

An adaptation by Amy Morriss from the pamphlet

A History of the Swarthmore Presbyterian Church:

In commemoration of its Centennial Anniversary 1895 - 1995

By Ruth Crissey, Church Archivist

Chapter I - 1895 to 1896

On November 16, 1895, a committee appointed by Chester Presbytery met with twenty-four charter members and laid the groundwork for the congregation. The initial service was on the first Sunday in December at 11:45 a.m. with fifty people present. It was held at the Strath Haven Inn (where Strath Haven Condominiums now are). Sunday School for seventy children met at 2:30 at Major Porter's home. The evening service was at 7:30 at the Inn.

On January 16, 1896, the [charter](#) was read, adopted and voted to be filed at the Media Courthouse. Officers were elected, a schedule of pew rentals was established and a special collection each Communion Sunday for a Session Fund was authorized.

One of the charter members was Frederick Simons, the inspiration and facilitator for much of the church's beginning. He was a silversmith and thimble manufacturer with his father in Philadelphia in one of the largest companies of its kind in the country at that time. He owned Strath Haven Inn which the congregation used and gave the land on which the church was built. He also gave \$1000 toward building costs and underwrote the \$10,000 mortgage "to be paid off at will."

The project of immediate concern to the members was [building a church](#). A contract was signed with Isaac Walker & Son to build the sanctuary designed by William Price. It was modeled after a chapel in Brittany with a corner bell tower, seating for 243 people and the interior finished with Flemish oak. Guests at the Strath Haven Inn contributed generously to the fund for stained glass windows, especially the one over the original pulpit area known as the cornerstone window, "Jesus Knocking at the Door." The rose window was installed at that time, but to date no reference has been found to it or to the artisan who crafted the windows.

[Henry Ezekiel Jackson](#) came to the attention of the congregation while he was still a student at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was called April 20, graduated from Princeton in June and preached his first sermon on June 7. His subject for the morning service was "True Emphasis."

The cornerstone of the new building was laid Friday, July 24, 1896, at 8 p.m. Construction was complete for Rev. Jackson's installation in September. The first infant baptism was on October 11, and other churches were invited to the first Thanksgiving service. An enthusiastic first anniversary celebration was on December 1. Also in December, the Women's Society of the Presbyterian Church was formed.

Chapter II - 1899 to 1906

The first of many outreach concerns ahead of their time is recorded in 1899 when the church "allowed" Mrs. Davis of Anniston, Alabama, the use of the church on Sunday morning, April 23, to present the cause of the College for Colored Girls in that city. This same year the Women's Society of the Presbyterian Church changed its name to the Women's Aid and Missionary Society. The Boys Brigade, a forerunner of Boy Scouts, attracted many members; and a chapter of the King's Messengers, a group for young women and girls to study home and foreign missions was active.

In 1901 the first hint of enlarging the church was mentioned. The decision was made to call on members and adherents to solicit volunteer pledges thus making all pews free of rental. The need for additional Sunday

School space was met by the Gibbons family of Springfield who offered \$10,000 toward a Sunday School building to be given in memory of their niece, May [Loeffler](#). \$10,000 was added to the Gibbons' gift by the church. The entire first floor of the new construction was one room with a glassed-in area at the back for special classes. At the opposite end was a stage over which was installed a beautiful stained glass window, a reproduction of the famous Copley painting showing the young Samuel talking with Eli, the high priest of Israel (I Samuel 3). The building was dedicated in December 1903. Eventually an enclosed walkway was built to connect the sanctuary and the chapel.

1906 was the next pivotal year for the congregation. In January, the dissatisfaction with Sunday School came to a head and reorganization became essential. New teachers were recruited, adult women's and men's classes were formed and a junior department was created. At a special meeting in March, Rev. Jackson resigned, having received another call. Rev. George A. Marr, already active in church life, served as interim pastor.

Chapter III - 1908 to 1915

[Rev. William M. Woodfin](#) of Christiana, Tennessee was presented to Session February 29, 1908, and was installed in May of that year. Rev. Woodfin was conservative in his thinking. He had a special interest in temperance and organized and led a "No License" campaign which reduced the number of saloons and curtailed their activity in Delaware County. He was also very keenly interested in the young people of the church. He trained them for membership by the communicant-class method. From this practice he compiled a small text book for the preparation of young people for Communion of which over 20,000 copies were published and used nationwide.

