

A Brief History of  
South Presbyterian Church  
1895-1995

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Beginnings  
1849-1895

Zachary Taylor was President of the United States of America; Rochester had been a city only fifteen years in 1849 when some young parents of West Brighton, a suburb of Rochester, felt the need for a Sunday School for their children. The village leaders finally granted them permission to hold such meetings at three o'clock every Sunday afternoon in the one room, red brick school house on "the road that went from Rochester to West Henrietta," the northwest corner of the present Mt. Hope Avenue and Crittenden Boulevard. This was close to the Crittenden Race Track in Crittenden Park.

Mr. Frederick Starr was a leader in this movement for a Sunday School. What prompted such agitation? Couldn't the children sit quietly at home? Were the teenagers sneaking into the inner city to join gangs? Were they "jumping boats" on the new Erie Canal? Maybe they were playing in the barns at the Crittenden Race Track or roaming to Oak Hill to hang around the Wolcott Distillery (where the University of Rochester football field is now located). There were so many temptations in those days! Whatever the reasons for the desire for a Sunday School they are lost in history. Little is known of the development of the Sunday School between the years 1849 to 1859 when William B. Levet took responsibility for the work.

Because there were no streetcars from Rochester to West Brighton, Mr. Levet had to walk all the way from his home in the city to the school on Sunday afternoons. It was largely through his efforts that the Sunday School became firmly grounded in the neighborhood. His was a labor of love, much appreciated by the parents.

During the winters of 1884 through 1886, the Reverend J. Ross Lynch took charge of the classes. In addition to his work in the Sunday School, he maintained evening "Preaching Services" to full capacity of the little building.

Other leaders of the Sunday School came for brief or longer periods. These included Emmet Hollister and George W. Merrick through whose efforts the first real religious society was organized.

There must have been an organ in the school. The Reverend John A. Baker acted as organist at one time, and taught a large Bible class. Later

organists were Mrs. Cornelius Warrant, Miss Minnie Preston, and George Tully. Mrs. E. Skinner, James W. Stanley and Frank Chadwick assisted as organists and choir directors.

Under the leadership of these and many others, the Sunday School and evening "Preaching Services" grew so much that it became necessary to make plans for some other place to meet... hopefully in a real church.

#### West Brighton Chapel Society 1895-1925

In 1895, the group from the School House voted to incorporate into a legal organization, obtain land, and erect a church building.

A "Certificate of Incorporation" was drawn up June 11, 1895, and signed by James Harmon and George Kinzel as witnesses. The organization, so formed, became legally known as "The West Brighton Chapel Society".

The following officers were appointed to conduct their first meeting, held for the purpose of approving a constitution: David K. Bell, Chairman; Harvey F. Remington, Secretary; George Kinzel, Mrs. Emmeline Barker and Miss Katherine White.

The Constitution adopted at that time, June 11, 1895, included the following articles: "The object of the society shall be the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to the means and usage in Evangelical Christian Churches."

"The basis of the organization shall rest upon the teachings of Evangelical Christianity set forth in the doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Alliance of the United States of America."

"Any person contributing money for the erection of the church building, or pledging a stated contribution of the support of this society and paying the same, shall be constituted a member of this society for one year from the date of the preceding annual meeting."

Following the adoption of the constitution, trustees were elected "by a plurality of voices": David K. Bell, Bion H. Howard, James Harmon, J. Franklin Crittenden and Harvey F. Remington. Among the trustees of later years were: Judson F. Holcombe, Levi Locklin, Arthur Martin and Cornelius Warrant.

Sunday School superintendents included J. Otis Emery, George Kinzel, Edward Laughlin, and Harvey F. Remington.

Besides these officers, there were other active members, whose names should be mentioned: Marjorie Alden, Mary Westfall, Edna and Bernice Martin, Mrs. George Clickner, Mrs. William Cook, Henry Schlegel, and Erwin Shutt.

One early member, who should be named was Mrs. Emmeline Bell

Barker. For many years, she “prayed, labored and dispelled any pessimistic spirit that might have kept the people from striving for the reality of a church”. Her zeal in the early days continued through the years in the West Brighton Chapel.

After the constitution was adopted, the new church was started across from the school house on Mt. Hope Avenue on a lot given by Mrs. Emmeline Bell Barker (where the Record Archive now stands). The lot, chapel and furniture cost about \$3,000. Only \$350 remained to be paid four years later by December 1899.

The cornerstone was laid July 7, 1895, with special ceremonies. The Reverend J. W. Stewart, pastor of the First Baptist Church, delivered a forceful address. Short speeches were delivered by William E. Levet and Emmet Hollister, former superintendents of the Sunday School. Other ministers spoke as well as Bion H. Howard who announced the contents of the cornerstone box.

On October 27, 1895, the completed chapel was dedicated with several ministers and members participating.

The first pastor, the Reverend Ingram Bill, guided the activities of the West Brighton Chapel Society through several years.

The Sunday School continued to influence the youth. Many became well-respected civic leaders all over the world. (One young man, Rollin Sanford, “paid the supreme sacrifice” in World War One.)

The Christian Endeavor Society, the Ladies’ Aid Society, and the Emory Adult Class, as well as other groups, took responsibility for many church functions.

