



Centennial Reflections

*"until we all attain to the unity of the faith
and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the
fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children,
tossed to and fro . . ."*

Ephesians 4:13, 14a

Christian Reformed Church
Rochester, New York

1877 — 1977

Preface

It is with pleasure that the Council presents this CENTENNIAL REFLECTIONS to members and friends of the Rochester Christian Reformed Church. We are grateful to all who contributed in any way to the publication of this booklet, as well as to the defraying of its cost. It is our hope that it may be used to gain a deeper perspective on the ways of God in the building of His Church.

THE COUNCIL

September 1978

CENTENNIAL REFLECTIONS

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I. THE FIRST SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

The years 1877-1952 (including a pre-amble of the events from 1867-1877) have been well described by then church historian, Conrad J. Bult in the booklet, Christian Reformed Church of Rochester- 1877-1952. This booklet was printed on the occasion of the seventy-fifty anniversary of the congregation. Realizing that some of the present members do not have this booklet available, we have attempted to briefly summarize some of the highlights of God's blessings during these years, borrowing from Mr. Bult's very fine account.

Very early in the infancy of the Rochester Christian Reformed Church, then known as "The True Dutch Reformed Church", the congregation wrestled with the question of whether to first call a minister or to obtain a place for worship. On November 5, 1878, the congregation, under its counselor, Rev. L. Rietdyk of the First Christian Reformed Church of Paterson, N.J., decided that they should first obtain a place for worship. Six months later however, the congregation reversed itself and decided first to call a minister. With the permission of Classis Hudson the congregation began the process of extending calls. In January of 1880, it was decided to purchase a house and lot at 55 Chatham Street; later that same month the congregation also decided to erect a new church building on that lot. The building was eventually dedicated on the 27th of June, 1880. During the Christmas and New Year's season of 1880-1881, seminarian Hermanus Tempel conducted services; and when Mr. Tempel became a candidate, the congregation extended him a call to be their first minister. Rev. Tempel accepted that call and served the congregation well for two years during this very crucial, formative period in its history.

In July of 1893, the congregation decided to sell its church building on Chatham Street since it had become too small. Eleven years later, in 1904, the sale was completed and property was purchased on the corner of North Goodman Street and what is now Ferndale Crescent. The new church building was dedicated January 17, 1906, while the Rev. Arie J. Vanden Heuvel was serving as the fourth minister of the congregation. Three years later the congregation was reincorporated under a new name, "the Christian Reformed Church of Rochester, N.Y."

In addition to its own membership growth and building programs during those early years, the congregation was also involved deeply in the Christian School and in mission emphasis. Under Mr. Jacob Mellema, a Christian School society was formed in 1910, and classes were held in the Brighton District School #10. Finally a Christian School building was purchased in 1915. In 1916, the congregation made a decision to begin mission work in Brighton, with evangelistic services being held on Sunday evenings with the assistance of candidate Jan Karel Van Baalen, and with Sunday School activities under the leadership of Mr. J.J. Van Zwoll. Down through the years the flame of outreach was fanned by a number of key figures in denominational missions: Rev. John C. De Korne of Home Missions, Rev. Lee S. Huizinga from China, Miss Johanna Veenstra from Africa, Rev. E.A. Smith also from Africa, Rev. A.H. Selles, Miss Wilhelmina Kalsbeek and Miss Ruby Liu from China. (An interesting note is that twenty three years later, in 1972, Miss Ruby Liu became a member of the Rochester congregation until her death in 1974.) Another mission highlight in those early years was that in January of 1949, the congregation conducted a proud farewell service for one of the sons of the congregation, Rev. John O. Schuring, who with his family left for mission work in Columbo, Ceylon.

In June of 1924, the congregation bought a number of lots at Merchants Road and Mildorf Street; and the following year it was decided that a new parsonage should be built there. The first occupants of the new parsonage were the Rev. A.J. Rus and his family, the ninth pastor of the congregation.

After being aware of the need for a larger church facility for some time, the consistory was authorized, in 1944, to purchase a new site located on Browncroft Boulevard, Newcastle Road, and Corwin Road. This purchase was accomplished in 1946; and it was while the Rev. A. Rozendal, the twelfth pastor, was serving that the new edifice was completed at a cost of some \$80,000. The new church building was dedicated November 30, 1951, one year before the congregation celebrated its 75th anniversary.