Under Rev. Woodfin's leadership, the church undertook the support of a foreign missionary for the first time, and the congregation voted to take an offering for the San Francisco churches destroyed by the fire and earthquake. 1908 was the year the Ladies Aid and Missionary Society decided to become two separate groups. The manse committee purchased property adjoining the church and planned a campaign to collect subscriptions to pay for it.

The church was known for its splendid record of attendance, and the membership was increasing to the point of outnumbering the seating capacity of the sanctuary. Again talk of enlarging the facilities began. A building committee was formed to create a new addition northward to accommodate the men's and women's Bible classes, a church parlor, kitchen and one or two other classrooms. Monthly amounts of one dollar for debt payment and the building extension were begun and lasted for three years. The Knights of Christian Courtesy bought the first bond issued. Originally called the Women's Building, we now know it as the [Parish Building](#) which made the connection between the sanctuary and Loeffler Chapel complete.

In 1911 Paul Landis became the first candidate for the ministry from the church. He was given to the care of Chester Presbytery and studied at Lafayette College. The original \$10,000 mortgage was satisfied in 1912 just before the depression of 1913-1915 set in and the start of World War I. The mood of the country intensified the success of "Home Prayer Meetings" which were held in different sections of the borough in preparation for Reverend Billy Sunday's campaign in Philadelphia. All church members were urged to attend. In 1915 Rev. Woodfin was called to a larger church and resigned. Again Rev. George Marr became interim pastor.

Chapter IV - 1916 to 1936

With the coming of [Dr. John Ellery Tuttle](#) in 1916, the church seemed to spread its wings and venture into unknown and exciting territory. At sixty-one years of age, Dr. Tuttle was the oldest pastor called to the church's pulpit and served the longest term, twenty years. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Amherst with a Master's from Yale Seminary and a Doctorate from Amherst, Dr. Tuttle was an unusual pastor. The records tell

that he was "a rare combination of a leader and a practical mind, a scholar with a broad point of view, a good speaker and a great sympathetic friend." He proved to have a tolerance for dissenting views also.

Dr. Tuttle's first years were not easy, however. Not only was there a war on people's minds, there was also the danger of a spread of infantile paralysis. The Board of Health closed the Sunday School indefinitely in September of 1916. Just before Christmas word came of the death of Lieut. Harold Ainsworth, 24th US Aviation Service attached to the British Royal Flying Corps. He was the first Swarthmore serviceman to die in the war and the only one from the church. When war was declared on Germany in 1917, fifty-one members of the church congregation left for service within the next year.

In 1918 Dr. Tuttle conducted a personal canvass to clear the church debt and increase the Building Fund, all weekday appointments were transferred to private homes to conserve the church's coal supply and the custom was started of presenting pulpit flowers in the memory of loved ones. In 1919 the first of many outreach programs was begun which involved a great portion of the church family. There was a large Italian settlement near the old Fairview Presbyterian Church (now known as Leiper Church). A stone mason who lived at the settlement worked on Grace Livingston Hill's home and told her of their great desire for religious work among them. At her suggestion, the people petitioned Swarthmore Presbyterian Church for help. The result was the Fairview Mission. Then unused, the Fairview Church was taken over for religious services including Sunday morning, Sunday School and mid-week prayer services. Classes in English and homemaking instruction were begun. The Trustees, Session and individual members of the church provided funds to rehabilitate the Fairview Church building, and thus it became a regular branch of the work of Swarthmore Church. All services and classes were conducted by volunteers.

These were busy years in the church, and many groups flourished and enjoyed large membership. The Christian Endeavor Society, the Sunday School classes for children and adults, the women's groups and the missionary societies for young people, the [musical activities](#) were at their peak in the history of the church. There was a church orchestra, a Men's Brotherhood Chorus, a young people's Chapel Choir, boys and girls choirs and the Chancel Choir.

Rev. Marr had become interested in the efforts of the black community of Swarthmore to establish a church. Through his efforts land was acquired and a church built. It became the [Swarthmore Wesley AME Church](#), and their first service before their building was complete was held at Swarthmore Presbyterian Church, October 1921.