During the years between 1895 and 1925, Rochester had grown into a bustling city. The Clinton Hotel had “steam heat with good stabling and sheds”, Waldert and Anscorb, 104 South Avenue, were selling blacksmith and wagon-maker supplies at their hardware store, Miss R. Kuss sold fine millinery (especially mourning hats) at 65 South Avenue, C. Challice sold holiday slippers for fifty cents. He advertised as a “reliable shoe dealer selling all kinds of footwear”. But at F. L. Hewitt’s 100 South Avenue, one could get Compound Celery Headache Powders for ten and twenty five cents.

Besides active business enterprises, beautiful parks were developed in the city and along Lake Ontario. Church families enjoyed picnics at Sea Breeze Park. West Brighton Chapel members were no exception. The swimming was good; the sand felt soft and warm after a vigorous breast-stroke swim. The picnic lunch ended with coffee brewed in the blue enameled coffee pots over make-shift fires. There was always group singing. Sometimes they sang old popular songs, sometimes they sang songs they

had made up for the occasion. One song that has been preserved, told of their love for their little church:

“There’s a small church in West Brighton  
A little way from town,  
Where the sermons and the banquets  
are both of great renown.  
It’s a pretty little building  
and it’s workers fill the bill,  
If once you come, you’ll always love  
this little church upon the hill.”

(Sung to the tune of “Where the River Shannon Flows”)

During the winter of 1919-1920, the members of the West Brighton Chapel Society decided to formally associate their church with the Presbytery of Rochester. The name was changed to the “West Brighton Presbyterian Church”.

All programs continued as formerly; Sunday School met at three o’clock; preaching services were conducted at half-past seven Sunday evenings. The Christian Endeavor, The Ladies Aid Society, and the Emory Adult Class continued their regular meetings with the usual year-end banquets.

West Brighton Presbyterian Church was growing in membership and influence so steadily that by 1923 and 1924 there were strong rumblings that the congregation needed larger quarters.

#### South Presbyterian Church 1925-1995

The rumblings became so persistent that in 1924, land owned by Mrs. Emmeline Bell Barker, on the corner of East Henrietta Road and Stokes Street (now Fort Hill Terrace) was donated by Mrs. Barker for a larger church building. Before starting construction, the members voted to change the name from “West Brighton Presbyterian Church” to “South Presbyterian Church”. (West Brighton became a part of Rochester in January, 1923). The “Certificate of Change of Name” was signed by Harry J. Holcomb and Edgar B. Smith, December 26, 1924, and January 7, 1925.

Ground for the new building was broken June 7, 1925. The Reverend Dr. James Jewell represented the Rochester Presbytery; Miss Beatrice Martin

broke the ground on behalf of the Church membership; the Reverend Mr. Arthur Talman, Pastor of the church, closed the ceremony with prayer and benediction.

By April 1926 the new church building, made of red tapestry brick and trimmed with Norristone, was completed and dedicated. A banquet was held in celebration on April 15, 1926. Mr. E. B. Smith, the toastmaster, presided at the program following the dinner. The Pastor gave the Invocation; Mrs. Mildred Davis Lewis sang a contralto solo; and Mrs. Lucille Davis Brightman sang a soprano solo. Later Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Brightman sang a duet; Dr. James L. Jewell and the Reverend Kennedy brought greetings from the Presbytery and other churches. Dr. Orlo J. Price delivered the address. The new church was the fulfillment of many dreams!

With the new building came many expansions in the church program. There was now adequate room for Sunday School classrooms on a scale never before realized. This was quite provident since the neighborhood and the church membership continued to grow. Quite a number of new homes were built in the area in the late 1920's. As new families moved into the neighborhood, many of them found South Presbyterian Church a friendly and welcoming place to worship in a convenient location. As a consequence, their children began to fill up the new classrooms, even as they themselves began to swell out the attendance at Sunday worship services. During these expanding years the Reverend Arthur Talman served South Presbyterian Church as Pastor. Services were held both Sunday morning and Sunday evening with an average attendance in the 60's and 70's. Various youth activities were begun in 1924, a Young People's Society, a Junior Choir, a Senior Quartet, and a troop of eight Boy Scouts was functioning. Vacation Bible School was conducted during the Summer of 1924 and became a regular yearly event. To recognize the children in the Sunday School classes, a Children's Day observance was set for the 2nd and 3rd Sunday in June. These observances included infant baptism and special children's exercises during the regular hour of worship.

Following Reverend Arthur Talman's moving on to other responsibilities in September of 1929, the church designated a Pulpit Committee. The work of this committee culminated in the installation of Reverend Paul Rider in February of 1930. He served the church for two of the early depression years until 1932.

As was the case in many churches, the coming of the "Great Depression" put a damper on many parts of the church activities as members found it more difficult to support a large budget in the face of loss of jobs and decreasing income. Yet, through it all, church membership

continued to grow. With the increases in membership came new church organizations which were formed to strengthen both the spiritual and the social life of the congregation. There is mention in the 1935 annual report of a Young People's Society, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Men's Club and Ladies Aid Groups meeting regularly.

In the Fall of 1935 Reverend Thomas S. Goddard was called to South Presbyterian Church to continue the fine work accomplished by Reverend William Hallock during his three years as Stated Supply Pastor.