The congregation celebrated 75 years of God's blessings in 1952. Fred Steensma and Peter Bruinsma served as a Committee on Arrangements. The celebration was saddened a bit by the fact that Rev. Rozendal had accepted a call to the First Christian Reformed Church of Zeeland, Michigan, preaching his farewell in Rochester on August 17, 1952. Under the shadow of that farewell the celebration was carried on in September, with former pastor H.J. Triezenburg (1930-1938) speaking at a fine banquet, September 12th, and at the worship celebrations held on September 22nd.

The 75th year of the congregation was significant for a number of reasons. First, in the area of **missions concerns**, it was already in 1950 that the congregation had authorized a survey to determine the possibility of local mission work in conjunction with the Jersey Street Mission Sunday School, led by Mr. and Mrs. Clarence W. De Jager. It was decided to engage an ordained full-time worker; however, at the recommendation of the denominational Home Missionary at Large, Rev. John M. Varde Kieft, this program was delayed until the congregation had entered into its new building. So, in 1952, that interest was resumed, and the local mission committee proposed the idea of a lay-worker. This concept received further impetus when the denominational Home Mission Board endorsed the congregation's request for financial aid in the amount of \$2000. After several declines to their call, Mr. William Ribbens accepted that appointment in October of 1954.

Another event, making 1952 a significant year in the congregation's history, was the appointment of an **Immigration Committee** since twelve families in the Netherlands had filed for immigration to the United States. In response to a newspaper ad in Holland, more than 150 letters were received from interested parties. Working with the Calvinist Resettlement Committee of the denomination the consistory decided to act as second sponsor for a number of families, no more than five at a time. A sizeable number of families came from the Netherlands during ensuing years, many of whom have since become leaders within the congregation.

Also in 1952, the Merchant's Road property was put up for sale; and a Building Committee under the chairmanship of Nicholas Bruinsma was appointed to draw up plans for a **new parsonage**. In May of 1953, the congregation decided to build a new parsonage at an estimated cost of \$22,500 rather than refurbish the old parsonage at a cost of \$3000. After purchasing property from the city of Rochester at a cost of \$725 on the corner of Newcastle Road and Corwin Road, construction began in 1954, with architect Murray Goddard. The old parsonage on Merchants Road was finally sold in June of 1954 at a price of \$13,000.

II. REV. E. UBELS - 1953—1954

Five calls were extended following the departure of Rev. Rozenal; then the Rev. Engbert Ubels was called from Delevan, Wisconsin. Rev. Ubels accepted the call and was installed as the thirteenth pastor on April 17, 1953. Little did anyone suspect the testing which the Lord had in store in the ministry of Rev. Ubels. After a brief thirteen months of serving this congregation he was suddenly taken from this life on May 1, 1954. Rev. Ubels had been invited to

join in the Fiftieth Anniversary celebration of his first congregation in Alamosa, Colorado. While riding horseback in a snowstorm, he fell from the horse and died shortly thereafter. Needless to say, the congregation was stunned as they learned of the loss of their beloved youthful (33 years) pastor. Those who were present on that first Sunday will never forget the masterful way in which the sad matter was handled when seminarian Bernard Haven was supplying the pulpit for the pastor and ably conducted the services under that strain. The appreciative consistory sent a word of commendation to the Rev. R.B. Kuiper, president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

During Rev. Ubel's brief ministry God led the congregation in a number of key decisions. Already mentioned were those relating to the decision to build a new parsonage and the establishment of an Immigration Committee. Another key event was the decision to establish a **church library**. The committee consisting of Mrs. Ubels, Mrs. Barney Bruinsma, and John W. Kuipers was mandated to develop a system for cataloging books, organizing and planning for future library development. It was decided to use the large west room on the main floor as the permanent library room. Equipment, books, and shelves were to be financed by offerings. The official opening of the new library took place September 19, 1954.

Another significant occurrence during these years was the appointment of a **mission committee** in June of 1953, consisting of Rev. Ubels, Peter Bruinsma, and Albert Spyker, to study and develop a procedure by which to readmit into membership those who left the congregation during the Rochester case of 1939, and who were now desirous of returning. It was a time of joy and reconciliation when, thereafter, several families were readmitted into our fellowship.

