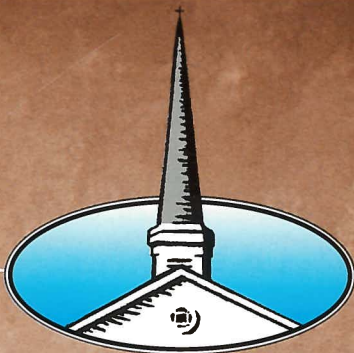


NORTHMINSTER

FORTY-FIVE



NINETY-FIVE

Celebrating Fifty Years

Keeping
Faith

(2)

(no date - 11 June 1944, p. 100)

"The Indianapolis Presbyterian Ministers' Association and the Church Extension Committee of the Presbytery of Indianapolis have been considering the needs of Presbyterians for churches in Indianapolis in relation to the present location of Presbyterian churches. Consideration has been given for five or six years to the probable need of a church east of the Monon R.R. and [between] 5-6th



[In the district on the west and east and 56th] Presbyterians for Indianapolis Presbyterians. On the basis of the average membership in the 180 members in this tract, and on the basis of constituency about 450 Presbyterians in this district.

This tract has had a large population growth in the last few years. There is no church in this district except a Catholic Church at 5-9th and Norwalk. The nearest church is the North Baptist Church which is over one mile from a probable location at Keystone and 59th St. The nearest Presbyterian Church is Meridian Heights which is over three miles.

In order to minister to this district
(Cont. -)

P45 Prologue

1945 was a good year. Peace broke out as V-E Day came in May and V-J Day followed in August. The United Nations was formed. Tupperware arrived. Jockey Eddie Arcaro won his third Kentucky Derby. A postage stamp cost 3 cents; a loaf of bread cost 9 cents. Pan American Airlines offered an 88-hour, \$700 around-the-world flight.

Ads in Indianapolis newspapers listed Sunday worship services at Fairview, Tabernacle, Meridian Heights, Memorial, Westminster, Second and Irvington Presbyterian churches. In a growing residential neighborhood in the northeast segment of the city, a band of people met in homes with the goal of establishing a new Presbyterian congregation.

Though their numbers were few, they had help. From several sources appeared evidence of faith in their undertaking. Indeed, their very dream was born as a “mission” project of the Presbytery of Indianapolis, which promised them not only financial backing but also much-needed guidance. From the Presbyterian Synod of Indiana came a pledge to secure, pay, and house a pastor. And the burgeoning Broad Ripple community at large offered its assurance of welcome and support.

Now, with the theme “Cherishing the Past — Charting the Future,” the people of Northminster are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of their church. They have commissioned this publication — a description of Northminster’s history in essays and pictures — as one birthday activity.

This also is an accounting to the many who have believed in what has been taking place at Kessler Boulevard and Ralston Avenue since 1945. Thus the title, “Keeping Faith.” We include faith in Almighty God, in Presbyterianism, in our community, in our founders, and in each other.

This is not a story of flawless achievement. It reflects countless, unsung



45

gifts of time, talent, and treasure, keeping faith in a shared vision of what this church could and can become.

Through the years, thousands of individuals and families have revived their hopes and wholeness through worship, study, and service.

Always, our ultimate mission has been to proclaim God's infinite grace and promise of redemption. We pursued that mission in temporary quarters 50 years ago. We pursue it now in our sanctuary and in our community. That mission will remain paramount beyond the next 50 years.

Guided by the values of their denomination's heritage, members of this congregation will continue to support decency and good order, concern for peace and justice, and representative church governance.

Our future will depend upon renewed leadership in the face of new challenges. This will require timely and local responses to timeless and universal human questions: Who are we? What can we hope? What should we do?

To all of those in the Church Triumphant who helped Northminster reach its 50th birthday, along with those in the Church Militant who will keep faith in its birthdays to come, this publication is dedicated. ■



A Northminster Chronology

45

55

65

75

85

95



1938

The Church Federation of Indianapolis becomes interested in the growing community bounded by 56th and 62nd streets and by the Monon and Nickel Plate railroads. The area is selected for Presbyterian development when a survey shows 82 such families live there.



Kindergarten class, 1953



Uncleared church site

1945

On June 24, at the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, the presbytery constitutes the new church. The name "Northminster" is chosen, three elders and three deacons are elected and ordained, 120 charter members are received, and four children are baptized.

First session meeting takes place July 5.

In August, the congregation approves incorporating and elects three trustees.

Worship services are held on Sunday evenings at Meridian Heights Presbyterian Church on Central Avenue. From September to December, Sunday services take place at East 71st Street and North College Avenue in Foster Hall, loaned by Indianapolis pharmaceutical executive Josiah K. Lilly.

On Sept. 30, the Rev. Raymond Cloyd Downs is installed as pastor.

1946



Ray Cloyd Downs, 1945

Starting Jan. 6, Sunday services are held in the Millersville Masonic Lodge at East Kessler Boulevard and North Emerson Avenue. Northminster members would use this facility for nearly two years.

Plans are announced in March for Northminster's new building at Kessler and North Ralston Avenue, where the Indianapolis Presbytery, with the

assistance of the synod's National Missions Board, has purchased five lots.

On April 14, the session receives first communicants' class into membership.

1947

An article in the Jan. 13 *Indianapolis Star* describes the growing Northminster congregation with 177 members, eager to move to their new home. They already have a Sunday school, three women's circles, and an active men's club.

A building contract is signed May 6 after members clear the property with axes and scythes.

On June 1, Downs resigns to accept an assignment as a Presbyterian missionary. His career would include service in Thailand. On July 13, the Rev. Richard S. Williams succeeds him.





Church cornerstone

A cornerstone rite is held in October on the construction site.

On Dec. 7, the first morning worship service takes place in the new building. To meet start-up expenses such as mortgage payments, buying new choir robes, and adding chairs, members hold fish fries, church suppers, and strawberry festivals.

The annual budget is \$7,742.

1948

In August, Williams resigns and continues his graduate studies at Princeton Theological Seminary.

1949

The Rev. Wilbur Raynor Closterhouse is installed as senior pastor April 27. His leadership further expands membership and programs.

1950

Manse is built on church property.

Membership rises to 367.

1951 & 1952

Two additions to the original building are constructed.

1952

Indianapolis Star of Nov. 22 reports a housing shortage for growing Sunday school that totals 851 youngsters.

At end of year, adult congregation totals 600 and annual budget comes to \$18,500, exclusive of mortgages.

1953

On Oct. 15, congregation votes to engage architect Edward James to plan a new sanctuary building.

1954

In April, congregation pledges gifts to support new sanctuary project.

In late fall, Northminster acquires adjacent Dawson property to the east, providing needed classrooms for Sunday school.



The manse, 1950s

By December, membership increases to 941, requiring three Sunday services.

1955

On May 1, the Rev. James R. Tozer becomes assistant pastor to help serve expanding membership.

Ground is broken for the new sanctuary Sept. 24.

Membership exceeds 1,000 adults.



Sunday school class, 1950s

1956

On May 9, a 40-foot steeple is hoisted onto its platform on the 30-foot-high roof of the new sanctuary. A cornerstone is laid May 20.

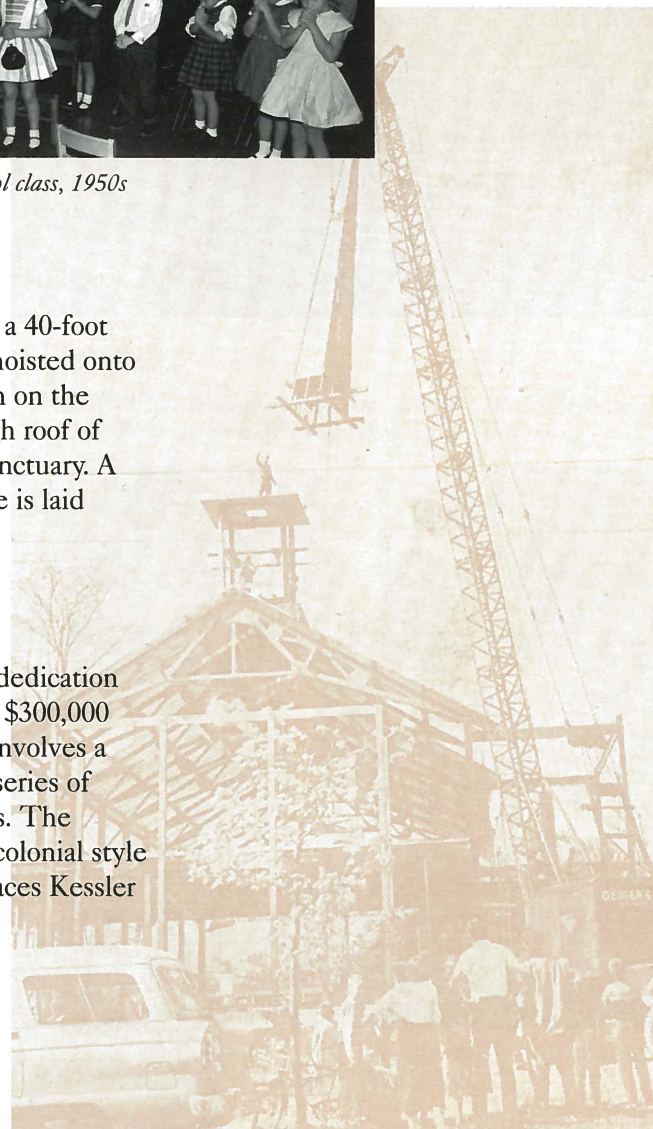
1957

In March, dedication of the new \$300,000 sanctuary involves a weeklong series of ceremonies. The red-brick, colonial style structure faces Kessler Boulevard.

1958

The Rev. Karl Gillmeister becomes assistant pastor Dec. 1 and is named associate pastor in 1959.

Tozer leaves Nov. 1 to accept pastorate in West Lafayette.



1962

In the fall, senior pastor Closterhouse resigns to accept a church call in Detroit. While a nine-member pulpit committee searches for 36 weeks and travels an aggregate 50,000 miles,

Putting "Northminster" plates to good use, 1962



associate pastor Gillmeister meets the challenge of serving 1,850 members of the congregation.

Leisure Day Club picnic in Brown County State Park, 1965



1963

In June, the Rev. Dr. A. Howard Lindquist, who has a reputation of being "strong in the pulpit," is installed as senior pastor.

The Dawson house east of the sanctuary is razed, making room for more parking.



Rev. Frank Bean

1964

The Rev. Frank E. Bean Jr. is named associate pastor Nov. 14. He resigns in 1972 and is now pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis.

1965

On Feb. 15, congregation approves construction of new educational wing.

Organist David Graf moves from Tabernacle to Northminster.

1966

On Jan. 10, congregation approves plans for Christian education wing.

Associate pastor Gillmeister resigns in May.

On July 1, the Rev. Dr. Donald R. Durrett, who had been a student assistant in 1961-62, becomes associate pastor.

