Personal Interest Program of the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations. The missionaries assigned were the Rev, and Mrs. Francis N. Seely of Chiang Mai, Thailand. The church maintained support to and communication with the Seeley's until their retirement in recent years.

There has always been a program for the youth of the church beginning with Christian Endeavor in the early 20's, later becoming known as Westminster Fellowship. Mr. Gary Hobbs was hired as part-time youth work director in 1966. Miss Judy Dekker held this position for 1969-70. Prior to this time, the youth groups had been guided and supervised by many adult volunteers over the years. Late in 1969, the Session began looking into the intern program of Dubuque Seminary. A seminarian would be with the church for one year as a staff member who would direct the youth work, and share in the preaching and pastoral ministry. July, 1970, brought us the first of six interns who would serve under the supervision of Rev. Steele. They were Rev. Richard Harken, 1970-71; Rev. Charles Pendleton,

1971—72; Rev. Alan Schaefer, 1972—73; Rev. Bruce Giese, 1973— 74; Rev. Donald Drummond, 1975-75;---and Rev. -Dan Patterson, 1975—76.

During the pastorate of the Rev. Steele the church reached a peak of 587 members in 1972. In 1976, he retired after 17 years service to this congregation. The UPW had grown into 6 circles; there were 2 adult choirs, a youth choir and a cherub choir. The Rev. Dr. James McPherson was installed July 10, 1977. November 20th of that year a new organ in the sanctuary was dedicated. In October of 1980, a Scholarship Fund was established for the purpose of awarding grants to church members who wished to attend, college or other post-high school vocational training.

Early in 1981, the kitchen was remodeled, providing new fixtures, countertops, and a new stove. A handicap Access Committee was formed in June 1981 and on July 25, 1982, the congregation voted to install an elevator near the north entrance. A parking area for the handicapped was made across from this entrance. The elevator went into use in the spring of 1984, and can take people to both levels of the church.

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. The goal for mission giving to Presbyterian programs has consistently been surpassed. Many members have served on committees and task forces of the Blackhawk Ministry Council, Presbytery and Synod. Part of the service to our community is to allow certain programs to use the facilities in our church. Those groups have included the Head Start/Project Now classes (now in its 32nd year), Alcoholics Anonymous, Smile-Awhile Preschool, East Moline Women's Club, and Scout troops. At election time, the Youth room is used as a Polling place.

Music has always been a vital part of our worship. Linda Miller, organist, began in 1969 and Brian Nelson, musical director and Gail Glockhoff-Long, bell choir director have been with us for over 25 years and have become members as well. In 1983, Elvira Brandsmeier gave a gift of \$3000 to begin a Bell Choir. A small engraved bell is displayed to honor her. Gail agreed to direct, volunteers came forward and they soon began playing during Worship. A Youth Bell Choir was also started; many of today's ringers have been playing for 25 years. A request from the choirs in early 1986 to consider remodeling the choir area, spurred the Session to create a Chancel Renovation Committee and begin fund raising. March 20, 1988, the newly remodeled chancel was dedicated, giving the choirs more room and flexibility and giving a more open look to the sanctuary.

From 1991 through 1996 various members, working through Constructores Paro Christo helped build homes in Mexico. It was originally a Black Hawk Ministry Council project but in 1996 we had a full team of 20 from our church, who raised \$18,000 to fund the trip and buy the supplies to build the house. Looking for ways to keep our young people involved with the church, a Puppet Ministry was organized in 1993 and soon became His Hands Puppet Ministry. They gave programs during worship, at other churches, even at the Meal Site one year at Christmas, continuing for close to 20 years. We celebrated our 70th Anniversary as First Presbyterian Church in November 1991 with an Open House honoring our remaining charter members, Margaret Hanson, Clara Haddick, and Anna Siefken, and recognizing the families of charter members still active in the church.

After much work & discussion by the Session and Trustees through 1995, the congregation voted to become a Unicameral governing body, with Trustees as part of Session. Committees became Commissions and new By-laws & Leadership Manual were written. November 3, 1995 we began a year-long 75th Anniversary year with an Open House recognizing those who had been members 50 years or longer. The following November, we completed our anniversary year with a luncheon & presentation of Proclamation from the city council of City of East Moline, declaring it "First Presbyterian Church week".

The Deacons proposed that we begin a Parish Nurse program. A Sunday School room became the nurse's office and Denise Maxwell was hired in 1993. In 1995 we began working with the Trinity Parish Nurse program and Laura Brown began her ministry with us.

Rev. Eric G. Nielsen was installed as pastor May 12, 1996. During that year, handicapped accessible restrooms were built upstairs & downstairs. Having realized that we could not raise \$18,000 every year for a Mexico Mission Team, it was decided to become more "hands-on" mission at home. We began serving meals once a month for the Churches United Meal-Site in East Moline, started 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 in addition to our long-standing missions: collecting food for Churches United East Moline Food Pantry, participating in CROP Walk among others. For many years a church van

had been discussed and that dream became true in 1999. Rev. Nielsen & wife, Lisa, laid out a Labyrinth across the street, one of the first in the Quad-Cities, still visited by many. We lurched into the 20th Century, finally purchasing computers for both the pastor & church secretary and began a web site. In 2001, Rev. Nielsen & family moved to Wisconsin to be closer to family and once again, we began searching.

Many years after the congregation had moved to the present building, it was discovered that the old church on 16th Avenue was to be torn down. Carillons had been installed in the new church and Session felt we had no use for the old church bell. Dr. Nick Katrana, former member, purchased the bell and donated it to Lutheran Hospital. Lutheran Hospital was then torn down and the bell relegated to a warehouse. In 2002, the Van Tieghem family began the process of making the old bell a Memorial. Mike Tyler designed a brick & wrought iron housing for the bell on the west lawn where it was hung in 2003.

Rev. Rebecca A. Sherwood, "Becky" came to us in September 2002. Soon after, a group of Evangelical Presbyterians from Togo, West Africa became regular visitors and March 26, 2006, 17 adults became members. Their arrival led to reading the Scripture and praying the Lord's Prayer in English and in French so we could be inclusive of the congregation we became together. Some of the congregation refreshed their memory of French classes. The church celebrated when Ben Barrigah, one of the early Togo members, became a United States citizen.

A new tradition began with Memorial Banners: every November banners are made to honor each church member who had died the previous year. On All Saints' Sunday, the youth present the banners during worship.

A group of women began meeting once a month to crochet or knit Prayer Shawls, others made shawls at home and over 200 have been given away. In the past few years, many disasters have occurred across the country leading us to doing hands on mission a little farther from home. Offerings were gathered to send to the New York Presbytery following the September 11, 2001 tragedy. "Flood buckets" were assembled for churches in our Presbytery along the river. Several members went to Mississippi to help rebuild after Hurricane Katrina. Our Sunday School children started collecting nickels to make a Mile of Nickels. With a little help from the adults, the goal was reached in 2009. Barb Newburg wrapped all those nickels end to end and laid them out on the lawn, circling the church and parking lot to spell "First Presbyterian Church". The children are still choosing missions to receive funds.

Several current members are descendants of the families that organized this church and we hope to contribute as much to the history of this church as those in the past 90 years. As we celebrate this anniversary, we are also preserving stories and photos for a Centennial Anniversary which is only 10 short years away. November 11, 1921 to November 11, 2011 Celebrating Our 90th Anniversary