Special note is made in the Annual Report that three choirs were providing music for church services and that all three were vested. There were the Adult Choir, the Junior Choir and the Pioneer Choir. Several pageants were presented by the choirs, church school, and an "old-timers group" in observance of the 40th anniversary of the church.

In 1936 the church chancel was completely re-built by the men of the church as well as the removal of the old steeple which had developed problems and had been cited by the City Safety department. Much work was done in the church to renew and maintain the physical plant. A new oil-fired boiler was installed in 1937 to replace the old coal-fired boiler which had been in use for many years. Also, a new Hammond Electric Organ was purchased and dedicated at a special service. Special music was provided by the choir and Mr. Graef at the console of the new organ. A message was given by Dr. Frank Weston, the secretary of the Presbytery.

1937 was also the year of the inception of the Board of Deacons. Prior to the formation of this board, all member visitations had been done by the pastor and members of the Session and the Board of Trustees, with the volunteer help of persons at the heads of various church organizations as the case arose.

Church membership and attendance had grown sufficiently by 1937 that two services were being held every Sunday morning to accommodate all the attendees. Mention is made in the Annual Report that the Sunday School membership was 200, and total adult enrollment was 210. Many of the second services were attended by more than 200 worshippers.

Reverend Goddard continued his pastorate of the church until September of 1938 when he moved to another church and the pulpit committee issued a call to Garner S. O'Dell from Hammondsport, NY., who accepted and became the new pastor of South Presbyterian Church in November of 1938.

Soon after Reverend O'Dell began his pastorate at South Presbyterian Church, Europe was in turmoil from the ugly specter of Adolph Hitler and his

Nazi confederates. Many countries were invaded and put under Nazi rule and occupation. The Second World War broke out in protest in 1939. The United States was only peripherally involved until the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 by the second of the Axis powers, Japan. The day after the Pearl Harbor bombing the U.S. Congress declared war upon the Axis powers, Japan, Italy and Germany.

With the declaration of war many of the young men of South Presbyterian Church either joined the Army, Navy or Marine Corps, or were conscripted in the Merchant Marine, or the U.S. Coast Guard. The ladies of the church found many ways to assist in the war effort with their knitting of items needed by the troops and by rolling bandages at the local hospitals.

A special honor roll board was purchased and as each church member joined one of the armed forces or the merchant marine, his name was installed on the board. At the peak of the effort South Presbyterian Church had 18 members in the service either overseas or on U.S. soil.

The members of the congregation were saddened by the report of the loss of Lieutenant James W. Taylor of the U.S. Navy who was killed in action in 1943. A memorial service was conducted on May 20, 1943 commemorating Lt. Taylor's life and a beautiful stained glass window was installed in his memory on the East wall of the church sanctuary. This window is a bit different from the remainder of the stained glass windows that are now installed on both the West and East sanctuary walls. It is a pastoral scene as an interpretation of the Psalm 121:1 passage, "I will lift mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help."

South Presbyterian Church has always been community minded and goal oriented toward service to others, and at this particularly difficult time in the life of the congregation all the members responded to the needs of the community and the nation. Young and old were active in Red Cross work, civilian defense, donating blood, rolling bandages, working long hours in various defense plants and many other services connected with the war effort. Sadly, a second loss of a young former member was reported later, John Derbort who lost his life in the defense of his country.

After World War II ended, Reverend Garner O'Dell received a call from a Presbyterian church in Amarillo, Texas, which he accepted, terminating his pastoral relationship with South Presbyterian Church in 1946.

In August of 1946, a young student from Rochester Colgate Divinity School, just ordained in the ministry, a Reverend Robert Divine was called by the church pulpit committee.

He was installed as the new pastor of South Presbyterian Church on October 27, 1946. He served as pastor for two burgeoning years during

which all the members that had been in the Armed Forces were reunited with their families and the church, which continued to grow in numbers and in activities as a great era of economic prosperity spread across the land.

During the 1940's the position of organist and choir director was held by Claude Love. He served in this position until 1949, resigning because of problems with his hands, due to arthritis. Mr. Love was followed by Richard Stover who served briefly and was succeeded by Ernstine Fischer.

Shortly after the beginning of 1948, Reverend Divine left to serve another church. A pulpit committee was convened and the search began. In May, 1948 they had tentatively decided on a replacement, so in May a congregational meeting was held to vote on the committee's choice, the Reverend Fremont Chapman, who had been serving a church in Ludlow, Kentucky. The vote was unanimous to accept their recommendation, so the call was issued to Reverend Chapman, which he accepted. He and his family, his wife Dorothea and their two children moved to Rochester to accept the pastorate of South Presbyterian Church on October 1, 1948. His service of installation was conducted on November 21, 1948.

It was the custom of many churches to own a manse or parsonage in which their pastor and his family could live. Some churches still continue the practice. The O'Dells had lived in a manse on Winton Road which had been purchased by the church. The Chapmans expressed a desire to live much closer to the church, and preferably in the same neighborhood. As a consequence a home on Mt. Hope Avenue was purchased using the proceeds of the sale of the manse on Winton Road, and further commitment by the church membership. The house they purchased had a number of places in need of repair, and interior renovation. This sparked the imagination of the women and men of the church. The women made curtains, washed walls and painted, and renovated all the cupboards and closets, while the men gathered together to sand and refinish floors, repair windows and clean out the garage and make it usable.