Mortgage on sanctuary paid in full.

1967

On May 7, new Christian education wing is dedicated.

1970

Northminster celebrates silver anniversary with a banquet for 400 guests and other events in June. These include a special worship service June 21, a hymn-sing, and a square dance in the parking lot.

The Rev. Margaret E. Towner becomes assistant pastor Nov. 1. She resigns in 1973.

Membership increases to 2,700.



Ministers celebrate Northminster silver anniversary, 1970.



1972

John Williams succeeds John Lofton as choir director.

1973

The Rev. Warren G. Corbett installed as associate pastor March 1. He dies June 16, 1980.

1975

Membership reaches 2,863.

1977

Elevator installed at west entrance.

1980

The Rev. Glenn W. McDonald begins service as assistant pastor Feb. 10. He resigns in 1983 and is now pastor of Zionsville (Ind.) Presbyterian Church.

1981

Lindquist Chapel is dedicated Aug. 10, and Lindquist retires as pastor, becomes pastor emeritus Sept. 1.

Also Sept. 1, the Rev. Dr. Gerald R. Johnson begins his two-year role as interim senior pastor.

On Oct. 25, the Rev. Eleanor J. Brouillard becomes associate pastor. She resigns March 1, 1983.

1983

After another extensive and intensive search for a senior pastor, the Rev. Dr. C. Frederick Mathias is installed Oct. 2.



Rev. Warren Corbett

1985

Northminster celebrates 40th anniversary with a banquet and other events.

Two pastoral installations take place Sept. 15. The Rev. F. Sue Berry becomes associate pastor. She resigns in August 1991 to become an associate executive for the presbytery surrounding Washington, D.C. The Rev. Scott W. Douglas, student assistant, becomes an assistant pastor. He resigns in May 1986.

1988

The Rev. Scott T. Marrese-Wheeler becomes associate/pastor April 10. He resigns Sept. 30, 1994, to accept call at Union Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Wis.

1991

The Rev. William J. Weber becomes parish associate pastor June 1.

On Sept. 3, the Rev. Heidi Hudnut-Beumler becomes interim associate pastor and completes her service June 1, 1993.

1993

The Rev. Donna E. Wells becomes associate pastor Sept. 19.

1994

Assistant music director Gregory Gibson resigns in August. Betty Bergin White succeeds John Williams as music director Sept. 1.

The Rev. Jerry D. Weber becomes parish associate pastor Sept. 28.

1995

Northminster plans series of programs to celebrate its golden anniversary. Events include a concert, sermons by two former senior pastors, a family picnic, a banquet, and a commemorative worship service. Membership is 1,730 adults as the year begins.

Northminster's charter members, 1995 (not pictured, Helen Fehr Dinkins and Evelyn Basler)



*Forrest &
Bonna Lassiter*

*Charles &
Grace Haugh*

*Fred &
Dorothy Schlegel*

*Patricia White
Ruth Bradley*

Gilbert Orban

Revisiting the Early Years

My recollections of Northminster go back to the summer of 1945 when a minister friend of mine suggested a McCormick seminary classmate of *his* was founding a new church in Indianapolis. "Look him up and see if you can help." Sometime in the fall, I did just that. The church was Northminster, a product of the National Missions New Church Development initiative, booming after the war and thriving in the expansionist period thus generated.

The "McCormick classmate" was the Rev. Ray Cloyd Downs, an engaging, gregarious, laid-back sort of guy, very "unclerical," much loved. He cruised the neighborhood of his parish on a bicycle, visiting, gossiping, proselytizing, and generally adding members to the rolls. Place of worship was the Millersville Masonic Lodge on the corner of Emerson Avenue and Kessler Boulevard. Becky and I became members — if memory serves me right — in January or February of 1946.

Memories of the year at Millersville are pretty vague. We watched the synod acquire property for Northminster at Kessler Boulevard and Ralston Avenue and knew that things were moving. Our growth was modest but continual, and we were confident of a better day once we had a building. In the meantime, we had to maintain the property, partly wooded and partly cleared, with a magnificent weed crop along Ralston. Norm Hartley, Clif Bradley, and I appeared there three times a summer, each with a scythe, swinging mightily in the hot afternoon sun, cutting the weeds and trying to keep the place trim.

The "parish" had been established by virtue of this property bought for the future church site where an ambitious, clairvoyant, self-confident presbytery committee had courageously bought five whole lots to accommodate a congregation estimated — with luck — to peak at 400 to 500 people. It was National Missions' sponsorship and "up-front money" that soon permitted the struggling and growing church to construct its first facility. This was a charming — and for the time, adequate — red-brick, quasi-Williamsburg-style sanctuary which was dedicated in 1947. I said "struggling" church because that is what seemed to occur as we moved in and cranked up to convert all of Broad Ripple.

Downs had departed for a mission career in Thailand and was replaced by the Rev. Dick Williams, a bright young bachelor, fresh out of seminary,

By P.E. MacAllister

Church Installs Rev. Cloyd Downs

THE NORTHMINSTER Presbyterian church and the Rev. Ray Cloyd Downs expect to break ground for the new church at Kessler blvd. and Ralston dr. the latter part of October.

The Rev. Mr. Downs was officially installed as new pastor of Northminster in ceremonies last night in Foster hall. The congregation expects to worship in the hall until their new church is completed.

Saranac Lake, N. Y., is the Rev. Mr. Downs home town and McCormick Theological seminary, his divinity school. He has done social settlement and Boy scout work, served as a traveling fellow for the Presbyterian church in the interest of Christian education and served various pastorates including two in the Adirondacks, and one at Monticello, Ind.



Rev. Downs

ster Presbyterian Building Next Week

Young Minister, Young Church Do Congregation Keeps Outgrowing Q



Drawing of

Work will begin next
the new Northminster P
ian Church at Ralston
and East Kessler Bou
Rev. Ray Cloyd Dow
the church, announce
Of Georgian Col
ture, the new chu
of red brick with
will cost \$48,00
will be bo
gation a

Northminster Pastor Named

Native of Chicago
Accepts Call Here

The Rev. Richard S. Williams
has accepted a call to the North-
minster Presbyterian church and
will deliver his first sermon here
July 6.

The Rev. Mr. Williams succeeds
the Rev. Ray Cloyd Downs who
has resigned to prepare for service

FUNDS FOR NE CHURCH REA

Presbyterian Buildings
Started Soon.

By EMMA RIVERS MIL
Times Church Editor

No overpowering debt will
the charter members of t
Presbyterian church to be
at the northeast corner of
blvd. and Ralston dr.

Funds already have be
cated to the project by th
extension committee of the
Presbyterian synod. More

Construction Scheduled to S New Building for North

The Rev. Ray Cloyd Downs, new
pastor of the Northminster Pres-
byterian church, will conduct serv-
ices for the congregation tomorrow
at 7:30 p. m. in Foster hall on
J. K. Lilly estate.

Northminster ch
cially organized som
ceremonies conducte
lanapolls Presbyter
r. Downs will be rec
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n of the denomi

Cornerstone Services Set

and a fabulous preacher. Dick's session was a group of stalwarts; the diaconate (to which I was soon elected) was active and a gang of eager beavers. There was a relatively strong Men's Club, several Women's Circles, a lusty-voiced choir (with Grace Hennessey as the director) and a huge Sunday school. In short, all systems were "go." We had been equipped with someone else's old hymnals, communion service, a used piano, and were scrounging to fully equip the enterprise with whatever paraphernalia is normally required. This scavenging operation involved the pastor as well as the flock.

One of Dick's early clerical longings was for some chancel furniture. He had his eyes on a lectern, pulpit, two chairs, and a table compatibly designed for our style of sanctuary, which we persuaded my dad to donate. The Men's Club replaced the piano with one of the old pump-type organs (where the stops pull out above the keyboard), now modernized by Jerry Hyde with a motor and compressor to supply the air. It cost \$95. We hauled it in one fall day and installed it (i.e. plugged it in), and from then on, organist Helen Hyde filled the sanctuary with this glorious (though somewhat wheezy) organ music.

We struggled in more ways than one in those early years. The most serious of these struggles centered on the character, service, proficiency, and, finally, personality of Dick Williams.

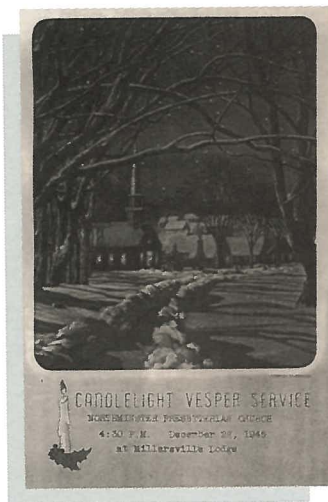
No brawl is more bitter than a no-holds-barred church brouhaha, and this was a bad scene. The point is, we were split right down the bloody middle, with the "pro" half on one side of the sanctuary and the "con" half on the other side. Williams' inexperience may have caused some problems; he did things some folks didn't like. The upshot was a full-blown administrative committee investigation from the presbytery, hearings, bitterness, politicking like mad. In the end, Williams resigned. We had an interim pastor for a time. Then in 1949, we invited an aggressive, energetic dynamo

named Wilbur Closterhouse to be our pastor. By the time he arrived, most of the excitement had cooled.

I remember his candidating sermon because I was ushering and stationed in the back of the church. He was a strong preacher with a stentorian voice, and the congregation listened intently, trying to act wise and judge with discrimination. When he came back to deliver the benediction after the recessional hymn, the first words he ever spoke to me were, "Did I talk too loud?" No one seemed to think so since he was called at once and came shortly thereafter, ending the long period of unrest and beginning a period of vigorous and rapid growth.

Wilbur was a good preacher, a great and wonderful human being and an inveterate and insistent parish caller. I recall his coming out to see us one night on his route, and I wondered, "What's up?" "I haven't called on you yet this year, so I'm making my annual call." "Wilbur, I've seen you three times this week and am in the church continually, why do you have to call on *me*?" *Everyone* got called on, and that calling on — old and new, young and elderly — built our congregation from about 200 to 1,900 in the next 13 years.