In spite of the 1920-1922 depression, the [extension](#) of the church building was accomplished by 1922 with gratitude for Dr. Tuttle's personal canvass. The chancel was added to the west, expanded seating to the east and a narthex. This meant destruction of the tower which so distinguished the original design, and the bell was given to Leiper Church. The renovation included memorial gifts of the pulpit, lectern, baptismal font and Austin organ among others. The first services held in the new sanctuary were December 24, 1922. On January 9, 1923, Dr. Andrews of Oberlin College played a recital on the new organ at its formal opening. This ten-ton instrument with 1,781 pipes is still in use, having been through many additions and alterations through the years.

The building expansion seemed to signal growth in other areas of church life. With a membership at 600, the number of people on Session and the Board of Trustees increased; the Sunday School needed more room and members were continuing to give gifts for the new sanctuary. The congregation was proud of the election of Dr. Tuttle to be Moderator of Presbytery in 1924, but was saddened by the death of Rev. Marr. In his memory the first special fund was established. A \$6000 scholarship fund was in place by 1926 which provided loans "for a student preparing for the ministry or any other specific Christian service."

The growth of Sunday School necessitated the creation of a Council of Religious Education which reported to the Session. A Director of Christian Education, was employed to work with the council and portions of Loeffler Chapel were glassed in to make additional class space for the nearly 500 children who registered.

With the start of the Depression in 1929, many changes took place, some by necessity. The women's groups merged into the Women's Association, and their work for the impoverished increased greatly. Staff and choir salaries were cut, and within two years the choirs consisted of more volunteers than formerly. By 1934 the regular Vespers and Midweek Prayer services were discontinued. In addition to pledging money for church support and benevolences, the membership received another pledge card which was most unusual. People were asked to fill out a "Worship by Service" form. "I hereby enter into covenant with God to do the things I have checked on this card for the year ending Easter Day, 1935." It included every possible kind of volunteer effort, such as praying, reading the Bible, teaching, singing, maintenance, office work and transportation.

When Dr. Tuttle resigned in 1936 at age eighty-two, the church had grown to the point of having a church secretary and a financial secretary in addition to the Director of Christian Education.

Chapter V - 1937 to 1948

[David Braun](#) was assistant minister at the Park Central Church in Syracuse, NY, and University Pastor at Syracuse University when he was called to Swarthmore. A native of Nebraska, he was the son of Dutch Mennonite parents who had been born in southern Russia. He was a graduate of York University in York, Nebraska, and an honors graduate of Yale Divinity School. He was described as a man of fine social vision with a high degree of adaptability to every situation and a wonderful sense of humor. His installation on May 13, 1937, began an era of widening horizons for the church.

In 1938 the "newest and most perfected type of sound amplification equipment" was installed for Palm and Easter Sundays, extending the service to the Parish Building where additional seating capacity was added. Two years later the system was extended to Loeffler Chapel and the Kindergarten room to accommodate service overflow. A college-age class was added to the Sunday School.

In spite of the start of World War II in 1939, the church continued to prosper. By 1940 all debts were paid, and the Trustees began reviewing the needs of the Sunday School. In 1941 preliminary plans for a new Sunday School building were prepared, and a building fund committee was established to secure pledges. In this year the Women's Association started summer "porch meetings" to continue their work, especially sewing for outreach programs. The Association also started circles "to give women in a growing congregation a chance to know each other, share and strengthen religious life and serve the community both at home and abroad." The declaration of war on Japan and Germany brought changes in the church, but at the same time growth was taking place that started the congregation in a new direction. One hundred and twenty-one members served in the armed forces, and war-related activities were paramount. In 1942, at the invitation of the Presbyterian Emergency Service Commission, Rev. Braun spent the month of January in a special ministry to preach and counsel at the Army camp area at Newport News, Virginia.

In 1943 a [Board of Deacons](#) and Deaconesses was installed. The broad purpose of this board was "to help make the social influence of the church as strong as its spiritual force in the life of the community." It worked in four fields -- adult education, community service, parish service and war service. In this year the Philadelphia Presbytery was reorganized, and Swarthmore became part of it. Through the years many church members have served with distinction on Presbytery assignments such as vice-moderator, committee chair and committee membership.

Even though the war affected everyone's life and another epidemic caused all children's church activities to be shut down by the Health Officer, the membership grew large enough that an [assistant minister](#) was needed. H. Lewis Cutler was called in 1946 and served for two years. A Braille class was added to the curriculum of the Sunday School, a Men's Chorus was formed and the Women's Association activities in sewing, outreach, Bible study and monetary support for the church were outstanding.