During these years, the little church was filled to overflowing most Sundays and the balcony was regularly filled as well, with some late-comers being seated on metal folding chairs in the Narthex. When Easter and Palm Sunday rolled around the Session wisely planned ahead and voted to hold two services, and early one at 9:00 a.m. and a second one at 11:00 a.m. Most of the regular members who attended weekly took advantage of the early service and nearly filled the church at 9:00 a.m. while many visitors and occasional attendees together with many members with families almost burst the walls outward at 11:00 a.m. On some occasions, the young peoples' group had already attended a Sunrise Service in one of the



surrounding parks at 6:30 a.m.

It was becoming evident that the little church structure was fast becoming outgrown. It was noted at the Annual Congregational Meeting in 1949 that membership had grown to 351, which of course did not include children in the Sunday School prior to their confirmation, of which there was a large group.

Many church activities were started during these years, as well as some continued from past years. The Women's Auxiliary purchased a new stove in 1950 to augment the older one that had been in use for years for church suppers. With the additional cooking facilities, some very well received dinner traditions began. The Sauerkraut suppers first mentioned in 1948 were continued and drew mammoth crowds. Also on the yearly agenda were other favorites like Ham Dinners, Roast Beef Dinners, Mother and Daughter Banquets and Smorgasbords. Many dedicated members of the church spent long hours cooking, setting up tables, serving the meals, washing dishes and cleaning up after the dinner was over. The socializing opportunities afforded by these projects and the ensuing meals generated a great deal of interest in the church and in other people in the community. Some of them came to church afterwards, liked what they saw, and joined the membership.

The young people of the church started a new weekly program called the Westminster Fellowship, which drew quite a large group of teenage and older members every Sunday Night. The Men's Club was also very active and quite regularly took on clean up and repair projects around the church. They also held an annual picnic, a great affair which was attended by most of the members plus friends, some of whom began to attend church as well. Regular meetings of the Men's Club with programs of speakers, films, etc. were also popular and attracted quite a following.

In 1950 the lot to the east of the church was purchased and planning began to determine how the little church could best grow in size. In November 1950 a special congregational meeting was called to discuss the needs and to review plans submitted by architect Donald Walzer for a new church school/social hall addition. This plan called for a separate building situated 20 feet south of the church structure. The 20 foot airway between the building was planned as a possible expansion of the church sanctuary itself, subsequently joining the two buildings.

The building was cement block, two stories, 84 feet long by 41 feet wide, faced with red brick to match that of the church closely as possible. The congregation decided to go ahead as planned and a finance campaign was launched in January 1951. After a successful campaign with enough funds

pledged to allow the remainder of the cost to be carried in a mortgage, a ground breaking ceremony was held on July 5, 1953.

It was during this period of growth that a troubling situation arose surrounding the music program. In September of 1951 Hugh Hayward, a U.of R. medical student approached the minister, Rev. Chapman, and some members of the Session, asking to be allowed to direct the choir. It was his opinion that because of the divided chancel and the location of the organ that the task of directing was best handled by someone other than the organist. After pressing the Session for months it was decided to let Mr. Hayward work with the choir on a volunteer basis. In November 1952 he was hired on a trial arrangement until Easter of 1953. Mrs. Fischer reluctantly agreed to give up the position of choir director but remain as organist. The choir was unhappy with this situation but agreed to try the arrangement. Then Mr. Hayward approached the Session a second time and said that there was really no need to spend money on two employees, organist and choir director. He felt that he was suited to doing the whole job. Mrs. Fischer was discharged and this was the beginning of a period of strife in the church.

The following is a quote from the Session minutes of April 1, 1953. "...the Session met to discuss the problem of church music. Lengthy discussion was held concerning the solution of the problem. The present choir director cannot continue for same salary, but particularly difficult is the matter of dissension and jealousy between older members of the choir and more recent persons. Motion was made that Mrs. Fischer, present organist, be released because of lack of cooperation and that the choir director be employed as organist and choirmaster with complete authority, new arrangement to begin April 12th. "

The choir was angered by Mrs. Fischer's dismissal, as were a number of the congregational members. A meeting resulted at which time the choirmaster, organist and choir members all freely spoke their minds. There was much bitterness among the choir members at the way Mrs. Fischer had been treated and bitterness on the part of Mr. Hayward who felt the conflict was caused by the organist and older members of the choir. The Session, faced with paying Mr. Hayward a salary which the church could not afford and worse, a possible split in the church, voted to dispense with Mr. Hayward's services, disband the choir and hire another organist and a soloist to provide the music for Sunday services until September of that year.

As a result the choir members left the church, some vowing never to return until Mrs. Fischer was reinstated. Charles Wilson was hired with the task of building a new choir. Over the course of the next year a small choir was formed and a few of the former choir members began to return. This

was the post-war period of church growth across the country and that was reflected in South Church. As a result, on Easter Sunday three services were held, one so crowded that folding chairs were set up on one side of the central aisle. Charles Wilson did not wish to play at the eight a.m. Easter service and so the Session approached Mrs. Fischer, asking her to play, which she did. In February 1955 Mr. Wilson resigned to become organist and choir director at another church. Mrs. Fischer was once again hired but refused the position of choir director. Charles Fowler was hired as choir director and the building of a quality music program commenced.