This growth delighted everyone, but it also strained the systems. Even the music



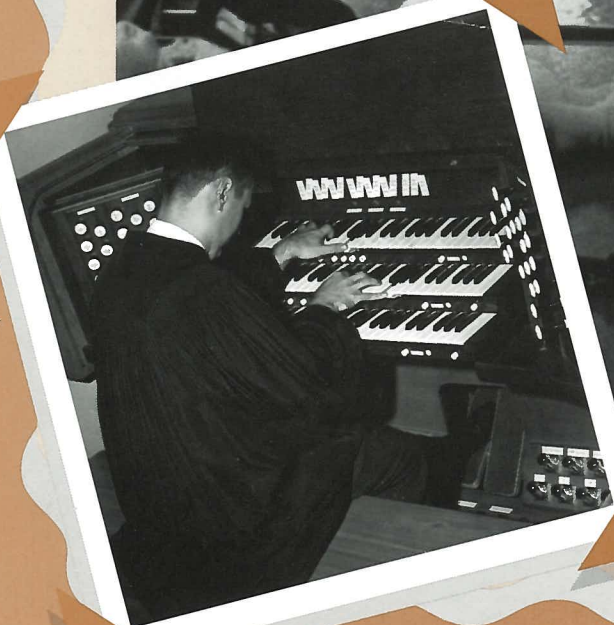
Christmas program,
1945

Rev. Wilbur Closterhouse



*Early Sewing
Guild, 1960s*

*David
Foster at
Reuter
organ,
1962*



Sunday School class at work

system. After a year or so, Wilbur began wondering about our classic music maker, the old pump organ and cast covetous glances at the Wilking Music Co. and the new Hammond organs available for sanctuaries like ours. We finally agreed on a little blond model which I think now sits up in the Lindquist Chapel loft. We bought it for him and dedicated it to my tent-mate in North Africa, John Scott Willey, who was killed on his 50th mission over Naples, Aug. 30, 1943 — my 25th birthday.

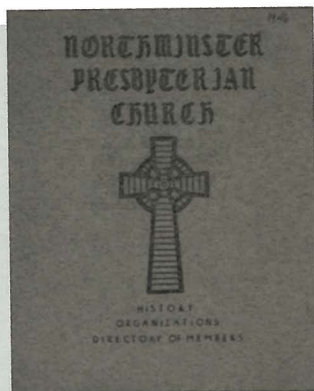
Wilbur's endeavor and success soon had us crowded on Sunday, so we went to two services. Finally, we went to three, and this meant we needed still more room. Soon we had a large addition under way (now serving as Sunday school space) along the northwest side of the building. From then on, there was a part of the congregation in the old sanctuary, sort of merged into a second one sitting over there on its left. Both soon filled again and likewise filled for three services. Which required a bigger sanctuary — the one in which we worship now.

Space was always a problem. As we approached 800 members, a place for 400 members was obviously inadequate. Through the years, as the church proved successful, we began acquiring land, namely the three or four lots on the corner of Kingsley Drive and Kessler which belonged to "old man Dawson," a sort of character who was not all that enamored of

traffic and loud noises. In the course of our expansion, we used the lot on the north, on the Kingsley side, where we had put up a manse to accommodate Closterhouse, his wife Mae, and their three daughters. More people needed more parking, so we finally ended up buying the Dawson property to occupy the entire stretch along Kessler.

What aided and abetted this rather phenomenal progress was not only the diligence and homiletical skills of the pastor, but also the nature of the times. Growth was everywhere. What also helped immeasurably was being situated in a new neighborhood populated with young families, all reproducing unrestrainedly and eager for a place to send their children to Sunday school. We had a brimming, bustling, gang-buster operation with a jillion kids there, greeted every Sunday by Clif Bradley, who made it a point to remember all their names. I forgot the figures, but I do know enrollment topped 1,000 youngsters in those halcyon days.

All these recollections flavor or color the way I think of Northminster in perhaps its most exciting and formative years. This opening chapter vindicated the efficacy of the system itself and the leadership which gave us a far better record than many of our contemporaries. Early on, Northminster knew firsthand what "grace" is all about. ■



*Church directory,
1945*

“We went to two services,
then to three...”

Memories Since the 1960s

It is at least partially true that we measure life more by memories than years. As we reminisce, our minds wondrously shut out the painful memories and the good ones come to the fore.

With that in mind, I've been asked to write some memories of Northminster, which span almost 30 years of ministry. I will try to do so without getting too sentimental.

In 1960 as a student at Christian Theological Seminary, I joined the ministerial staff of Wilbur Closterhouse and Karl Gillmeister as the youth minister. During this two-year term, Nancy and I had two children, Dawn and Jami. Other people's children (the youth groups) met in the chapel for worship and recreation. One night Karl and I took 200 junior high-schoolers on a hayride — what a time!

Wilbur taught the congregation new hymns during worship. Choirmaster David Foster had seven choirs, including a group of 40 high-school students who sang each Sunday at the early service.

I also remember the old Dawson farmhouse that sat on our parking lot. The 90 ninth-graders met there for Sunday school. Nancy and I joined Karl and his wife Robbie in their apartment upstairs for a few Saturday-night poker games.

I remember the weeklong spiritual seminar led by the Rev. Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse. Each night the sanctuary overflowed with people. The congregation was growing rapidly. It was the 1960s and all churches were feeling growing pains.

The facilities were greatly taxed by increased membership. Our two daughters were in the nursery in the “furnace room.” Can you believe cribs and playpens around the furnace?

Then there was the “cry room” upstairs on the west side of the balcony of the current sanctuary. It had a large window so parents could sit upstairs and watch their children. With no Christian education building, classes were held everywhere — the sanctuary and vestibule, the library, hallways, the Dawson home, the manse, the kitchen and chapel. Northminster had one of the largest Sunday school enrollments in Indiana — more than 700 children

By The Rev. Dr. Donald R. Durrett



*Vacation Bible school,
1963*

*Northminster youth visiting
the Berlin Wall, 1968*



each week. The congregation totaled about 1,500.

Oh yes, there was the annual Men's Club golf outing. It finally was discontinued because some golfers put a bit too much emphasis on the "19th hole."

After I finished seminary, our family moved to northern Indiana for our first church pastorate. In July 1966, we returned to Northminster as associate pastor and family, joining the team of A. Howard Lindquist and Frank E. Bean Jr.

The congregation had grown to about 2,000, with an average worship attendance of 900. Our family grew by one, son Dean. People liked Lindquist's style of preaching and a "full-service program" for everyone. The past 30 years are flooded with so many events and people that it is difficult to chronicle the memories.

Some highlights include youth retreats at Camps Pyoca and Geneva, along with youth exchanges with Rissen-Hamburg, Germany, beginning in June 1968, when 68 of us (58 high-school students and 10 adult leaders—Bob and Jody Baumgardt, Gordon and Jane Abbott, Harold and Jean Schroeder, Larry and Margaret Pettet, and Nancy and I) went to Germany for a work camp. We learned all the music to "Up With People" and the dance routines, which we performed in several churches in Germany. Over the next 10 years, we took two more groups abroad, and three groups from Germany came here.

We also took work groups of youth to Buckhorn Creek, Ky.; Chicago; Washington, D.C.; and Fort McDowell, Ariz.

Then there were the Christmas parties for the children around Washington Street Presbyterian Church. One of my fondest memories was our Sunday-night youth program called "Faith in Action." It consisted of two confirmation classes—grades 8-9 and the senior high-schoolers. Our cook, Lottie Kollins, prepared the meals with Norinne White, and the parents served them.

In the early 1970s, our neighbors at Christ The King Church had a serious fire that closed their school. Northminster's staff went to their pastor, the Rev. Tom Carey, and offered our facilities for their use in our new Christian education wing. That event launched many years of joint events between our two churches, congregations, and pastors. After Father Carey's retirement, we warmly welcomed the Rev. Ken Sweeney.

“I recall the year 48 men of Northminster chartered a bus to attend a national meeting of Presbyterian men in Chicago. The entertainment for the event came from a young, unknown guitarist and singer named John Denver.”



All of us have enjoyed his openness and quiet spirit. He retired in February 1995.

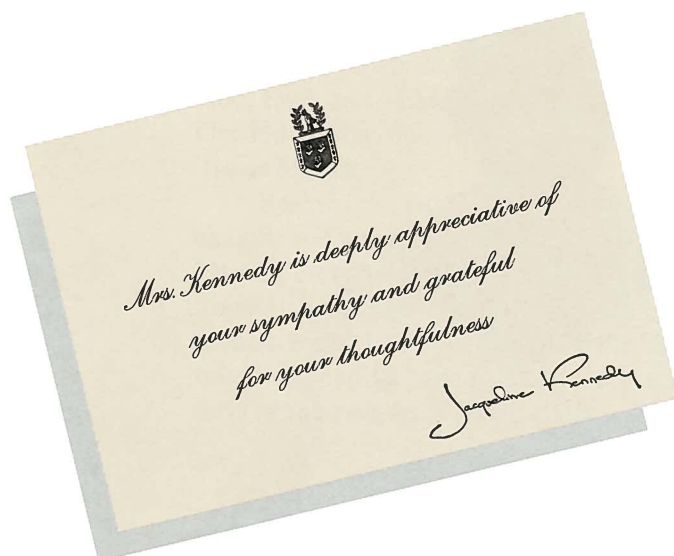
Memories and time frames run together, so it is difficult to sort out what happened when and to whom. One hot summer Sunday before our church was air-conditioned, communion was to be served. That day, elder P.E. MacAllister attracted attention as he served the sacraments in his Bermuda shorts.

For several years, many in the congregation enjoyed fishing, camping and hiking at Northminster Lake near Mooresville. The property was given to the church by the MacAllister family.

I remember the musicals put on and produced by the members of Tandem Club, including “My Fair Lady,” “Showboat,” and “The Music Man.” Many of the shows were performed in Gordon and Jane Abbott’s back yard, enhanced by delicious food from MCL Cafeteria. Nancy and I have been members of the Two by Two fellowship for many years. I remember the hayrides at Dudley and Sarah Senefeld’s farm, the retreats at Geneva Center and the home of John and Carol Woodruff, the “hard-times party” hosted by Butch and Jan West, and the Halloween party at Chuck and Ann Chandler’s, with Bruce Wagner doing his famous “Rindecella Story.”

There also were Sunday school picnics at Noblesville Park and the Jordan YMCA. In contrast, I remember the somber mood of the congregation on the Sunday before Thanksgiving in 1963 as the American flag was carried down the center aisle draped in black as a memorial to President John F. Kennedy who had been assassinated two days before.

During the 1970s I enjoyed taking part in the sports offered at Northminster. Our basketball team, which played in the northside church league, consisted of Tom



“I remember the somber mood of the congregation on the Sunday before Thanksgiving as the American flag was carried down the center aisle draped in black as a memorial to President John F. Kennedy who had been assassinated two days before.”

“The children’s choir was singing an anthem at a worship service, when one of the children got sick and threw up on two others in front of him. After the service, Tom Foster came to me and said he ‘didn’t like the anthem either.’”

Wallace, Dick Dunbar, Jerry Collins, Mike Shebek, Tom Reeves, Wayne Brummer, Bud Yencer, and Butch West, along with big Vern Altemier. Our softball team had so much talent that we beat all the church teams and had to play in the Industrial League for competition. We were led by fastball pitcher Gene Harvey.

I recall the year 48 men of Northminster chartered a bus to attend a national meeting of Presbyterian men in Chicago. The entertainment for the event came from a young, unknown guitarist and singer named John Denver.

Field trips also hold many memories for me, especially those with the Leisure Day Group. We went to state parks, an Amish village, museums, and the Tulip Festival at Holland, Mich.