Rev. Braun was taken ill in 1947 and died in December of that year. He was eulogized as a man "unusually gifted with the word of God" who brought distinction to the church through his important assignments in national Presbyterian affairs. The new Sunday School Building in which he had been so interested had been deferred because of unsettled conditions. When it was completed in 1951, it was named in his honor and his ashes were buried in the cornerstone. About six months after Rev. Braun died, Rev. Cutler was called to a church in New Jersey. This left the church without ministerial staff, but the Pastoral Nominating Committee had been fortunate in finding Reverend Joseph P. Bishop, who preached in July 1948 and was installed in September.

Chapter VI - 1948 to 1958

[Rev. Bishop](#), a native of West Virginia, was a graduate of Washington and Jefferson College. He studied at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland and graduated from McCormick Seminary. He had served four years as a Navy Chaplain and had been pastor at the historic Fourth Presbyterian Church in Albany, NY. The nine years he served in Swarthmore were ones of growth and innovation. A Young Married Couples group was formed, a coffee hour after the Sunday Service was started, sponsored by the Deacons, and some students at Princeton Seminary came on weekends to be assistants in the Church School. These students taught in the Jr. High Department, did some counseling and home calling for the church and also served on the Swarthmore College Campus.

Work began in earnest on the Braun Building. The cornerstone was laid September 24, 1950, and the dedication took place a year later. At that time McCahan Hall occupied the entire second floor. It was named in honor of Dr. David McCahan, Professor at the Wharton School of University of Pennsylvania. Dr. McCahan was the Church School Superintendent for many years. In October, Rev. John Stettner became Assistant Minister and two Sunday services were begun as an experiment. Church School then met at 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. In 1951 the church acquired the Tomlinson House, across the street on the corner of Chester Road and Harvard Avenue, for Church School purposes. It became known as Junior House. An agreement was finalized with Swarthmore College for a driveway and parking area for the church, and a set of Schulmerich carillon bells were added to the organ. Rev. Bishop began a series of radio broadcasts over WFIL, Philadelphia, on Sunday evenings. Called "The Pastor's Study," the public was invited to call in.

The Deacons had supervised a Nursery Day School in the old manse at 727 Harvard Avenue which met mornings for five days a week. The manse was torn down when the Braun Building was built, and it wasn't until 1953 that the school as we know it was established in the church buildings. That year, too, the Ushers Association was formed as part of the Deacons' activities and office volunteers were begun. With the start of the Korean War, young men of the congregation went into service. Beginning in May, each week the Sunday bulletin contained a "Service Man of the Week" address, urging people to send cards and letters. In June, Rev. Stettner left, and in September, Rev. John Schott was installed as Assistant Pastor.

1955 was a special year for two reasons. The Women's Association's unbudgeted "opportunity giving" reached the most generous total on record. In February it was announced that "through the generosity of a particular friend of the choirs...and through the good help of some others, it is now assured that the adult choir will be able to fulfill its European tour." A number of people from the congregation accompanied the choir, whose itinerary included Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France. It had long been the desire of Donald Mathis, choir director, to make a good-will tour with a series of concerts in Protestant churches, schools, orphanages, hospitals and refugee camps to further international understanding and personal relationships among Christians through the medium of music. All that was accomplished, and the 34 choir members who went took with them gifts for hostesses and orphans that the women's circles had spent hundreds of hours making.

The following year, in conjunction with the World Council of Churches, a displaced German family was sponsored and settled by the church. Edward Campbell, Jr., a son of the church and a student at McCormick

Theological Seminary, was ordained into the ministry -- the first ordination ever held at Swarthmore. Rev. Thomas Hubbard, a student at Crozer Theological Seminary, was appointed student assistant in Christian Education as part of his required seminary field work.

In September 1957, after a successful ministry in Swarthmore, Rev. Bishop accepted a call to a larger church in Boston. The church membership had reached an all-time high of 1800, and 825 persons were enrolled in church school. Rev. Schott, who was to become Director of Christian Education upon the arrival of a new minister, was named Moderator and along with guest ministers supplied the pulpit. He was a very well-liked pastor, especially among the members of the communicants' class which he instructed in preparation for joining the church Palm Sunday, 1958. While conducting the service that day, Rev. Schott was taken ill and died instantly. It was a great loss for the members, and the church rallied to help his family in many ways. The Easter offering was used to purchase a sterilizer for Presbyterian Hospital in his memory. It was fortunate that a new minister had been selected, and within a month Dr. Evor Roberts was installed.