III. REV. R. EVENHUIS - 1955—1957

It was a trying time for the congregation to lose their youthful pastor so suddenly; and it was another ten months and five calls before the fourteenth pastor, Rev. Robert Evenhuis, was installed. After a brief two years and eight months in the Rochester congregation, Rev. Evenhuis asked for, and received, a one year leave of absence, as of November 25, 1957. This was granted on the advice of his physician. Among the events that transpired during his pastorate was the decision in December of 1955 to **reorganize the consistory**, so that the elders would constitute the consistory, the deacons the deaconate, and the elders and deacons together would be called the Council.

In the life of any congregation, as in the life of any individual Christian, there are time of sadness as well as time of joy. The Lord in His wise providence led the congregation through a most trying and agonizing period while Rev. Evenhuis served as pastor. It would not serve any useful purpose in these Centennial Reflections to enter into the situation at length; however, it is interesting to observe that this difficult period came about as a result of the congregation's interest in mission outreach, as referred to previously. In fact, the congregation was pioneering in a mission approach with the appointment of Mr. William Ribbens (referred to earlier) who was serving as assistant to the minister in the area of evangelism. However, as often is the case in new ventures, uncertainty and confusion occurred as to the method of evangelism to be employed: whether the congregation should use chapel evangelism or parish evangelism. Happily, the Lord brought the congregation through this experience of testing also; and we have learned anew the lesson of history that during every trial we must remain close to the Lord of the Church, for both the understanding of His will and purpose, and for the indwelling of His Spirit in the ways in which that will is carried out.

IV. REV. R. FRENS - 1958—1965

After Rev. Evenhuis received his leave of absence the congregation sought another pastor for some ten months, receiving several declines. Then, in September of 1958, a call was extended to the Rev. Richard Frens of Oak Park, Illinois, who subsequently accepted the call and was installed into office November 17, 1958. The congregation was joyful to have its own pastor once more, particularly in a time when pastoral leadership was sorely needed.

During those months of vacancy God's program continued to develop. Already in December of 1957, George Kuipers recommended organizing a **Calvinist Cadet Club** according to the national constitution. The Council approved this recommendation and a meeting was scheduled with parents in order to elect officers. A parallel decision was made in 1959 to form a study committee to investigate a **Calvinette Club**. In October of that year a committee of women was appointed to arrange for its establishment. At the same time the Council decided to finish the upstairs room at the rear of the church for the Cadet Club, at a cost of \$250 plus voluntary labor.

In July of 1958 the Council informed the congregation of the happy news that sufficient funds had been collected to pay off the balance of their mortgage on the church property. Meanwhile, however, other **building concerns** came to the surface such as the problem of acoustics in the sanctuary, and that of moving the organ to the rear of the church. After some

investigation the congregation decided in December of 1960 to provide a new auditorium ceiling at a cost of \$3500, in an effort to improve acoustics.

God brought new challenges to the Rochester congregation in 1961. It was in March that the Missions Committee recommended that the congregation approve the recommendation of the Rev. Jack Zandstra, Itinerant Home Missionary for the denominational Board, concerning forming a **new church in Webster, N.Y.**, a suburb some ten miles east of the city. A meeting was called the 24th of March for all those interested in that work. Fifty families were represented at the meeting. A committee consisting of John Leys, Louis Bolt, and Thomas Chambery Sr. was appointed by the Council to investigate various properties with authority to secure an option. The committee investigated a particular piece of property which had been recommended by Rev. Zandstra, as well as others which it felt were also desirable. In July of that year the congregation authorized the Council to purchase four acres of land on State Street in Webster, about one block east of South Avenue, at a cost of \$4000—\$6000, with the condition that a canvass of the congregation show a willingness to support the program in its entirety. But, questionnaires showed inadequate support; and in October the Council voted to delay proceeding with the Webster project.