As part of our outreach efforts, we sponsored Christmas parties at Pendleton state prison and the Indiana Boys’ School at Plainfield. We had a counseling program at the Marion County Jail, and I remember we conducted Sunday school classes on Sunday afternoons at the city’s juvenile center.

Then there was the night we really reached out — all the way to East Asia. It was a windy, snowy, cold February night in 1983 when one of our sponsored refugee families arrived from Laos. The children of Her Pao Xiong stepped off the plane barefooted. Mrs. Xiong carried a wooden bowl, a small ax, and incense. None of the family spoke English. With much help from the congregation, we housed them, enrolled the children in school, and found a job for Mr. Xiong. It was a heart-warming experience.

I remember with great affection Si Tri Nguyen and our next refugee family — from Vietnam. They have found jobs, bought a house, and joined our church. Two of the young adults are in school. An is an honor student at Purdue University, and Thang is a junior at North Central High School. The family is a joy and a delight.

Our facilities have certainly changed over the past 30 years. The present men’s





*The children's choir,
1970s*

restroom outside the choir room was the church library, the Knox Room was home to our scout troops, and the present choir room was an outdoor church garden. The church office was near the sanctuary. The church manse was located where the Christian education wing now stands. The choir room was downstairs in what we now call Calvin Hall annex.

Many humorous events and experiences have lightened the years. I lift up just a few that happened to me.

One Sunday at worship, just as I was about to start the pastoral prayer, I noticed that a large German shepherd dog had come through the open front door (we had no air-conditioning then). He was headed up the center aisle. I paused to see what he was going to do. He came up the steps and sat down next to me at the chancel. When I finished the prayer, he got up and walked down the aisle out into the world again.

The children's choir was singing an anthem at a worship service when one of the children got sick and threw up on two others in front of him. After the service, Tom Foster came to me and said he "didn't like the anthem either."

During these years I have met and tried to minister to thousands of persons at hospitals, nursing homes, weddings, funerals, baptisms, and community services. My family and I have been richly blessed by our association with the congregation at Northminster. We feel grateful and humble for being accepted with such warmth, love, and friendship. We feel a part of each member's extended family. So many friendships made, events shared, and memories created and stored.

Many members, too numerous to name, whom I have dearly loved and enjoyed, have joined the Church Triumphant. A few who touched my (our) life in special ways were Kitty Holmes, Bill and Nellie Haug, Cliff and Mary Wilgus, Charlie and Mildred McGaughey, Dr. and Mrs. Cecil Ball, Ray Hilgedag, Frank and Norinne White, Floyd Logan, Gerald Hyde, Dr. Robert Driesens, Paul Kahn, Ernie Ittner, Charles Byers, Ed Gue, Dick and Mildred Stevens, Joan Fortune, Frank Reissner, Harry Smyth, David Orr, Hilda MacAllister, John Ashby, Carol Murrer, Carol Weber, Hank Jones, and Travis Melick.

Besides the pastors mentioned earlier, I remember and have great respect, appreciation, and admiration for all the others with whom I have worked—Warren Corbett, David Peters, Glen McDonald, Eleanor Brouillard, Jerry Johnson, Sue Berry, Margaret Towner, Scott Marrese-Wheeler, and the current pastoral staff of Fred Mathias and Donna Wells. Each one is part of the church story. And I hope and pray that in some way Nancy and I have touched a few lives and made a difference in the spiritual journeys of the people of Northminster. ■

*Church services were held at
Millersville Masonic Lodge prior to
construction of the new building*



Improving A Northminster's Home

As World War II neared its close, a forward-looking Indianapolis Presbytery recommended establishment of a mission church in the Broad Ripple area. Local residents became interested in the idea and soon held meetings in several of their homes, planning to establish a congregation and to seek national Presbyterian approval to charter a church.

On July 5, 1945, the first Session meeting of the newly chartered Northminster church met in the home of Elder William Hennessey Jr. On Aug. 3, 1945, a building committee was formed. The presbytery purchased five lots along East Kessler Boulevard to accommodate construction of the new church. Later, the Dawson property on the northwest corner of Kingsley Drive and Kessler was purchased, thus completing the church's acquisition of all property along the Kessler frontage.

On Feb. 3, 1947, the session received approval from the Civilian Production Administration (a federal bureau that approved or denied new construction during World War II) to construct the first Northminster church building. On May 20, 1947, the Indianapolis zoning board also approved the construction. The Burns and James architectural firm prepared the plans, and the general contractor was the Edward Weddle Construction Co. The cost of the original property and sanctuary building was \$15,516.80.

Construction was completed, according to session records, Feb. 2, 1948, but the first worship services were held Dec. 7, 1947, in advance of construction completion. The membership roll continued to increase, and it became necessary to use the Dawson house, which was converted to Sunday school and meeting rooms. In 1950 a manse was built on the north end of the property for the senior pastor. The assistant pastor, when he was called, lived in the Dawson house, purchased in 1954. This structure was razed later; the manse was sold and moved.

Early in 1952, a new building addition was under way, north and east of the first sanctuary. Part of the new construction became the chancel of the original sanctuary and provided a small library as well. This construction was done by the George Bahre Construction Co. Bahre, a member of Northminster, did the work at cost for \$14,200.

It was followed closely by the construction of Christian Education Unit #2, which consisted of a kitchen, scout

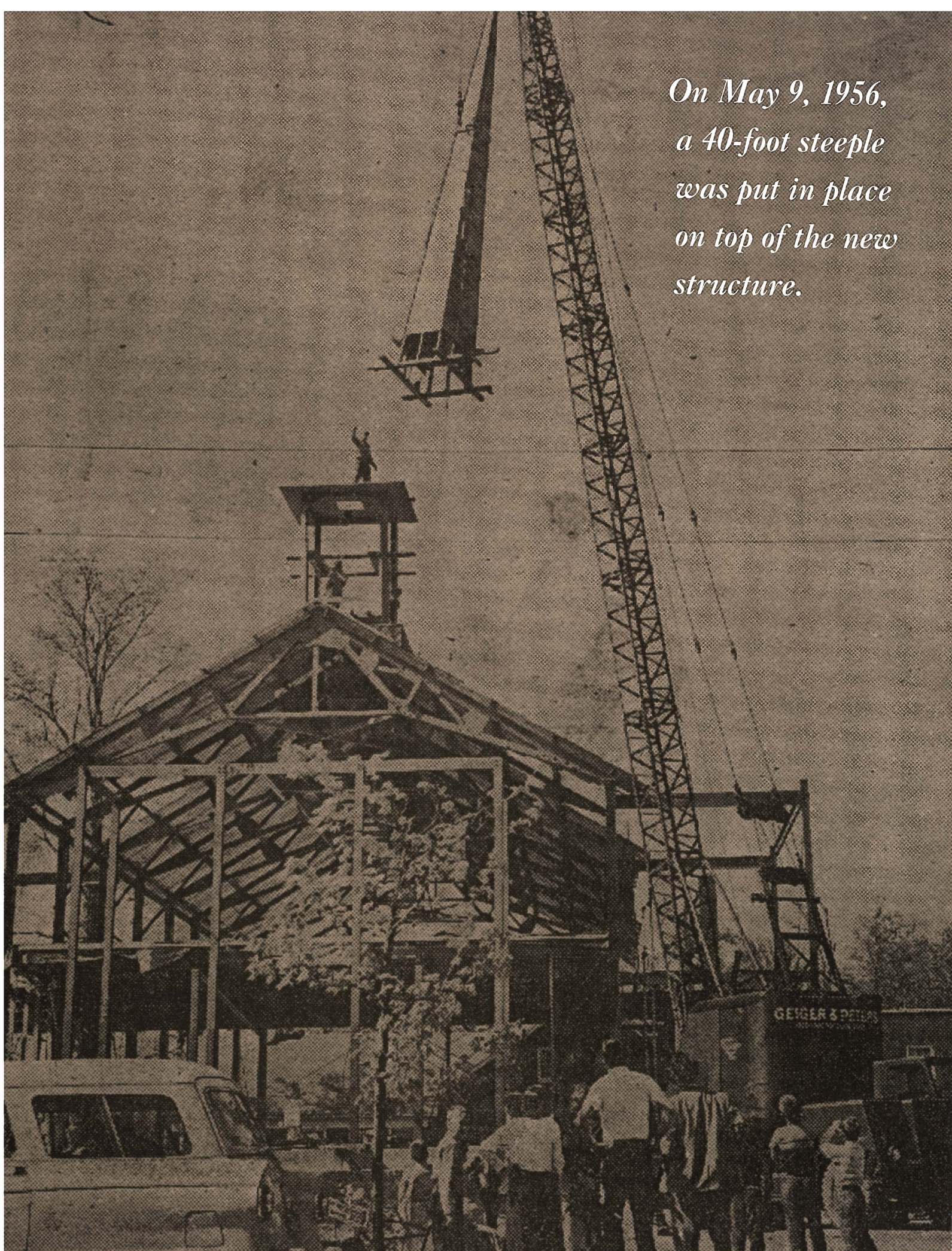
By Bill Kniptash

You are cordially invited to the
Laying of the Cornerstone
of the
Northminster Presbyterian Church
Kessler Boulevard and Ralston Drive
Indianapolis, Indiana

Sunday, October 26, 1947

3 p. m.

*On May 9, 1956,
a 40-foot steeple
was put in place
on top of the new
structure.*



room, and added Sunday school space that nearly doubled the available space. The cost of this addition was \$39,539.52. While this construction was under way, it was decided to build a second-story construction over the first-floor Sunday school rooms.

Membership continued to increase. At its meeting of Oct. 15, 1953, the session voted to engage Edward James, Architects, to prepare preliminary plans and, upon approval, to produce final drawings for a new sanctuary building.

On Jan. 31, 1955, the session passed a motion to complete payment on the existing mortgage on the church. From that date forward, all monies accruing to make mortgage payments were to be placed in the church's building fund. There were still financial obligations to the New Church Development and Building Additions of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

On Feb. 28, 1955, the session empowered the building committee to apply for a \$125,000 loan from the W.A. Bartlett Mortgage and Bond Co. of Muncie. By later session action, the amount was increased to \$135,000. On March 13, 1955, the presbytery approved the mortgage amount and authorized Northminster church to proceed. Other funds came from cash on hand, personal loans from church members, a mortgage grant from the Board of National Missions, and pledges from the congregation.

On Aug. 29, 1955, a model contract was approved to proceed with construction of the new sanctuary by the George Bahre Co. The amount of the Bahre contract was \$213,000. The total cost of the sanctuary, including construction, furnishings, pew seats, and so forth was \$300,000.