From that time to the present South Church has been blessed with a series of talented choir directors and dedicated choir members. Whatever the program has lacked in size, the quality has been consistently high.

At the annual congregational meeting on January 12, 1953, the church membership was stated as 511, and again on January 11, 1954, it had gone up to 526. Everyone enjoyed the new building and the opportunity to spread out a bit after being cramped for so long in the smaller quarters. There were the occasional "growing pains" where the new building was proposed for such usage's as were considered inappropriate by the members, but the Sunday School loved the new arrangements and the new church office found its way into the new building quite rapidly as well. Now that the church possessed a stage and an impromptu auditorium, many new activities suggested themselves such as big potluck dinners, plays and performances, enhanced community dinners with larger and better serving facilities, wedding receptions, Christmas pageants, etc. In 1954 the Session put on a variety show that included acts by many of the church members.

In 1954, a new stained glass window was placed on the west wall of the sanctuary opposite the "Taylor window" in memory of one of the early church members, a Mr. Pepper, by his widow Jean Pepper.

One note of interest in the January 11, 1955 annual meeting minutes was a report from the Women's Auxiliary having held three community dinners, a March fish fry, and April Smorgasbord, and a November Sauerkraut dinner, the profits from which aggregated very nearly \$2200. At that meeting, membership was stated to be 603.

During the year 1955, the Session concurred with Reverend Chapman that a student assistant could help out greatly in the life of such a big growing congregation. As a consequence a young Rochester Colgate Divinity School student was engaged for his study year to fill that position.

Another item of interest was the mention of a Hungarian refugee who was "adopted" and offered living quarters by members of the church.

In late 1955 choir director Charles Fowler resigned, and was followed by

Edward W. Taylor, Jr. Mr. Taylor sparked South Presbyterian Church Choir to great enthusiasm with a lot of new music, occasions of orchestral music as accompaniment, several large cantatas, and even several Gilbert and Sullivan operettas performed on the stage of the Fellowship Hall.

Membership in the church continued to grow, reaching 669 in 1956 and 680 in 1957.

In 1957 the Chapmans decided that the manse on Mt. Hope avenue no longer filled their needs, and consequently the Mt. Hope manse was sold and one at 103 Reservoir Avenue was purchased. This house was not a new house and required some repairs so various church members pitched in and made many of the changes. There is a special notation after Easter in 1957 that 736 worshippers took part in the two Easter services.

Finally in 1959 after many years of multiple services in the smaller sanctuary, plans were made and financing was devised that would enable the church to go ahead with its former plan of joining the existing sanctuary with the Fellowship Hall building, a move that would extend the sanctuary by almost 20 feet and increase the seating capacity substantially. The church membership in 1959 was 732, and most Sunday services were attended by large enough groups to fill the sanctuary and the balcony for both services. At a special congregational meeting on March 8, 1959 the plans were approved and a final go ahead was made, seconded and carried unanimously.

The large stained glass window that was in the south wall of the sanctuary, a gift of Dr. Augusta McCord in memory of her Aunt Mary Alice McCord would of course need to be removed for this extension, so it was moved to its present location above the balcony in the north Wall. The new south wall, designed by Walzer and Miller, consisted of a prominent pair of Flemish Header columns enclosing a recessed area containing a back-lighted cross. This beautiful design won the architects a prize. The new sanctuary, after refurbishing with new pews and a new chancel had seating for 400 persons, about 100 more than the smaller sanctuary offered.

The 1959 annual meeting minutes noted that the South Presbyterian Church Men's Club was being disbanded and would contribute their treasury to the church funds.

The new addition was dedicated on March 13, 1960. After 12 very productive years at South Presbyterian Church, Reverend Fremont Chapman requested that his pastoral relationship with the church be dissolved to enable him to answer a call from the First Presbyterian Church of Batavia, NY. The congregation approved the request with regrets and set up a new pulpit committee to search for a replacement pastor.

After some months of search, a new pastor Donald W. Cashen was

proposed and was accepted by the congregation on December 11, 1960.

Prior to 1962 whenever the church received a memorial gift, it was acknowledged by letter with thanks, and then generally applied against the purchase of a memorial item. Often it was an item specified by the donor, usually an accoutrement for the chancel, the pulpit or the communion table. In early 1962 a set of by-laws setting out the rules for the use of memorial gifts was written and approved, and a special book was purchased in which to place on public view those gifts received and their donors.

The new sanctuary was floored with asphalt tiles when it was first dedicated and in June of 1962 carpeting was laid down both side aisles and the center aisle as well, which made for a much quieter atmosphere during services.

Reverend Donald Cashen and his family expressed their desire to purchase their own home and draw a housing allowance rather than living in a church owned home. At a June 25, 1962 special congregational meeting this request was approved as well as the proposal to sell the manse on Reservoir Avenue. After the sale of the manse, the proceeds of the sale were used to construct new rooms in the old basement of the original church. Furniture and equipment was purchased as well, to complement the new rooms.