It was during these years when Rev. Frens served as pastor that, under God's blessing, the Webster project matured and finally took shape as an evangelistic and church extension arm of the Rochester congregation. Early in 1963, the Council moved to call an ordained home missionary for work in the Webster area as soon as possible. Proposals were discussed with Rev. Nelson Vander Zee, Eastern Home Missionary; and it was decided to call a congregational meeting to approve the procedure of calling an ordained person at an average cost per family of \$1.50 per week. It was decided to overture Classis Hudson to recommend the Webster area to Synod as a denominational field. Finally, the congregation was informed by the Home Mission Board in March of 1965 that the Webster field had been approved for action in that year with capital funds available. The Board sought a commitment from Rochester which the congregation approved: a) to serve as calling church for Webster; b) to give \$10,000 to the Webster project for capital expenses; and c) to pay \$1500 towards the home missionary's salary per year, and \$1500 toward capital expenses per year. In July of that year the congregation extended a call to candidate Henry Wildeboer to serve as Home Missionary in Webster; a call subsequently declined. Then, in September, a call was extended to the Rev. Edwin Walhout in Holland, Minnesota. Rev. Walhout accepted the call and was installed in November with a message based on Isaiah 52:7, by the Rev. C. Witt, then counselor in Rochester. To round out this portion of the

congregation's initial involvement with Webster, 1965 closed with a request from missionary Walhout for the transfer of 13 families, plus his own, from the Rochester roles to those of Webster.

The interest in outreach which repeatedly crops up in the history of the Rochester congregation showed itself, not only in the concerns for the reaching out into the community of Webster, but also in a concern for lending **support to a foreign missionary**. It was during 1962 that, at the request of the Christian Fellowship Circle, the Council approved donations in one of the permanent collection boxes then located in the foyer of the church. These donations were to be given to Miss Winnabelle Gritter, missionary in Taiwan. Eventually this increased to \$500 per year commitment, continuing support of Miss Gritter for several years to come.

Also, during these years while Pastor Frens served the congregation there was concern for the **renovation** of some of the church facilities. Particularly, the kitchen was deemed in need of substantial change. In the fall of 1963, \$450 was appropriated for a new stove; but estimates were also sought for additional kitchen improvements, as well as the possibility of a new ceiling for the church basement. Almost a year later the Council approved a proposed rough draft for a remodeled kitchen; however, it was to be reviewed by representatives of the various ladies' societies in the church. Early in 1965, a larger renovation project was envisioned; and architects Valvano and Valvano were engaged to make preliminary drawings. All kitchen changes were to blend with this total project. These preliminary plans were then proposed to the congregation at a meeting in July of 1965, and were tabled by the congregation in order to investigate alternate plans as suggested from the floor of the meeting. The Council, in September, instructed the Building Improvements Committee to complete that investigation, and to get bids on the church kitchen improvements in order to present them to a future congregational meeting.

All of these efforts were interrupted by the request of Rev. Frens for retirement from the active ministry as of October 1, 1965, for reasons of health and above retirement age. The Council acquiesced in this request by overturing Classis Hudson accordingly at its next meeting. It was with sadness that the congregation bade farewell to its pastor of seven years, as he and Mrs. Frens entered the ranks of emeriti pastors.

V. REV. J.C. VERBRUGGE - 1966—1970

Once again God was good to this congregation because after only one

decline, and only a few months of vacancy, the Rev. John C. Verbrugge, from Bowmanville, Ontario, accepted the call in December of 1965. He was installed into office on February 4th, having had the original date for installation postponed because of a typical Rochester blizzard. During the almost four and one-half years of service while Rev. Verbrugge was with the congregation, a number of significant developments occurred.

One of these was in the area of **building renovation**. As is obvious from the above, the need for structural changes became more and more clear already during the days of Rev. Frens. With the total renovation work in the hands of selected architects, the Building Improvements Committee tabled the remodeling of the kitchen until those plans were finalized. Meanwhile, they did remodel the Nursery room with wall paneling through the aid of some twenty hours of volunteer labor. Finally, the congregation, in December of 1967, approved "in principle" the long-range plans for renovation. With the "principle" adopted, work on the kitchen proceeded at an estimated cost of \$5,800. On different occasions investigations were also made into the possibility of purchasing additional neighboring houses to serve as parish houses. But, in each case obstacles encountered warranted a change in plan. In October, 1968, the Committee reported progress in the kitchen, and expressed the need for redecoration of the basement area, as well as eventual planning for another organ. Basement improvements failed to gain congregational support, and in May of 1969 the Council approved renovating the large downstairs Catechism room with wall paneling, new ceiling and lights, at a cost of no more than \$1,000.