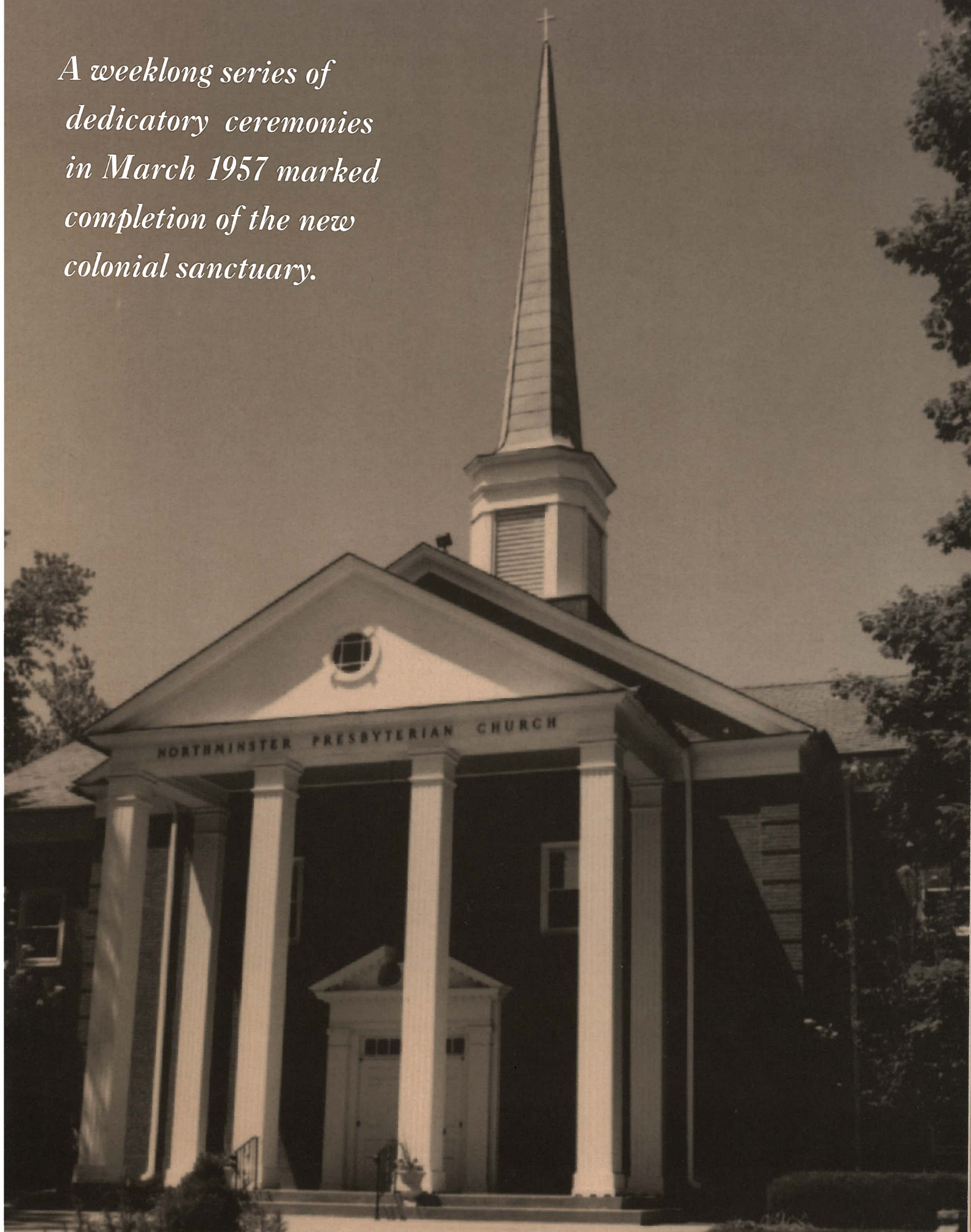
Ground was broken for the new sanctuary Sept. 24, 1955. On May 9, 1956, a 40-foot steeple was put in place on top of the new structure, and on May 20 the cornerstone was laid.

A weeklong series of dedicatory ceremonies in March 1957 marked completion of the new colonial sanctuary, which seats 600. This sanctuary serves the present congregation, and its beauty has been enjoyed by all members since it was



Architect's rendering of original structure

*A weeklong series of
dedicatory ceremonies
in March 1957 marked
completion of the new
colonial sanctuary.*



dedicated. A magnificent Reuter organ was added later, funded by a drive for monies from the congregation and friends of the church.

In the basement area below the sanctuary, called Calvin Hall, are an assembly room and kitchen where many church activities take place. An elevator was installed between the sanctuary level and Calvin Hall in 1977.

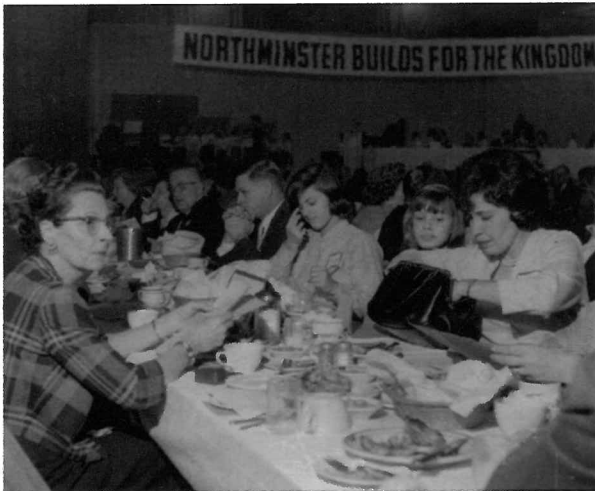
In 1964, rapid increases in church membership generated more pressure for more church-school classroom space. A long-range planning committee studied this problem and other matters, all related to membership increases. This committee reported to the session Dec. 28, 1964, and recommended, based on a registered Sunday school enrollment of 1,080, constructing 15,235 square feet of new school space.

A special congregational meeting was called for February 15, 1965, to vote on construction of a new educational wing. The congregation voted to approve this recommendation and selected a building committee, which in turn chose the architectural firm of McGuire, Shook, Compton, Richey and Associates to prepare plans for the new construction. Floor-plan information and elevation sketches were presented Jan. 10, 1966, and the congregation voted that the building committee should oversee this project.

In May the session authorized the board of trustees to borrow \$275,000 in a mortgage loan for the construction of the new education addition. Additional monies were to come from church members in gifts and pledges. The George Bahre Co., general contractors, was selected as the builder. The structure was dedicated May 7, 1967. The addition is located on the north side of the church property. The two-story structure extends eastward toward Kingsley Drive.

Two other building projects complete the 50-year history of the Northminster church home. The Lindquist Chapel, dedicated Aug. 10, 1981, is the original sanctuary, which has been renovated and is now used for church services and meetings. A second improvement was completed by closing in the area on the west side of the church, and a room was built between the walls of the Lindquist Chapel and the new sanctuary. It is now the choir/multi-purpose room. Originally, a small garden area, complete with a decorative water fountain and pool, had been located here.

The result of all this dedicated work by Northminster members and friends is the beautiful debt-free church as it now stands in this 50th anniversary year of the church's first days. ■



A Loyalty Dinner helped raise funds for new educational wing, 1966.

Shepherding the Flock

The 24 ordained men and women whom Northminster has chosen as its ministers have taken key roles in guiding the church through its first 50 years. They have brought to their assignments diverse professional and personal qualities. They have responded to challenges of growth and change, inspiring the congregation through example and messages from the pulpit, taking part in denominational governance at regional and national levels, working with others to improve the community, and conducting hundreds of baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

Those who became charter members of the new church in June 1945 were eager to recruit their own minister. Other tasks could wait. They wanted pastoral leadership ASAP.

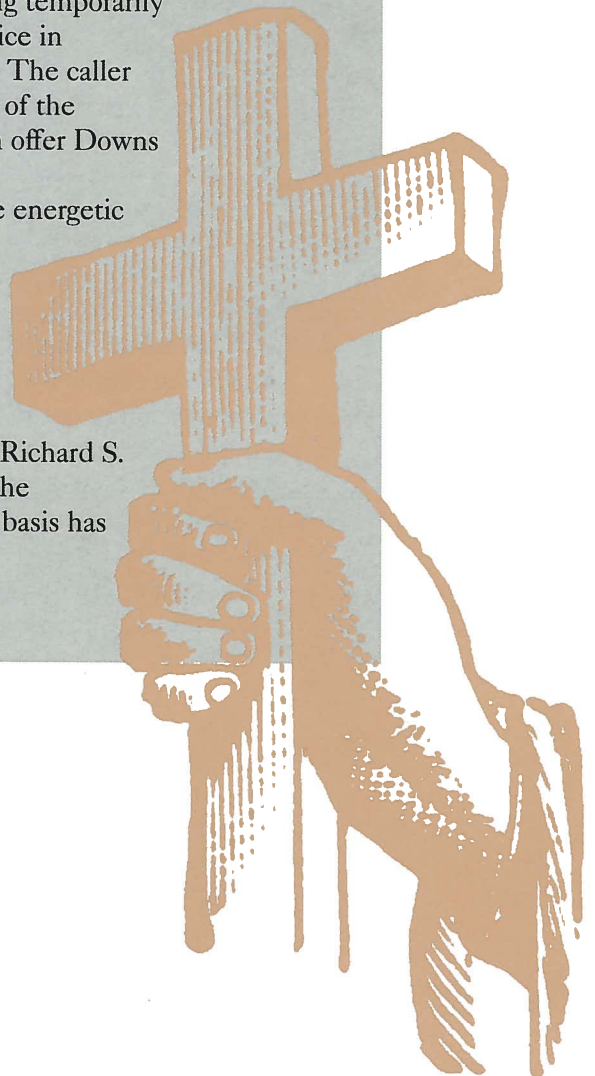
Probably none suspected, however, how speedy “soon” would be. Or that symbols of future leadership would include a bicycle, doorbells, and three-point sermons.

Northminster’s first pastor was on the job less than two weeks after the church was chartered. The Rev. Raymond (Ray) Cloyd Downs, recently graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago and working temporarily in the general assembly’s board of Christian education office in Philadelphia, received a telephone call from Indianapolis. The caller was the Rev. Dr. Alexander Sharp Sr., executive secretary of the National Missions Board for the synod of Indiana, with an offer Downs could not resist.

Neither could Northminster’s congregation resist the energetic 28-year-old. From the outset, he demonstrated many of the attributes they prized in a pastor: He was devoted, dedicated, durable, diplomatic, even daring. He also was compassionate and congenial.

Downs set the pattern in many ways. Probably his most noticeable exception was in length of service in our pulpit, only two years. His immediate successor, the Rev. Richard S. Williams, served here only 14 months. However, each of the remaining three senior pastors appointed on a permanent basis has

By Jim Mitchell



done so for an average of 14-plus years. In order, the Rev. Dr. Wilbur R. Closterhouse, the Rev. Dr. A. Howard Lindquist and the incumbent, the Rev. Dr. C. Frederick Mathias, have combined to guide the faithful more than 43 years.

On two occasions, stated supply personnel have carried on the duties of our senior pastor — once for more than two years. An interim pastor once held forth for 10 months. Ordained assistant and associate pastors also have lent leadership continuously since May 1, 1955, and seven student assistants have served briefer stints along the way.