Chapter VII - 1958 to 1969

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin and Union Theological Seminary, [Dr. Roberts](#) received his doctorate at the University of Edinburgh. He had served three years as a Navy chaplain in World War II and was serving at a church in New York State when he was called. Dr. Roberts came to a congregation that had always been very diverse. It included people in the fields of education, business and industry, the arts, sciences and medicine. Because of the proximity to the Witherspoon Building in Philadelphia and Princeton Seminary, the church had the privilege of pulpit supply, teachers and leaders from the personnel of the Boards and General Assembly. Many of them lived in Swarthmore and the neighboring communities. A new dimension was added the month after Dr. Roberts' arrival when the [Morganwood Community](#) was established a few blocks from the church. A project of the Presbyterian Board of Pensions, it was a community of individual homes for retired clergy and missionaries who wanted three things: a nearby vibrant and strong Presbyterian Church, a nearby higher educational and library institution and convenient public transportation. As the community was settled, the residents began participating in the life of the church in many ways. Rev. Walter Getty, Morganwood's "first citizen," became Minister of Visitation for the church. The dedication of the community took place at the church with Dr. Harold R. Martin, Moderator of the General Assembly, officiating.

Education flourished in 1959 with four divisions of Westminster Fellowships, each led by a minister; post-high school and college Bible study on Sunday morning in addition to the regular classes, and Daily Vacation Bible School. Rev. Robert Browne was called as Associate Minister for Christian Education in April, and in October morning prayers were begun each Tuesday. The Women's Association reached a peak membership of 356 within the next two years, and a Memorial and Gifts Committee was added to Session activities.

In 1962, having been successful in settling a second German displaced family, the Session approved a project to have a carefully chosen youth member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church participate in a program designed by the Inter Christian Youth Exchange, which cooperated at that time with the United Presbyterian Church in America. The directors approved Swarthmore Church, and Tek Berham came, lived with a church family, studied at the Swarthmore High School and participated in church activities. The next year the church sponsored a Cuban family, a project in conjunction with One Great Hour of Sharing.

In 1954 the Supreme Court had mandated school integration. In a congregation positively oriented toward equal rights in education, there was a proud consensus of support for that decision. The Session encouraged members to support efforts toward greater racial justice in Chester and also voted to recommend to the annual meeting that "all nominating committees thereafter consider all persons for church officers solely on the basis of qualifications and availability with no discrimination because of sex." These efforts were supported by Rev. William Eaton who came as Associate Minister of Education in 1964. Wednesday School was started for junior high students which included recreation, dinner and study. The Lenten lectures led by Rev. John Fry proved to be popular, and the Women's Association circles were at the height of their activity.

As the Vietnam War started, there was a growing concern for the dwindling attendance at morning services, and the deficit reported in collections and declining pledges. Families began leaving the church. The congregation took sides on Dr. Roberts' stand on civil rights and other controversial topics that were reflected in his sermons. Many felt frustrated because the church problems were not being addressed. The lack of communication between the minister and the people caused increasing alienation. When the news media picked up the story, the resulting publicity was often untrue or at best half-true. A flood of letters from members was sent to Session. In 1966, the whole matter was finally placed in the hands of Presbytery. Two sub-committees were formed -- one on ministerial relations and one on pastoral counseling. The Ministerial Relations Committee, recognizing "the stature of the Swarthmore Presbyterian Church, a great congregation with a thrilling challenge few churches are called upon to meet," began many months of meeting with the Session, study and personal interviews with members. Dr. Roberts concurred with the entire program.

When the committees reported to the congregation in November, 1966, they advised the professional relocation of the pastor and the replacement of two Elders from each class "for the sole purpose of bringing new life and ideas into the leadership of the church." A plan of reconciliation was put in place, hampered often by "wide-spread, untimely and conflicting publicity." Until this reconciliation could take place, it was recommended that the church have supply pastors. The Presbytery could only advise, not dictate in this situation. However, all of the suggestions were put in place. Dr. Roberts resigned and went to the Graduate Theological Union in San Francisco to pursue advanced study. The Administrative Commission of Presbytery recommended a six-month delay before the election of a Pulpit Committee to allow time for the appraisal of strengths and weaknesses of the congregation and a survey of the membership. It felt that the problems of the church resulted from a misunderstanding of the nature, ministry and mission of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Eaton had expressed a desire to relocate about the time Dr. Roberts left, so Presbytery named Dr. Charles Hussey as interim pastor. He served until January, 1968. The Session began the study of the Presbytery document "Action Guide on Race" and started a development of fair-housing guidelines. In January, 1968, Dr. Rex. Clements became interim pastor, beginning the oversight of reconciliation in the church. The congregation's response to him was a very positive one. A study of "The Nature and Mission of the Church" was started and a parish survey was done. It was a detailed evaluation including residential distribution of members, population trends, the effect on Swarthmore Presbyterian of the growing strength of Presbyterian Churches in neighboring areas, and a comprehensive, basic study of the whole Church School. The church entered into discussion with neighboring churches on fair-housing guidelines which, after months of preparation, were published in *The Swarthmorean*.