By this time the serious need for a decision regarding the **church organ** confronted the congregation. The Council, through its Organ Committee Chairman, Richard Velzen, recommended to the congregation in December of 1969 that the Delaware Organ Company of Towanda, N.Y. be engaged to make, assemble, and install a pipe organ at a total cost of \$17,600. Any other building changes needed to accomodate the organ were estimated at a maximum of \$2,400. The congregation approved this recommendation; and the actual installing work began during October of 1971. Although in congregational use shortly thereafter, it was not until November 12th of 1972 that the organ was finally dedicated at the Sunday morning service. On the previous Friday evening, well known city organist, Mrs. Marion Craighead, provided a formal organ concert at the new console.

The area of **mission**, as we have seen, was always close to the heart of the Rochester congregation. When pastor Verbrugge arrived, the congregation

was in the midst of giving financial assistance to Miss Winnabelle Gritter in Taiwan. However, due to her illness, Miss Gritter was relieved of her assignment, and in January of 1968 the congregation began to consider supporting other foreign missionaries. In June of that year Dick Vander Steen, missionary in Nigeria, spoke at the Spring Mission Rally, and the following month the Council approved the Sunday School and other church organizations supporting Mr. Vander Steen with their volunteer offerings. Eventually the congregation committed itself to \$500 support; and, in 1974, the congregation voted to strive to give \$1,000 annually in their above-budget offerings for the Vander Steens.

Related to mission is the concern for **local evangelism**; and here too there is repeated evidence of such concern in a variety of ways. In 1966, there were requests for five children to be brought from our Christian Reformed Church in Harlem, N.Y., so as to provide some summer "fresh-air" for these disadvantaged children. Members of our congregation repeated this request for a number of years, as long as the Harlem church sponsored it. Another area of evangelism during these years was the summer Vacation Bible School which was repeatedly directed by Albert Spyker and others, and also the program of Released Time, which was an arrangement with Public School #46 during the school year, to allow those children so desiring to be released from school a bit early, in order to attend classes in our church. For many years this Released Time program on Wednesday afternoons was highly successful, enrolling well over one hundred children. Mrs. Clarence W. De Jager, Mrs. Peter Bruinsma, and Mrs. Barney Bruinsma gave their direction, while many other church women gave much time and effort to teaching. It was in the 1970's that this program began to falter as a result of changes in the school administration, changes which resisted cooperation. Again, in 1966, the congregation began to give formal financial aid to the work of the Open Door Mission, located in the city's inner loop. And, in 1968, meetings were held with the Rev. Donald Griffioen, Eastern Home Missionary, regarding inner city work. These meetings resulted in an Evangelism Conference in September of 1969, with pastor Griffioen leading sessions on sharing the Word. This Conference produced a number of cottage "grow-groups", which continued home Bible Study for a considerable time.

Although the **Webster project** was well on its own during these years, the interest and support of the Rochester congregation for that work continued. In the final months of 1967, the group from Webster came with plans for building and seeking financial assistance, which the Rochester congregation voted to endorse. In January of 1968, formal assistance was rendered in the organization of the Webster congregation with its own consistory. Finally, in

February of 1970, the two congregations of Rochester and Webster joined together in the dedication of Webster's new church building.

Ever since the unfortunate schism of 1938, which resulted in the forming of the Memorial Orthodox Presbyterian Church, there was the desire to strengthen the ties between these two congregations. After all, here in these two denominations was a theological **ecumenism** which had to be pursued. And, during the years of pastor Verbrugge, there were many attempts to bring this about. In 1968 the idea of a sacred concert, featuring the choirs of both the Memorial Church and the Rochester congregation, developed. This ultimately evolved into a service of worship where the two congregations blended heart and mind in adoration of their Triune God, in the Rochester Christian Reformed Church. These services were repeated in 1969 and in 1970.