The slender, scholarly appearing Downs inspired the parishioners of his first pastorate with straightforward, Bible-based preaching. He introduced the practice of regular chats with the children in worship services. He pushed constantly for construction of Northminster's first building on the lot at Ralston Avenue and Kessler Boulevard, once serving communion outdoors in the woods on the site. Perhaps what Northminster folk remember best, however, is his bicycle. He rode it everywhere, especially on his daily trek to Broad Ripple from his earliest Indianapolis residence in the 1300 block of North Delaware Street. (Now retired, he still pedals 15 miles each day near his home in Bainbridge Island, Wash.) Northminsterites also approved strongly when the young man went back East to marry Elizabeth (Betty) Holmquist, a young war widow whom he had known since high-school days in New Hope, Pa. Betty's 2-year-old son, Peter, accompanied the couple on their return to Indianapolis. Peter's father, a U.S. Air Force pilot, died in World War II.

In the spring of 1947, Downs answered another telephone call. It was another offer he felt he could not refuse. The general assembly's Board of Foreign Missions needed his organizing skills in the Far East. Denied a hitch in China by the Communist takeover there, the Downsens went to Thailand. Ray became campus minister at eight Thai universities, establishing and operating a Christian student center at each one. Ray and Betty devoted 32 productive years to this assignment before returning to the United States in 1981.

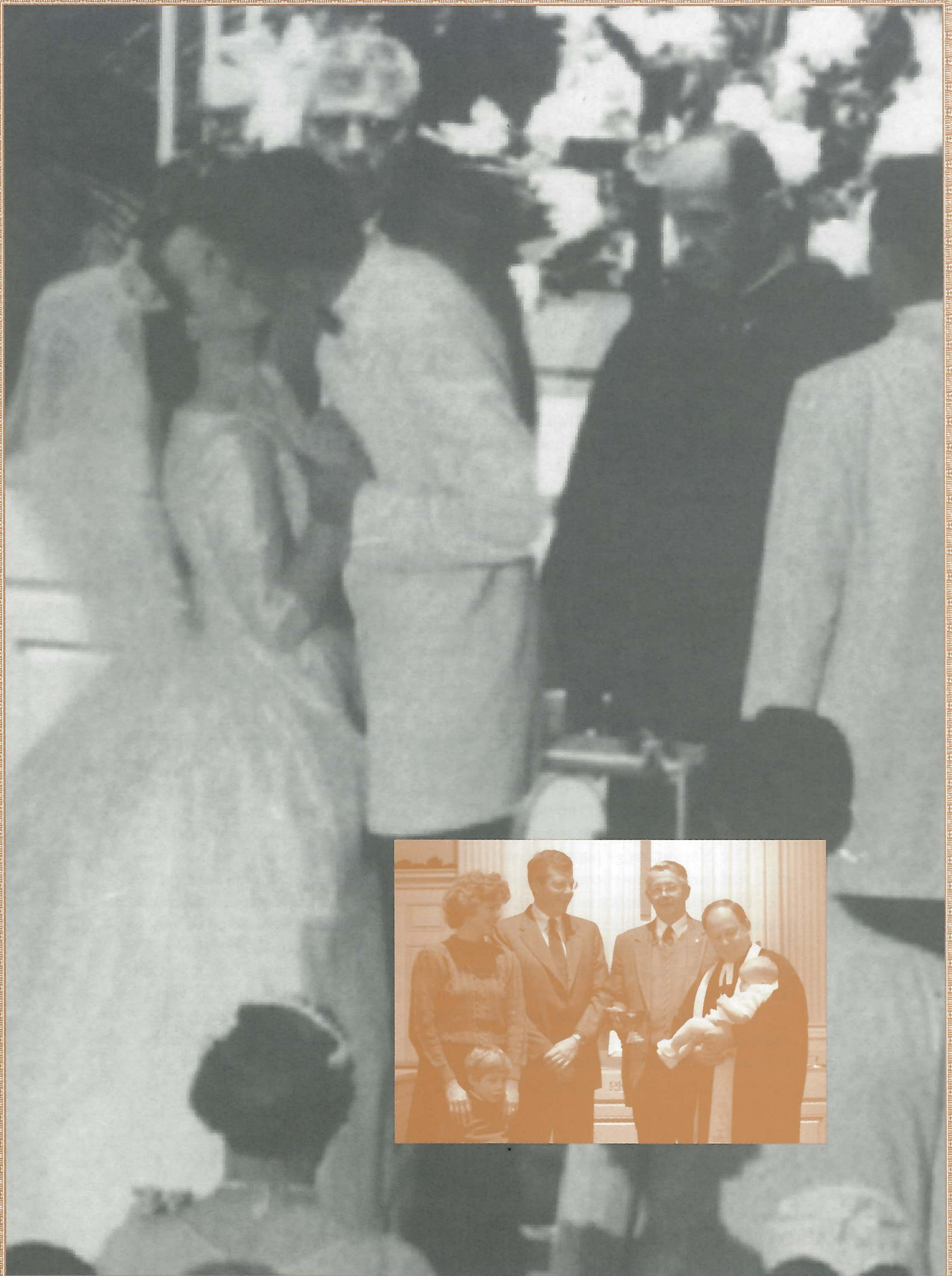
When the couple left Northminster in early June 1947, the church's second pastor already was standing in the wings. Downs welcomed 24-year-old Dick Williams and showed the newcomer through the nearly completed sanctuary on Ralston.

Williams preached his first 20 sermons, however, in the Millersville Masonic Lodge. When the move to the new building came, Northminster at last had a home of its own. On Sunday, Dec. 7, 1947, Williams stood behind a borrowed pulpit once used locally by the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and delivered the first sermon ever presented in the building. He had presided six weeks earlier at ceremonies marking the laying of the cornerstone and had conducted a prayer meeting on the premises four days before the "official" opening.

But Northminster was not for the new graduate of New York's Union Theological Seminary. Increasingly, his ideas on church administration went in different directions from those of many parishioners. He resigned in August 1948 to pursue advanced studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. From there, he came back to his native Midwest to serve pastorates in a number of Presbyterian and United Church of Christ churches. These included First Congregational United Church of Christ in Rochester,

*Rev. Raymond (Ray)
Cloyd Downs, 1946*





Rev. Dr. Wilbur Raynor Closterhouse



Wis., where he was senior pastor for 13 years. Since retiring in 1985, Williams has served interim pastorates in 14 parishes in Wisconsin and Illinois.

If the situation was tense and inharmonious during the latter half of the “Williams year,” there was sweet music ahead for

Northminster. Our good friend Dr. Sharp filled the pulpit until the following April as a stated supply. Northminster’s third senior pastor then came to town with a lighted match in his hand—and the rocket swooshed off the launching pad.

The Rev. Dr. Wilbur Raynor Closterhouse, 34 years old and eight years into his ministerial career, was excited by the potential he saw at Northminster — potential for great service to Jesus Christ. Believing that “evangelism must stand central in the life of the church,” he rang doorbells. He also organized a Fishermen’s Club among the men of the congregation. More doorbells rang. In Closterhouse’s first 10 years here, Northminster’s membership showed an average annual increase of 160.

The human tidal wave confronted the young church with an even more formidable challenge than its initial organization. Two additions to the original building were needed immediately. They were built. A manse was needed for the pastor’s wife and three small daughters; the Closterhouse family moved there in 1951.

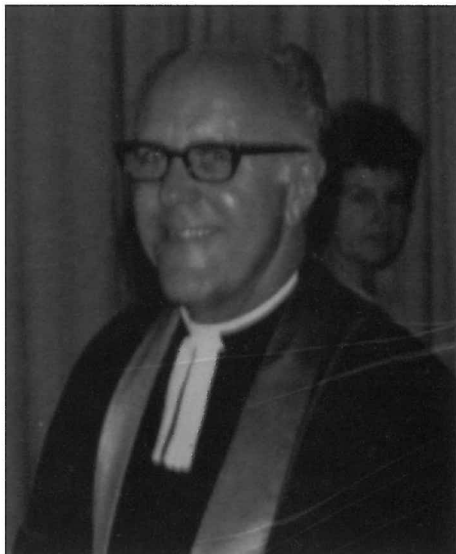
Burgeoning pastoral responsibilities required more ministerial help. Student assistant John Hinant came aboard in late 1952 and was joined in the summer of 1953 by Tom O. Parrish. Our first ordained assistant pastor, the Rev. James R. Tozer, arrived in May 1955. Budgets and the nonministerial staff increased annually. The beautiful new sanctuary on Kessler was dedicated in March 1957.

The Northminster parishioners — less than a decade from the move into their small first building — showed they could ride a rocket with the best of them.

Historians probably would regard Northminster’s remarkable expansion as a normal outgrowth of the postwar boom in northeastern Indianapolis. But a veteran Presbyterian minister who observed the growth from a nearby parish thought otherwise: “It was Closterhouse. He went out every day and obtained new members. He kept them, too.”

A congenial congregation, excellent musical and Christian nurture programs, and sound preaching helped “keep them.” Most Closterhouse homilies were delivered in full solemnity. But the impish grin and the endearing ad-lib were





never far below the surface. The Rev. Karl Gillmeister replaced the resigned Tozer as assistant pastor in late 1958, and the senior pastor took note of this from the pulpit.

Northminster's ministerial

roster, he commented, now read like the sign on an Amsterdam law office: "Closterhouse and Gillmeister Inc."

Earlier, in the original sanctuary, Wilbur tiptoed down from the pulpit to accompany the closing hymn on the Hammond organ himself. Organist David Foster had slipped out the side door to greet a friend and didn't return in time. Parishioners were not sure how to respond — with guffaws at Foster's embarrassment or applause for the impromptu performance of the backup organist.

Born in Jenison, Mich., Closterhouse returned to his home state in August 1962, accepting a call from Calvin West church in Detroit. Later, he served 11 years as senior pastor at First Church in Spring Lake, Mich., and retired there as pastor emeritus in 1978. Since then, he has carried out interim pastorates at more than a dozen sites in four states.

There was no joy at Ralston and Kessler the day the Closterhouses moved out of the manse. But life went on with scarcely a ripple. Young Gillmeister moved smoothly into the duties of acting senior pastor. "Business" proceeded flawlessly through the interim.

The church spent eight months searching for a new senior pastor, and again the selectee applied spurs to virtually every facet of Northminster.

The Rev. Dr. A. Howard Lindquist "spoke Hoosier" more fluently than his predecessors. He was a native of Chicago but had served First Church in Kokomo for three years. He had been senior pastor at First Church in Fort Dodge, Iowa, 10 years before accepting the call to Northminster. He was 45, married, the father of two teenage daughters and came with a reputation as an excellent preacher.