An interesting development in 1963 was a Puerto Rican seminar in which sixteen young people and two adults participated. The youth of South Church traveled to Puerto Rico during Easter vacation and were involved in work projects in El Guacio. They had a chance to become acquainted with the people, to live with them, and to share meals, work and fun times. As history shows, this popular seminar was repeated annually for several years.

The church set up a Christian Education Department in 1964 with Margaret Shearer as the first Director of Christian Education. Also, a policy was decided upon which would govern Sabbatical and Study Leaves of Absence by church staff members. The special Christian Education Department with its paid staff was terminated in 1966 after only two years in order to help balance the 1966 budget.

In April of 1966 a new endeavor, the University Heights Nursery School, requested use of church quarters beginning in September. This was the beginning of a very amiable association which was to continue for almost 30 years.

The South Presbyterian Church Choir, through their director, Mr. Edward Taylor requested permission to make a record of selected church music sung by the choir. Approval was granted and a large number of records was sold to the congregation and friends of the church to defray the costs of the recording and pressing of the record. Many church

members still have copies of this record in their music collections.

In the wake of the continuing annual Puerto Rican Seminar, the entire congregation received a terrible shock in April of 1968 when it was announced that Elder Alexander Elliott, Jr. died in El Guacio, Puerto Rico during the seminar. Alex Elliott was one of the adults accompanying the group of young people on the trip.

Later on in 1968, a special congregational meeting was held to act on Reverend Donald Cashen's request to dissolve his pastoral relationship. The request was granted and October 7, 1968 was set as his last day in the South Presbyterian Church pulpit. A pulpit nominating committee was convened and began the task of finding a replacement pastor. In the interim, Reverend Irwin W. Underhill, a retired minister, came out of retirement and began to serve as stated supply during the period of the pastoral search. This association continued until the second Sunday in August of 1969.

The change of church staff begun with the loss of Reverend Cashen was continued in 1968 as Edward Taylor, Director of Music sent his letter of resignation to the Session, to become effective December 1, 1968. Mr. Taylor left to head the music program at Pittsford Presbyterian Church. Zena Baranowski, a church member, was hired as a temporary director and stayed 10 years.

A special congregational meeting was held in June of 1969 to consider the pulpit committee's recommendation to issue a call to Reverend Larry L. Hickle of Binghamton, New York. During this meeting a standing ovation was enjoyed by Reverend Irwin Underhill in recognition of his much appreciated service in so aptly filling the pulpit on short notice and for such a protracted period. That same month the congregation pooled its efforts to put on a big Strawberry Festival on June 14th. The service of installation of Reverend Larry L. Hickle was held on October 19, 1969.

Some major changes were taking place in Rochester during the late 1960's as in many other communities as well. Differences of opinion over social issues affected membership in many churches. Our church was no exception. Mention is made in the minutes of the annual Congregational Meeting that a special resolution was drafted and approved to censure the actions of one Saul Alinsky, a militant social reformer, who had instigated a movement in Rochester and elsewhere called "Fight". Also, the congregation made plain its opposition to the conflict in Viet Nam. On another occasion, another resolution was passed regarding the opposition of South Presbyterian Church to the Rochester School Board's decision to begin bussing students to schools outside the #49 School area, and bussing students from other parts of the city in to #49 School. The policy remained

in force however, and subsequently became one of the motivating forces that caused people in the community to begin to move into the suburbs to avoid the consequences. Despite all the confusing events in 1970, the congregation began making plans to celebrate their 75th anniversary. The culmination of their plans was a day of celebration held on June 7, 1970.

The church under the pastorate of Larry Hickle continued to address many of the varied social issues of the times. Seminars were held, talk sessions were common, and films and training booklets were used to help the congregation identify with those issues and determine what their role should be in confronting the problems that arose out of the various issues.

Reverend Hickle became instrumental in bringing worship gatherings to the new suburban community of Riverton. The new development was without a church or a pastor, so Rev. Hickle spent part of his week getting to know the people and providing pastoral care for them. Meanwhile, Miss Jane Rathman was engaged to fill in for Reverend Hickle on his days at Riverton.

To make South Presbyterian Church more visible to people in the community, special flags were erected along the sidewalk leading into Fellowship Hall. On the side wall of fellowship hall, banners made by women of the church greeted those entering. Each of these banners was designed around a central theme and symbols were chosen and affixed that depicted the chosen theme. Many non-members were using Fellowship Hall as well as the first floor rooms for their activities. The University Heights Nursery School was in attendance in the mornings. The Monroe Developmental Center used 2,500 square feet of the building for two years between 1972 and march of 1974. A great deal of effort was expended to identify possible renters in Fellowship Hall in an attempt to balance the annual budget in the face of decreasing membership and increasing costs of operation. In 1975 a zoning change was entertained with the city planning board to allow a day-care center entitled "Play Care" to operate in the building. Nothing came of the operation however, as the motion was defeated in June of 1975 at a special congregational meeting.

During January of 1976 a new spot was inserted into the order of worship with the inauguration of a "Children's Moment", which included children from kindergarten age and older sitting with their parents during the first fifteen minutes of the service and being dismissed to Church School at the end of the special children's sermonette. This beneficial way of including the children in the worship service has been continued up to the present time.