Dr. Fred Druckenmiller replaced Dr. Clements in January, 1969. At that point a pastoral nominating committee was functioning, and in May, Rev. Bertram deHeus Atwood accepted the churches call.

Chapter VIII - 1969 to 1975

The [Rev. Atwood](#), a native of Albany, was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Rutgers University, New Brunswick Theological Seminary and did graduate studies at New College, University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He continued his training at the Theological Seminary of Tubingen University, Germany, and was a General Assembly representative to the World Council of Churches meeting in Holland in 1958. He was serving the Grosse Point (Michigan) Memorial Presbyterian Church when called. Rev. Atwood knew the Swarthmore situation and wanted the challenge of completing the healing started by the interim pastors. In the profile distributed to the congregation, he was described as a superb preacher and "vigorous man of contemporary philosophy" as well as being skilled in reconciliation, sensitive to social issues and strongly supportive of lay leadership.

The ensuing years brought many changes and new vigor to the church. A long-range planning study in previous years had resulted in the acquisition of various properties on Harvard Avenue and elsewhere in the borough,

not only for manses but for the possibility of enlarging the sanctuary or building a new one. Various areas of the existing buildings were inefficient and needed restructuring. These problems were addressed beginning in 1969 with the sale of many houses. Rev. Atwood preferred to own his home which made a manse unnecessary. In the following years, an outside entrance to the office was installed, the narthex was enlarged and a covered walkway between the two was constructed. Rather than enlarge the sanctuary, two Sunday services were started. Lighting and ventilation in the sanctuary were updated and consultation with the Willet Stained Glass Studio began for a master plan of appropriate subject matter and position of future stained glass windows. Loeffler Chapel was converted into an all-purpose room for choir rehearsals, small services of worship and meetings.

Rev. Atwood reorganized the Session committee structure, instituted an Administrative Council and revamped office procedures. The Session approved an experimental nature of worship services -- trying new forms while maintaining many of the traditional ones. A proposal was approved to permit Deacons to serve Communion with the Elders, lay participation in the worship service was begun, and baptized children were permitted to participate in the Communion.

With the installation of Rev. David Colman as Assistant Pastor in 1970, a strong program for the youth was started. Their meeting room, "The Space," was in Junior House and work camps during the summer months were major outreach activities. The University of Christian Living series at Lent and Advent were begun as were study sessions on drugs, a Church School class for retarded children and a Sunday morning Bible class for Swarthmore College students.

A variety of programs other than education and religious services became available to the congregation. The Couples' Club was revived, a Mothers' Group was formed and there were short-notice opportunities to meet and discuss "emergency" situations or new developments. A counseling service for the unemployed proved very helpful. And the Outreach Committee was restructured into subcommittees to better study various areas of concern.

Another major program began in 1970 in southwest Philadelphia. That area was experiencing severe social problems including racial tension, drugs and a need for programs for dysfunctional youth and the elderly. Several churches in the area had formed Community Celebration, a type of neighborhood agency to address the problems. Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church was a major factor in that effort, and with the help of Presbytery, Swarthmore began a relationship with Woodland and Community Celebration which was one of the first ecumenical efforts attempted by the Presbytery. Swarthmore assumed the salary of Woodland's secretary who did work not only for Woodland but for the other cooperating churches. In addition, both adults and youth of the church cooked and served monthly Sunday dinners at Woodland for area residents; the Chancel Choir sang occasionally and young people from that area were part of the Swarthmore borough summer recreational program.

In the meantime, other projects attracting church members were the Upward Bound program at Swarthmore College and the establishment of the [ABC \(A Better Chance\) House](#) next door to the church. Its purpose was to provide a residence and education opportunities at Swarthmore High School for disadvantaged, academically able students who lived outside the district.