Once again, Northminster folk responded nobly to the urgings of a new leader. As membership rose to 3,000, they constructed a Christian education wing and remodeled virtually the whole existing structure. As life became more complicated for the staff, the regular complement of ordained ministers increased to three, including the first woman granted ordination in the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) — the

Rev. Dr. C. Frederick Mathias



*Rev. Donna Wells shares
"Time with the Children"
in the sanctuary.*



Rev. Margaret E. Towner. As facilities expanded, the congregation learned to do things in an even bigger way: A throng of 2,000 members worshiped once in Clowes Memorial Hall at Butler University; 400 shared dinner at a celebration of our 25th anniversary; 76 young people completed a two-year catechetical class.

*Rev. Donald Durrett
instructs a youthful
"good shepherd."*



Only an average bicyclist and not an amateur organist, Lindquist offered his parishioners sparkling sermons delivered with dramatic flair. Inevitably, his message broke down into three major points, always introduced as the preacher counted them off on his fingers (and the audience giggled). Often the message was presented in the form of a one-man playlet with Lindquist, of course, performing every role. Not too many Sundays went by without a Lindquist story of one or more of his quaint Scandinavian relatives. Sometimes the house was so packed an usher was posted outside to watch for the fire marshal.

Not incidentally, those sermons marched inexorably to the apostle Paul's admonition to Timothy — the theme Lindquist loved best: Remember Jesus Christ. In his farewell discourse, he summed up: "Forget the years — forget the face — forget the voice — forget the words...but remember Jesus Christ!"

Northminster's affection for Lindquist found unusual expression in 1972. He accepted a call from a Presbyterian church in suburban Chicago and prepared to leave. But the session, responding to a wave of concern from parishioners, petitioned Whitewater Valley Presbytery to withhold approval of the transfer. The pastoral switch was quashed, and the Lindquists remained happily at Northminster for nine more years. Actually, Lindquist has never left; when he retired in September 1981, he became pastor emeritus. A plaque at the entrance of Lindquist Chapel recognizes his contributions.

The two-year lapse between Lindquist and his successor was the longest Northminster ever has endured. But the wait certainly was not unendurable. The Rev. Dr. Gerald R. Johnson bridged the gap as stated supply. A former senior pastor at Meridian Heights church and already a regular attendee at Northminster, Johnson was well acquainted here when summoned to duty by Whitewater Valley Presbytery. All went smoothly.

Northminster's pulpit committee also had chosen wisely. The Rev. Dr. C. Frederick Mathias, called from Westminster Church in Wilmington, Del., was well prepared to serve a "different" Northminster congregation. He took a strong interest in planning. Gray heads were beginning to dominate the pews; Sunday school enrollment had receded; the go-go pace had slowed. Well into his 24th year as a senior pastor, Mathias moved the church in directions other than expanded facilities and longer membership rolls.

One was a major switch in the Christian education program. Mathias and his staff noted the sharp drop-off in juvenile members and swung more of the emphasis to adult study. Northminster's involvement in community-wide social service also got a shot in the arm. The response was vintage Northminster: full speed ahead.

Education classes, taught by members of the church staff and recognized authorities from throughout central Indiana, now enlighten adult parishioners. Northminster volunteers, facilities, and dollars have been served the needy all over town. They build houses. They help prisoners in jail take steps in the right direction. They clothe the children of the poor. They introduce the hope of holy scripture into neglected lives.

From the pulpit, Mathias' sermons cover many subjects, all examined in the light of the Bible. Northminsterites find the beauty of his pastoral prayers particularly uplifting. An authority on the origins of hymns, the Princeton seminarian has been the chief instigator of the current celebration of Northminster's 50th anniversary. He will complete his 12th year at the helm in September. ■

Northminster's Associate/Assistant Ministers

NAME	PERIOD OF SERVICE	PRESENT LOCATION
James R. Tozer	5/1/55 - 11/1/58	Covenant Presbyterian Church, West Lafayette, Ind.
Karl W. Gillmeister	12/1/58-8/15/66	Retired, New York City
Frank E. Bean Jr.	11/14/64-8/1/72	Christ Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis
Donald R. Durrett	7/1/66-	Northminster
Margaret E. Townner	11/1/70-1/1/73	Retired, Sarasota, Fla.
Warren G. Corbett	3/1/73-6/16/80	(deceased)
David Peters	1/1/75-8/1/76	Grace Presbyterian Church, Beaver Dam, Wis.
Glenn W. McDonald	2/10/80-4/30/83	Zionsville (Ind.) Presbyterian Church
Eleanor J. Brouillard	10/25/81-3/1/83	First Presbyterian Church, Milan, Ohio
Scott W. Douglas	3/1/85-11/1/86	Indianapolis
Janet C. Lowery*	11/1/86-8/15/87	First Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Ind.
F. Sue Berry	9/15/85-8/19/91	National Capital Presbytery, Washington, D.C.
Scott T. Marrese-Wheeler	3/15/88-9/30/94	Union Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Wis.
William J. Weber**	6/1/91-	Retired, Indianapolis
Heidi Hudnut-Beumler*	9/3/91-6/1/93	Decatur, Ga.
Donna E. Wells	9/19/93-	Northminster
Jerry D. Weber**	9/28/94	Northminster

* Interim associate

** Parish associate

Northminster's Student Assistant Ministers (non-ordained):

John Hinant 1952-54; Tom O. Parrish 1953; Donald R. Durrett 1960-61; Donald Ward 1961-62; David Peters 1974-75; Kenneth M. Low 1984-85; Scott W. Douglas 1984-85

Rev. James R. Tozer



Rev. Karl Gillmeister



Teaching the Good News

Although the name has changed from “Sunday school” to “Christian education,” organized Bible study in a Presbyterian setting has typified the history of Northminster. It is all there: the early struggles to keep up with breathtaking growth, turning the corner with added facilities and staff, and emphasis in recent years on better services for a stabilized congregation.

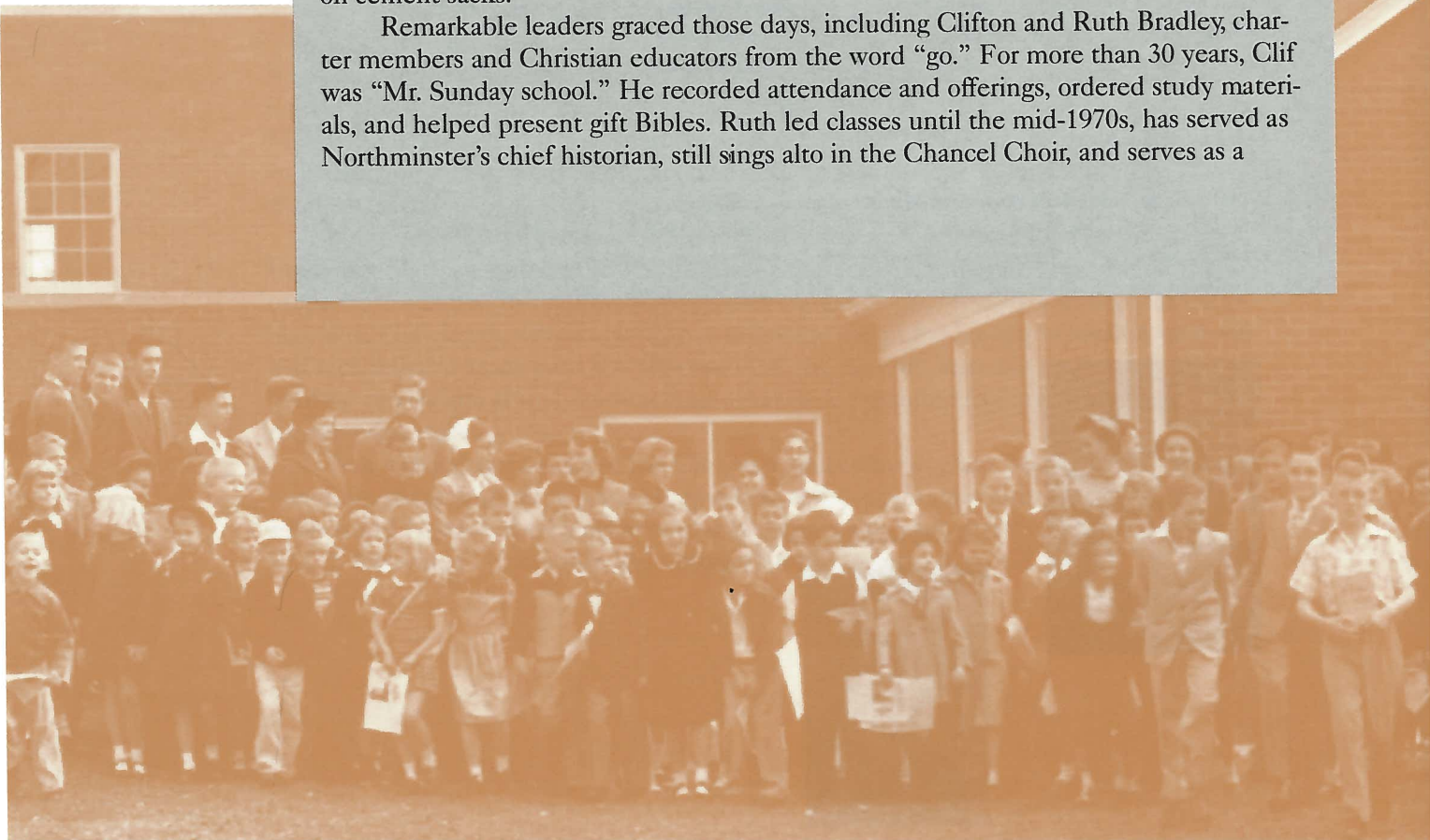
In the 1940s and 1950s, the post-World War II baby boom expanded the numbers of youngsters coming from local families, both members and nonmembers. Northminster met these needs of its nearby community, as average weekly Sunday school attendance rose from 65 in 1947 to 231 in 1950 to 701 in 1957.

As church-school enrollment increased to more than 1,000, the congregation responded by adding more space and recruiting more volunteer teachers. About 90 percent of those enrolled were children and high schoolers. Adults took a back seat.

Imagine the hectic times before the present sanctuary and Calvin Hall opened in 1957. Hester Cox’s primary department faced what Harold Sander, a Sunday school superintendent 10 years later, described as “bedlam conditions.”

But Mrs. Cox and her staff joyfully conducted opening exercises — singing, prayers, Bible reading, birthday recognition — for 150 children every week. Then the troops divided into six classes meeting behind flimsy wallboards. In the spring of 1956, a group of third-graders sought quiet by scrambling across a muddy boardwalk to gather in an unfinished construction area. They learned Bible stories each week seated on cement sacks.