A special congregational meeting was called in June, 1976 to take appropriate action concerning Reverend Hickle's request to become a part-

time pastor to the Mumford Presbyterian Church. The action was dropped a little later when the Mumford congregation refused to reschedule their worship service to 9:30 a.m. to allow Reverend Hickle time to drive back in to Rochester in time for an 11:00 a.m. service at South Presbyterian Church.

Until 1976 the annual congregational meeting had always been held in the evening. In an attempt to get more people to attend these important meetings a change was made to the by-laws of the church allowing a shift in timing so the annual meeting could be held following the morning worship service. Over the years since 1976 this practice has become a tradition with the serving of a light luncheon prior to the meeting to induce people to stay.

In a further attempt to make the church more visible in the community the session voted to install large aluminum letters across the face of the bell tower informing all passers-by that this was South Presbyterian Church. A bid from Granger Wilson was accepted and the new letters were installed in the spring of 1978.

In June of 1978 the choir director, Zena Baranowski offered her resignation to the Session after a number of years of fine music at worship services. Soon after, a new director, Gregory Catrett was engaged and began leading the choir in October of 1978.

A major step for the congregation was taken in April of 1979 with the decision to sponsor a Vietnamese family in Rochester. The Luans were introduced to the United States and their new home town and were settled at 780 South Avenue. Work was found by Mr. Luan, and the children began attending schools in the neighborhood. Much support was given by the congregation during this integration process.

At the 1980 Annual Congregational Meeting, the Martin Guild of the Women's Association announced that they were disbanding. Those assembled voted them special recognition for their many accomplishments over the years. Also, the church changed the by-laws to allow members of the Session and the Board of Deacons to serve two consecutive terms. Special recognition was made of the Deacon's "Caring Program". 1980 was the occasion of the 85th anniversary of the church and plans began in February to celebrate the event with a special Sunday program on June 15, 1980. Other peripheral events were a Pot Luck Supper and a slide show, a Strawberry Festival, a special Coffee Hour following the June 15th service and a historical booklet was made up by member Mabel Crellin. 300 copies of the booklet were printed and some of these are still in existence in various members memorabilia.

In that same year the oil-fired boiler heating the church developed problems so extensive that it would have cost almost as much to repair it as



it would to replace it with a gas-fired unit. A successful fund raising campaign resulted in the installation of the new boiler.

On October 20, 1980, Reverend Hickle announced that he accepted a call from First Presbyterian Church in Delaware, Ohio. The final dissolution of his pastoral relationship was voted at a special congregational meeting on November 16, 1980.

In January of 1981 the Personnel Nominating Committee suggested Reverend Linda Brebner as an interim minister, and in March the position was offered to her, which she accepted. In July of 1982 the congregation voted to extend a call to Dr. C. Raymond Trout. He accepted the call and was formally installed on September 19, 1982.

During the mid 1980's, in an effort to make our church more accessible to the handicapped, two improvements were made. A chair lift was installed to permit easy access to the sanctuary from the parking lot entrance. At the same time, a "hearing loop" induction amplifier system was installed to help those with hearing impairments enjoy the worship service.

Early in 1985 an organ task force was formed to locate a suitable instrument to replace the electronic organ which had developed a habit of interrupting the worship with a strident noise that indicated its early demise. The task force, headed by Gregory Catrett, began investigating both pipe organs and electronic organs. The search continued for over a year to locate a suitable organ at a cost the church felt it could manage.

It was in 1986, during the organ search, that Ernstine Fischer retired having served with distinction for over thirty-three years. At that time the position of organist and choir director was combined and remains so to the present day.

In December of 1986 the Organ Task Force announced that it had located a tracker pipe organ in Syracuse which appeared suitable.. Upon approval by the congregation it was decided to purchase the Syracuse instrument, a seventeen rank tracker organ built by Ernst Leeflang in the Netherlands. An engineering survey of the balcony structure was made and after reinforcing the existing joists with larger, more frequent beams and joists, the new organ was moved in, installed and tuned, making ready for its first recital.

The new organ was dedicated at a recital by Mr. Richard D. Erickson, Dean of the Rochester Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and Senior Associate in Organ at the Eastman School of Music. Seven different works for the organ were chosen to portray the skills of Mr. Erickson and the remarkable range and capability of the new organ. The recital on October 4, 1987 was followed by a special reception in the Fellowship Hall.

In April of 1988 the Choir Director, Greg Catrett regretfully resigned, such a short time after he had assisted in the installation of the new organ. A new choir director and organist, Bruce D. McClung was appointed to fill the upcoming opening. Mr. McClung was an Eastman School of Music Doctoral student. When Mr. McClung graduated in 1992 he was succeeded by Neil Harmon, another Eastman Doctoral student, who serves to the present day. For the past forty years the choir has been a close knit group, led by a series of wonderful, much loved directors who have brought unique qualities to the church music program.

In May of 1990, Dr. Ray Trout advised the Session that he had been chosen by the Presbyterian Church National Headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky to fill a position concerned with the church's family ministry, which he accepted pending his release from his pastoral relationship on July 8, 1990.

Due to severe budget restrictions it was decided to specify a Stated Supply Pastor on a part-time basis. After hearing and interviewing several applicants, the Chaplain of the Rochester Presbyterian Home, Reverend Bruce Billman was recommended to the congregation. They voted to accept the recommendation and Reverend Billman accepted the dual responsibility of half-time pastor and the continuing chaplaincy at the Home in October 1990.