Another area in which considerable change took place during Rev. Verbrugge's ministry was that of the **church school**. In March of 1968, Rev. Verbrugge made the suggestion to the Council that it consider holding its catechism classes in church on Sunday, immediately after the morning worship service, rather than at the Christian School at the end of the school day. In April, the Council approved holding grades 5—8 in church on Sunday mornings immediately following morning worship. Later the Council decided that teachers of catechism classes should be selected from the "best qualified teachers in the church membership" rather than exclusively from among those who are elders. In May of 1968 the Sunday School Steering Committee proposed to the Council that, beginning June 16th, the Sunday School classes (age 3 - grade 4) be conducted simultaneously with the morning worship through the summer months. This was approved, and subsequently extended beyond the summer months until the end of 1968, and further to solicit congregational responses to this plan. Having evaluated this program, in November the Council decided that the church school program (i.e. the Sunday School which was held simultaneously with morning worship) should be continued through 1969; however, the age range was modified to include age 3 through grade 2.

Among other significant occurrences during the years of Rev. Verbrugge is the decision in May 1968 to permit **women to vote** at congregational meetings. The first congregational meeting when women were present with the privilege of voting was October 29, 1968; although women had been present a year before in order to participate in the discussion pertaining to renovation work in the church kitchen. Again, in the area of **worship and liturgy** there were several indications of relaxing some of our rigid traditions

regarding worship during these years. In 1966, for instance, approval was given that one of the young people read the Scripture lesson from the new Pulpit Bible which the young people had presented to the church in memory of Wendy Eckert and William De Jong, both of whom had been tragically killed in an automobile accident. When Thanksgiving arrived that year, there was a desire expressed in the Council that the service be "liturgically modified". This brought to focus the general area of liturgy as a whole. Prayer Day services involved more lay persons and young people. In 1969 a committee was appointed to consider changes in the service format. One result of that committee effort was youth involvement in a special worship service in Youth Week in September of 1969.

In the church world as a whole, there was considerable stir during these years and following; and the impact of that on the local congregation in Rochester was evident. Changes were occurring rapidly in the world, as well as in the church world; and within the denomination, as well as within our congregation, fears were being expressed that we were merely being caught up in the trends of the times. Tensions between those seeking change and others resisting change, and between social involvement and theological conservatism, made their impact upon the congregation; and it was difficult to maintain a Biblical balance.

Pastor Verbrugge accepted a call to Randolph, Wisconsin, preaching his farewell to Rochester on July 26, 1970.

VI. REV. R.W. DE VRIES - 1970—

By early October, the congregation witnessed its seventeenth pastor and family move into the parsonage on Newcastle Road. After but one decline, Rev. Robert W. De Vries was called from Framingham, Massachusetts, and began his work in Rochester with his installation on October 15, 1970.

The stir in the church, mentioned above, persisted for some time to come; and the goal of pastor and Council was to work towards a greater confidence in the office of pastor and elders, and towards a spirit of harmony and cooperation under the Word of God. One area of immediate need was felt to be that of closing various gaps which had arisen within the congregation for a variety of reasons. In February of 1971, the Council made this its first target, and began with a number of proposals, one of which was the forming of a Youth Council whose purpose was to include the youth in the life of the church, encouraging discussion as well as proposing ideas for Council consideration. Other efforts were also attempted, but progress was of necessity slow; and by

the end of 1972, a petition was being circulated among some of the membership which, negatively, accused the Council of not providing adequate leadership and, positively, submitted a list of constructive ideas for consideration. While the Council disapproved of this method of petition, it did give consideration to the various ideas proposed. Out of those ideas came the eventual organization of a Social Committee to promote Christian fellowship among the congregation, and also, the formulation of a newsletter called "The Dove" which was to enhance communication within the church family.

Proposals such as these began to lower barriers and to create an atmosphere of trust, freeing areas of worship, evangelism, and church renovation for calmer and more objective investigation. Although the issue resurfaced once more in October of 1974, the Council managed to maintain a positive posture so that still more fruits were drawn from that episode also.

In the area of **worship**, we have noted that there had been a current of dissatisfaction already during the years that pastor Verbrugge was serving. In fact, as early as 1964, there was a request for changes in the Prayer Day service; and two women, Mrs. Roger Van Heyningen and Mrs. Bernice McGovern, representing the Fellowship Circle, asked for consideration of special Lenten observances, including special Sunday evening services, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper on Good Friday, possibly in a service from 1—3 p.m., involving local Orthodox Presbyterian churches as well as Christian Reformed Churches.