National problems continued to have an effect on churches. Swarthmore was not spared these rapidly growing conflicts. At the January Communion service in 1970, a group from the militant Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC) led by Muhammed Kenyatta interrupted the service, spilled the Communion elements on the floor and spoke of its dissatisfaction with the response of Philadelphia Presbytery to BEDC's "Black Manifesto" which demanded reparation from churches and synagogues nationally. On Palm Sunday, 1972, a group representing "National Death Toll" in opposition to the war in Vietnam, staged a sit-in, lay in the aisles and refused to leave when asked. The police were called, the protesters arrested, but the church did not file

charges. The group chose Swarthmore because it believed it was one of the more "sensitive and responsive" churches in the Philadelphia area.

In 1975 Rev. Atwood decided to leave the parish ministry and accepted a professorship at Princeton Seminary. Within months, Rev. Colman -- who had been made Associate Pastor in 1971 -- also resigned. They had made an outstanding team. At the end of their first year as pastors, the Session issued a testimonial to their "unfailingly inspiring sermons, their exemplification of Christian joy and demonstration of the unlimited love of God." Rev. Dr. J. Harry Cotton, former president of McCormick Seminary and a Morganwood resident, became interim pastor.

Chapter IX - 1975 to 1992

[Rev. J. Barrie Shepherd](#) became the eighth pastor to serve the church. Born in England of Scottish parents, he was a preacher, scholar, teacher and poet. Raised in the Church of Scotland, he was educated at the University of Edinburgh, receiving BA and MA degrees. After two years with the RAF, he returned to Edinburgh for graduate study, continuing at Yale Divinity School and Hartford Seminary. He was active in both civil rights and peace movements and interpreted the 1960's in powerful sermons which won him growing recognition. His ability as a poet was also recognized by a variety of publications. He had been chaplain at the College of Wooster, Ohio, and pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian Church there when he was called. He expressed pleasure at "coming to one of the great churches of our denomination."

Rev. Shepherd remained at the church for sixteen years. In that time old traditions and new concepts were meshed in all areas of church life, innovation in worship was developed, and ways to carry the church successfully into the twenty-first century were conceived. Session committees became particularly active, providing a variety of volunteer work. The Hunger Committee placed baskets in a few areas of the church to receive gifts of food for the needy on Communion Sundays. It instituted the Penny-A-Meal plan to add to its funds. The Peacemaking Committee won two awards from the denomination for "historic commitment to ministry to those less fortunate." In conjunction with the Soviet-American Peace Walk, it provided a chance for church members to meet Soviet travelers and share a meal with them. In 1982 the Session authorized a permanent Committee on Evangelism and laid the groundwork for a strong tie with the college students. The Outreach Committee undertook the resettlement of a Vietnamese family in 1979; the same help was given another family in 1984, and both projects proved to be very rewarding and successful. In 1989 the committee presented a challenge to rehab a home in Chester for resale. It was another successful venture, attracting both adults and youth for Saturday work sessions.

The fiscal affairs of the church were addressed in 1977 by the formation of a Long-Range Financial Planning Force. It has been an unwritten, long-standing rule of the church to reject money-making activities. However, necessity prevailed. In 1978 the first of continuing [Fall Fairs](#) was launched. In 1979 the Major Mission Fund Drive of the denomination was combined with a Capital Fund Drive for essential major projects for the church plant. In 1985 the Trustees started an Investment Committee, and Rev. Shepherd undertook a personal canvass to establish an unrestricted Second Century Endowment Fund.

The church's ecumenical relationships were strengthened with the Covenant of Faith among the congregations of Swarthmore, St. John Chrysostom Catholic Church and Ohev Shalom Synagogue. They pledged "to pray for each other, study Scripture together, work together to combat racism, prejudice and bigotry." A study program, Quest, was organized to further Jewish-Christian understanding by these same congregations. A pulpit exchange between St. John's and Swarthmore took place on annual Christian Unity Sundays, and a community prayer service for the Persian Gulf conflict was held at Swarthmore.