Two problems ensued shortly after Reverend Billman became the new pastor. The first was the training of a new church secretary even while he himself was becoming familiar with the church administration. These tasks he accomplished with great aplomb even in the face of considerable personal frustration.

The second problem was the shock of finding that the Church Bell had been stolen from out of the bell tower. For several months the Sunday Worship Service went unannounced while the search continued to try to locate the old bell and perhaps try to buy it back. It had a special inscription cast into its form that was particularly pleasing to one and all who knew of it. The bell, however was not discovered so attempts were made to have a new one cast identical to the old one. This was where the congregation began to really understand the monetary value of the lost bell. Church insurance would not cover nearly enough to pay for having a new bell cast. Then, remarkably a comparable bell, with an even older history, back to Civil War times was found at a barn sale in Henrietta. The church purchased the bell and had it installed in the place of the pilfered original. Once again the good news could ring out as the congregation prepared to worship God and ponder the good news of the ineffable love told out in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When Bruce McClung tendered his resignation in 1993 to accept a

teaching position in Ohio, a fine replacement was found in the person of Neil Harmon, a young Eastman School of Music Master, who was then working towards his Doctorate in Music. Neil accepted the position and has filled the post admirably up until the present time.

South Presbyterian Church still struggles each year to meet its modest budget. Church membership stands at 229 at its last count in January 1995. Fully 70% of its members have been members for at least 10 years, many for 20 to 25 years and some for even longer.

As one looks across the congregation assembled on a Sunday morning, the gray hairs of age are apparent on many of the bowed heads. There are many that are younger, of course, and quite a few of the children eagerly await Reverend Billman's illustrative Children's Moment sermonette and the subsequent trek down the stair to their instruction rooms.

South Presbyterian Church continues to remain faithful to its heritage of service in the community and warmth of friendship and love. Having studied the pursuits and accomplishments of the church in the years since its founding, the congregation seems predisposed towards perpetuating the good things started so long ago in 1895!

Although we are proud of "our little church upon the hill", we must remember that it's growth and influence are due to the sacrifice, work and devotion of many individuals. South Presbyterian Church has a rich heritage which can and should be the impetus for future service. What better epigram could we add to the history of the church than that portion of a verse borrowed by Mabel Crellin in the first part of this history, "From toil to triumph may you clearly see, this is our wish: 'the best is yet to be'".

#### Pastors Serving West Brighton Chapel Society

The Rev. Mr. Ingram Bill	1895
The Rev. Mr. Earl Rugg	1911-1912
The Rev. Mr. Ernest Davis	1911-1913
The Rev. Mr. W. S. Webb	1914-
The Rev. Mr. L. M. Bristol	
The Rev. Mr. Roy Barnett	1914-
The Rev. Mr. Samuel Newman	1915-
The Rev. Mr. Winford Sharp	1916-1917
The Rev. Mr. Holdt Smith S. S. *	1920-1921
The Rev. Mr. William Weller S. S. *	1922

Note: Some of these were Divinity School Students

\* Stated Supply

### Pastors Serving South Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Mr. Arthur Talman	1923-1929
The Rev. Mr. Paul Rider	1929-1931
The Rev. Mr. William A. Hallock	1932-1935
The Rev. Mr. Thomas S. Goddard	1935-1938
The Rev. Mr. Garner S. O'dell	1938-1946
The Rev. Mr. Robert Divine	1946-1948
The Rev. Mr. Fremont L. Chapman	1948-1960
The Rev. Mr. Donald W. Cashen	1960-1968
The Rev. Dr. Larry L. Hickle	1969-1980
The Rev. Linda Brebner	1981
The Rev. Dr. C. Raymond Trout	1982-1990
The Rev. Mr. Bruce E. Billman	1990-

Note: Mr. Arthur Talman served both churches

### Commissioners to the General Assembly

1950 Harry J. Babcock  
1960 Robert C. Worthy  
1963 Charles Thompson  
1973 Mrs. Derek Foster (Heather Elliot)  
1975 Mrs. Emerson Bush (Hildegarde)

### Commissioners to the SYNOD of the Northeast

1941 Edward Schuback  
1954 Edward Chamberlain  
1958 Claude Rowell  
1964 George Doremus  
1969 Charles Thompson

### 100th Anniversary Committee

The Rev. Bruce Billman, Moderator  
Carol Curtiss, Chair  
Emerson Bush  
Hildegarde Bush  
Shelly Carithers  
Ruth Dempsey  
Joe Hellmuth

Merle Hyldahl  
Mille Hyldahl  
Ernstine Rickner  
Thomas Rickner

### Mission of South Presbyterian Church

The Mission of our Church is given form and content by God's activity in the world as told in the Biblical story and understood by our faith. Our mission manifests itself in...

- proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ
- developing a system of Christian education which seeks to encourage the full potential of children, youth and adults
- recognizing the needs of the nearby community and developing appropriate ways to respond
- developing programs to respond to personal growth needs and personal crises
- depending on members to assure their responsibilities to support and preserve the life of this church as a place unique in the community and in the life of its members.

Adapted from the Statement of Mission: Adopted by the Session in 1976.