Now, with the need for greater communication in mind, the Council formed a Worship Committee in February of 1971, whose purpose was to examine our liturgy and to coordinate all efforts towards worship. Shortly thereafter it was decided to end the second communion service which had been held in the evening, and instead to increase the number of morning communion services to once every other month. The Council, through its Worship Committee, also held a hearing in the fall of 1971 on the subject of worship, with some 18—20 persons who shared their views with the committee. The committee considered these views in the light of Biblical principles; and, finally, presented the Council and the congregation principles for worship which both preserved the Biblical core for worship, yet allowed for flexibility for various changes. A new order of worship was formed in November of 1971 for the morning service. Greater congregational participation was one goal, and such decisions as the relocation of the organ console and the choir in the rear of the sanctuary, as well as the forming of a Congregational Participation Booklet, containing law responses and Communion

responses, enhanced that goal. Another goal was greater integration of all the various aspects of the worship service into a unified theme. As far as the evening service was concerned, it was decided to retain the order as it had been; but that on occasion there would be a uniquely different service, perhaps using other persons or other vehicles, such as films, as adjuncts to the ministry of the Word. Evening services made use of cantatas, youth and other lay participation in prayer and reading, informal hymnsinging, and time for sharing. Special services such as Thanksgiving and Christmas were also changed, with the latter becoming a service where the focus was on children. Good Friday became the climax of a series of pre-Easter services in union with the two Orthodox Presbyterian churches and the two Christian Reformed churches. Communion began to be celebrated at this ecumenical service in 1974. Also, to make the worship a greater sharing experience, the Council approved the use of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible in 1974, replacing the pew Bibles in the following year.

As a spirit of cooperation grew, thanks to God's goodness, a sizeable **renovation project** was a last undertaken. A Task Force was appointed in 1973 under chairman James Chambery to investigate, estimate, and recommend changes in our physical plant. The next spring they recommended a program of various phases with a total cost estimate of \$10,000 for basement work, and \$23,000 for first floor changes, plus volunteer labor. This was approved by the congregation with the stipulation that the water problems in the basement be tended to first. A few short months later the Finance Committee reported having already received applications for \$16,200 in bonds. Frank Krol was appointed Task Force Coordinator with the responsibility of providing volunteers for the undertaking. Cooperation was exciting as changed took place downstairs and, finally, upstairs. Bright colors replaced drab quarters; cheerful furnishings invited fellowship; and carpets in the Council room and library, plus enlargement of the latter, all served to enhance the Lord's house for better service. In the renovation activities, it was also decided to refurbish and enlarge the sound system for both the sanctuary as well as the downstairs fellowship hall. Here was evidence that God's Spirit had indeed favored us with greater cooperation in His work.

The material building of the Lord's Church is but one aspect of this cooperative spirit, the spiritual building is another. And, **outreach at home and abroad** was always a keen interest of the Rochester congregation. That interest, fanned by a renewed spirit of harmony, was seen in a variety of ways.

Locally, it was decided, in October 1971, to be a part of the Leighton Ford Crusade to the extent that we were not forced to violate our Reformed convictions. Many from the congregation not only attended the services, but also served as counselors for those who responded to the messages. In 1972, the Council decided to seek congregational participation in the denomination-wide Evangelism Thrust effort for 1973. Various study groups were organized to study the booklet, "Called to Serve". Arrangements were made to obtain Rev. Paul Veenstra from California to serve as our inspirational speaker to kick off the meetings for 1973. The Thrust ventures, while not bringing all that was hoped for, did serve towards the working of unity and the establishing of goals, many of which were carried out in the various committees of the church.

The outreach ministry of the congregation was seen also in its continued financial support of the Vander Steens in Nigeria, as well as in the financial support of the local Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship efforts. It was seen too in financial aid for the Open Door Mission, as well as in food, clothing, and other gifts, and the conducting of monthly services. Love for mission established such projects as "Trash for Cash", a 3-month program to aid the Rehoboth Christian Hospital in New Mexico, where former members, Dick and Elaine Stam were serving. This love for outreach also purchased a \$900 special Spanish typewriter for Winnabelle Gritter, who by this time was working in Mexico, providing textbooks and teaching materials for the extension Seminary, as well as grade schools. In April of 1977, a Leader's Seminar was held on the Growing Church, with Home Missionary John Van Til leading the discussion concerning ways and means to better be a church of outreach.