In 1977, Rev. Bruce Schundler became the Assistant Minister for Christian Education, followed in 1978 by Rev. Karin Nelson. The youth of the church participated in work camps in Maine, Kentucky and Tennessee under their leadership. Wednesday School was discontinued, and a group called New Dimensions was started for

middle school age children. Rev. Margaret Ferguson succeeded Rev. Nelson in 1981. She worked not only with the Church School but also organized a group to meet the needs of blended families and step-parenting. Rev. Robert Richardson replaced Rev. Ferguson in 1986 and continued the evaluation of the Christian Education program in progress. During his years at the church, the young people began a program of feeding the hungry at the 69th Street Terminal in Upper Darby once a month. They participated in programs at the denomination's conference center at Montreat, North Carolina, and went on a work project to Honduras, an ambitious undertaking that took months of planning. In all these activities, the church members were willing contributors of food, goods in kind, transportation and as chaperones.

These years brought many new opportunities for worship. Bilingual members participated in Worldwide Communion Services; Pentecost Communion was celebrated in the courtyard; Ash Wednesday services were started in Loeffler Chapel as well as daily Communion at morning prayers during Holy Week; Maundy Thursday was commemorated with a Tenebrae service. In all of these, music played a big part. The ministry of music at Swarthmore has been notable. Volunteer choirs have been led by fine choral directors assisted by organists of uncommon ability. Many of these organists have been from the Curtis Institute, and some have gone to illustrious careers. Musicians from the Philadelphia Orchestra and musical institutes have assisted in major productions. In 1979 the first of several musicals by the junior high group of the Church School was presented during the worship service. There were three performances of Paul Knopf's religious Jazz Liturgy, and music was a major factor in two festival weekends.

The need for additional ministerial help in 1981 resulted in Rev. Franklin Gillespie being called as Parish Associate for visitation and Moderator of the Deacons. This board's work expanded to include establishing a support group for the temporarily unemployed and taping services to place in the library of a neighboring life-care facility. Eventually its membership was increased to eighteen.

During these years, several areas of the church buildings were revamped and updated for expanding needs. When it became necessary for McCahan Hall to be converted into class rooms, plans were made to build [Fellowship Hall](#) including a large, all-purpose meeting room and kitchen. It was dedicated in 1984. In this year, also, the Session began discussing the possibility of a Memorial Garden on adjacent property. The plan came to fruition in 1988 when both a church garden and a memorial garden were dedicated.

Rev. Shepherd resigned in 1991, leaving the memory of powerful sermons crafted in the poet's use of the language, accented by an infectious Scottish burr. Revs. Virginia and Edward Sale became the church's first co-pastors in 1992, serving as interims for a year. Rev. Richardson accepted a call as Pastor of the Marple Presbyterian Church. Again our Pastoral Nominating Committee found a highly qualified man to be senior minister.

Chapter X - 1993 to 1995

[Rev. Richard Wohlschlaeger](#), a native of the St. Louis area, was Associate Pastor of the First United Church of Oak Park, Illinois, when he was called in 1993. A graduate of Elmhurst College, he had received a Master's degree in 18th century English Literature at Columbia prior to a career in teaching. While teaching at John Burroughs School in St. Louis, he was called to military service during the Vietnam War. After graduation from the Navy Officer School in Newport, Rhode Island, he served on the cruiser USS *Galveston* and then as an English professor at the US Naval Academy. He retired with the rank of Commander. Called to the ministry at age thirty-nine, he studied at McCormick Theological Seminary where he achieved high academic excellence. He did independent study in Switzerland and Edinburgh where he served on the staff of St. Giles' Cathedral. He is a man of deep personal faith, warm and direct with people and a ready listener. He has been extraordinarily successful in working with youth.

Rev. Wohlschlaeger was joined by Rev. Mary Alice Lyman, Associate Pastor responsible for Christian education programming and related activities. Rev. Karin Nelson returned as Minister for Parish Life. This team formed a strong, collegial relationship -- definitely a shared ministry. There have been exciting new directions -- a

rethinking of worship, evangelism, mission, stewardship, Christian Education and congregational nurture. The Stephen Ministry program took root and a Parish Nurse program was piloted in fall 1995. Outreach to retirement communities by deacons and the pastors took on increasing importance, and intergenerational activities were planned collaboratively by the deacons and children's ministry committee.

As the church passed into over one hundred years of witness, the Celtic cross above the rose window proclaims that there is still life abundant within the old stone walls. People of every persuasion, longing and skill will find a welcome within the buildings which echo with the dedication and foresight of those twenty-four people who fulfilled a dream.

There is only one obscure reference to a motto attributed to the charter members: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity."

So be it.