It was this same dynamic for outreach which caused the Rochester congregation to experience a bitter disappointment and frustration. Already in 1972, the Eastern Home Missionary, Rev. Henry De Rooy, informed us of a group in Owego, N.Y. who had asked the Rochester church to provide moral and spiritual support. In December of that year the congregation voted to sponsor this effort. Help was provided in a variety of ways even though the distance to Owego was considerable. Administrative guidance was offered, the drafting of a Constitution and By-Laws aided our inter-relationships, and Grant-In-Aid from the denominational Board of Home Missions was eventually obtained for the support of a missionary pastor. After many disappointing declines, a call was tendered to Rev. Robert Tjapkes in Baco Raton, Florida, who accepted the call and was installed August 27, 1976, as Associate Pastor in Rochester for work in Owego. However, financial burdens in Owego, which before had not been evident, came to the surface so that already by March of 1977, after

much study, the Owego congregation was informed by its Steering Committee that their financial situation was so crucial that, even with the denominational assistance, they would be unable to pay their portion of the pastor's salary beyond June of 1977; and no relief from that burden was foreseen. With these disappointing facts the Rochester Council, in conjunction with Owego and the Home Mission Board, declared Rev. Tjapkes eligible for call elsewhere. Shortly thereafter, on November 27, 1977, worship services in Owego were officially terminated by their decision.

On the plus side once again, **deaconal concerns**, like concerns for outreach, were also close to the hearts of the membership of the Rochester church. One evidence of this was a Deacon's Conference held in 1974 where Neil Molenaar, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee Domestic Programs Director, was the speaker. Deacons from neighboring congregations participated as the Biblical dimensions of the deaconal office were explored. In 1975, the congregation ventured into another area of ministry of mercy when it approved the Vietnamese Resettlement Program. Taeke Lubberts was appointed to head the committee which had been authorized by the congregation to spend up to \$4,000, if necessary, in the sponsoring of a refugee family from Vietnam. The Hoai Duc Trong family of four arrived November 1975; and, thanks to the blessing of God through our committee and congregation, housing, furnishings, clothing, food, linens, employment, and other needs were provided to aid this family in their adjustments to their new home and country. Again, in the fall of 1975, the deacons and the young people decided to host a Senior Citizen supper for all the retirees of the congregation. That first dinner and program of 1976 proved to be so well received and appreciated by the elderly of the congregation, that it has been repeated a number of times since.

Finally, with 1977 as the **Centennial Year**, the Council through its committee designated that year appropriately with the theme, "Thanks Be To God!" There were several stirring items which served as vehicles for the congregation to express its thanks to God: there was the special meeting of Classis Atlantic Northeast in our sanctuary in the end of September to help us in our celebration; there was the exciting Centennial Pot-Luck Supper, highlighted with memorable slides of congregational events from years past; there was the moving Centennial Sunday on October 2nd. The morning service was a service of communion at which time pastor De Vries brought a message "Monument or Movement?". The evening service was the climax, the Centennial Celebration with Rev. John O. Schuring, son of the congregation, speaking on the theme "Thanks Be To God for a Century of Blessing". Both services

drew inspiration from several choir renditions as well as from congregational litanies, as together they blended into heartfelt gratitude. In both services the congregation gave, in response to God's blessings through the years, a gift of \$3,868.76, appropriate to their deaconal love, for the purchase of a Dodge Aspen station wagon for use in Middlesboro, Kentucky, and the Christian Family Services program among the poor in Appalachia, under the sponsorship of the denominational World Relief Committee.

So, our reflections on the centennial of the Rochester Christian Reformed Church fittingly end on this positive act of faith. Thus it was that the congregation was founded, and thus it continues to serve with "thanks be to God". And, reflecting over the path which God has chosen for the Rochester congregation, a path sometimes strewn with many obstacles, but also one surrounded by countless, obvious blessings, the theme of dependence upon the grace of God surfaces again and again. We may truly express our thankfulness to Him for those countless members raised up by Him throughout these years, who demonstrated His grace repeatedly by faithfulness, devotion, and sacrifice. Whether the Lord of Glory will delay His much-sought-for return for another one hundred years is surely not for us to speculate; but this much is sure, there can be no other target for this congregation, nor for any other, than that which has been its foundation throughout the first one hundred years, the wonder of "thanks be to God".

Thanks Be To God!