Remarkable leaders graced those days, including Clifton and Ruth Bradley, charter members and Christian educators from the word “go.” For more than 30 years, Clif was “Mr. Sunday school.” He recorded attendance and offerings, ordered study materials, and helped present gift Bibles. Ruth led classes until the mid-1970s, has served as Northminster’s chief historian, still sings alto in the Chancel Choir, and serves as a



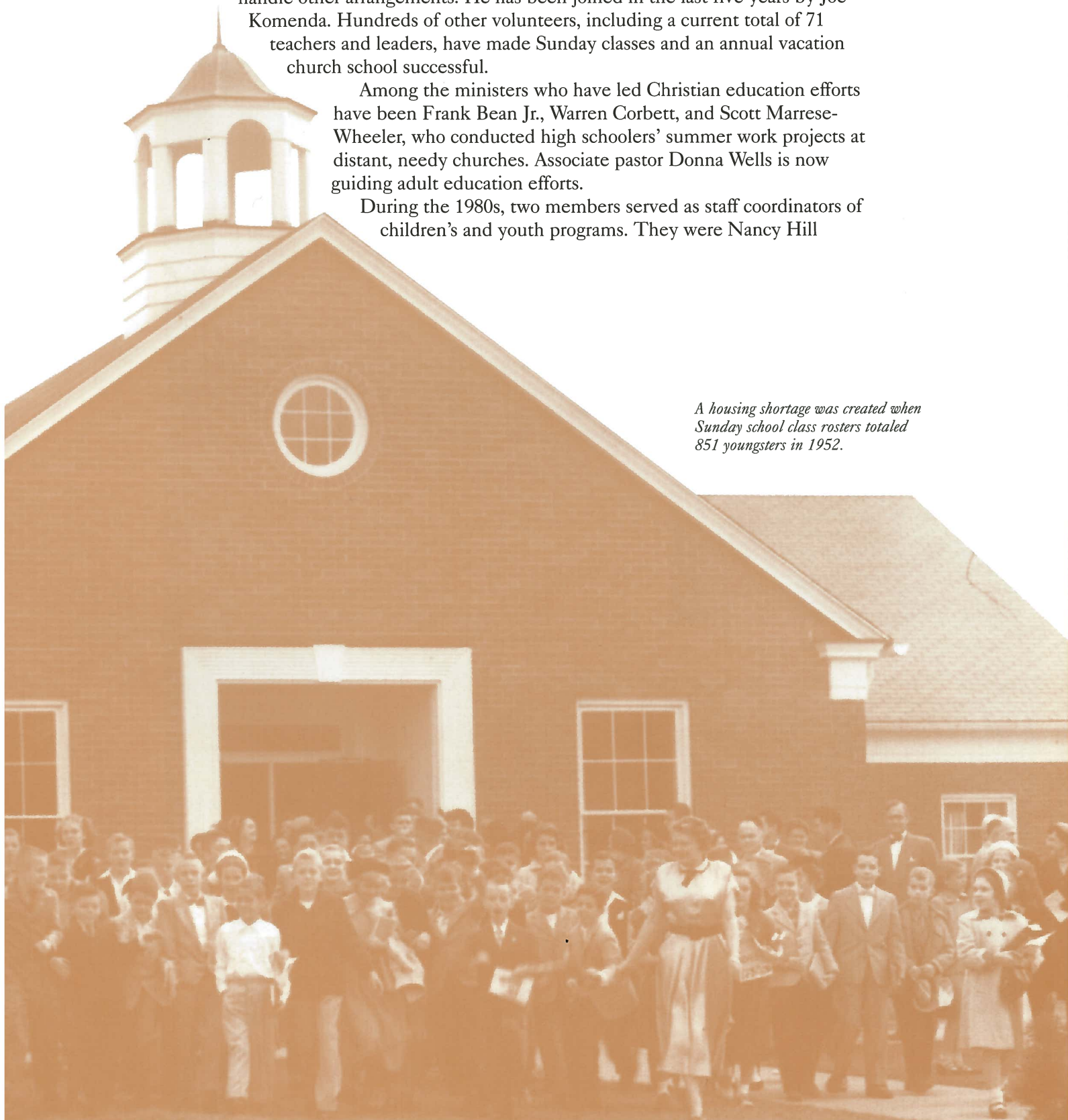
deacon. Early associates with the Bradleys in Christian education were Norman and Jessie Hartley.

Since 1958, Paul Raffel has arrived early on Sundays, at first to teach classes, then to make sure that rooms and teachers would be available for the pupils and to handle other arrangements. He has been joined in the last five years by Joe Komenda. Hundreds of other volunteers, including a current total of 71 teachers and leaders, have made Sunday classes and an annual vacation church school successful.

Among the ministers who have led Christian education efforts have been Frank Bean Jr., Warren Corbett, and Scott Marrese-Wheeler, who conducted high schoolers' summer work projects at distant, needy churches. Associate pastor Donna Wells is now guiding adult education efforts.

During the 1980s, two members served as staff coordinators of children's and youth programs. They were Nancy Hill

A housing shortage was created when Sunday school class rosters totaled 851 youngsters in 1952.



(1983-85) and Barbara Stayton (1987-1990). Having a full-time director had been suggested in 1962. Five years ago, Ruth Chadwick Moore, who has professional credentials in this area, was named director of Christian education.

At the start of our 50th anniversary year, church-school enrollment was 563, with average weekly attendance about one-third of the total. Infants and toddlers up to age 3 numbered 95, 86 were in high school, and 50 were adults over 25.

Two recent trends are noteworthy. Adult education has been developing with new Bible study projects and guest speakers. A popular visitor is Dr. Ron Allen, a faculty member at Christian Theological Seminary. His thought-provoking discourses on biblical themes have won him a devoted following at Northminster.

The other trend has been increased interest in intergenerational activities. Family worship is encouraged on the first Sunday each month, and several family retreats have been conducted. At vacation church school in 1994, children and adults had simultaneous-but-separate study sessions on the same topics, meeting for some combined events, including meals.

A recent task force study at Northminster noted a national trend toward treating Christian education as an integral part of entire church programs. Bringing pupils into the church family early offers a way to carry out *Mark 10:14*: "(Jesus) said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me." ■



Vacation Bible School flourished in the mid-'80s.



Getting Together

For many reasons, including shared interests, good works, and fellowship, Northminster members have formed organizations within the church. Descriptions of a number of those groups follow.

Women of Northminster

Shortly after Northminster was chartered in 1945, 28 women members met in August in the home of Mrs. Hal Brackett to form a "church aid" group. Since then, organized women of Northminster have prepared and served thousands of church meals, studied the Bible, sponsored charitable projects, offered prayers of comfort and joy, and helped to serve Northminster in countless other ways.

Some members of the original group came from churches where they had been volunteers. With their leadership, the women wrote a constitution, held monthly meetings, formed day and evening groups, and appointed committees on programs and speakers, ways and means, flowers for worship services, and plans for the new Northminster building. Mrs. Robert Hamill was elected the first president. Since then, 32 presidents and moderators have led the organization.

Early concerns included contributing to the children's education, furnishing new hymnals for the congregation, helping the minister with office work, and finding child-sized furniture for the Sunday school. Although pastor Ray Downs had hoped that the group would focus on education and spiritual topics, pressing needs to purchase many items led the women to hold strawberry festivals, fish fries, and chicken-and-noodle dinners. They even ran a food booth at the Indiana State Fair.

Soon after World War II, European churches asked churches in this country to sponsor responsible families in America, finding housing, jobs, furnishings, and food to help transplanted families get started. Northminster women worked effectively to meet this challenge as the church sponsored, successively, the van de Perks from Holland, the Borczaks from West Germany, and Frank and Elvina Rodriguez from Cuba.

All women members of Northminster also are members of *Presbyterian Women in the Congregation of Northminster Church*, which offers

Sponsored by Northminster women, Jacob van de Perk and family moved to Indianapolis.

Refugee Family Arrives



On March 7, Jacob van de Perk, his wife and two sons, arrived at the Municipal Airport in Indianapolis.

The Jacob van de Perk family came to America from The Hague, capital of the province of South Holland, located northwest of Rotterdam.

The assurance for this family was given by the Northminster Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis. On hand to meet them at the airport were representatives of the Women's Association and the Rev. James Tozer, assistant pastor.

A house at 4065 Clarendon Avenue, Indianapolis, fully furnished, is now their home.



The two sons, Antonie Evert and Roeland Jacob are eleven and nine years of age.

Church Leisure Club Is Outlet For Senior Citizen Recreation

USAN FORTUNE

20 seconds another
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or citizens.

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Members of Northminster's Sewing Guild offer up their talents, 1993.



Women of Northminster give Wheeler Mission a hand.

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them opportunities for fellowship, study, and service. A yearbook lists members, along with local church, community, and international service programs.

Bible study takes place in 13 circles, small groups that often meet in members' homes. The *Hannah and Pauline prayer groups* meet regularly and send cards to the hospitalized and shut-ins.

Other activities include running a food pantry and a used-clothing closet for the poor, decorating the sanctuary for special occasions, preparing meals for families in bereavement or who are facing a crisis, and arranging receptions and dinners.

The group also holds an annual mother-daughter banquet and presents biblical plays. They give special assistance to Wheeler Mission, Sojourners for abused women and children, Warm Up America for the homeless, the Little Red Door for cancer patients, an Indian reservation, AIDS patients, and local hospitals and nursing homes. The association has formed a Christian family-values impact group and recently conducted a survey of the needs and wishes of its members to guide its planning.

The association has presented 32 honorary life memberships and annually recognizes three members for outstanding service and dedication. Delegates also attend Presbyterian gatherings and study conferences.

Other groups that offer Northminster women opportunities for voluntary service are the church's branch of Methodist Hospital's *White Cross Guild* and the *Sewing Guild*. The White Cross Guild was organized in 1932; Northminster's branch was established in 1960. Its purpose is to stimulate the interest of women, regardless of religious affiliation, in ministering to the needs and comfort of the sick at Methodist Hospital. Northminster's branch is among dozens of such groups in the guild. Its 25 members meet monthly at Methodist's Service Center, 1500 Stadium Drive. They make burn dressings, test kits, first-aid kits, and related items.

Records of the Northminster Sewing Guild go back to 1975, although the group probably was organized long before that. About 15 to 20 church women met to make clothing, layettes, and booties for children in the city and at an orphanage in Guanajuato, Mexico. They also repaired choir robes.

Since 1993, Sewing Guild members have completed many other projects. Wishard Memorial Hospital has received blankets, infant gowns, lap robes, pillows, and quilts. Blankets, caps, mittens, gowns, jeans, sweaters, and slacks have been donated to the Choctaw Indians in Oklahoma. Several local nursing homes also received lap robes, gowns, and Christmas candy. Other institutions which have benefited include Sunset Gap Community Center in Newport, Tenn.

For 10 years a *Banner Committee* has designed and produced seasonal works for a display in the sanctuary. Committee members are Margaret Clark, Janette Confer, Sue Decker, and Katy Deer.



*Example of
works of Banner
Committee*



Men's Prayer Breakfast has met since the 1950s.

Men's Groups, Early and Later

Among service and fellowship groups at Northminster is the *Men's Prayer Breakfast*, which has met early on Wednesday mornings for more than 40 years. The men pray for hospitalized church members, for hurting families, and for others who have special needs. They also offer thanks for happy outcomes and send cards of sympathy and cheer.

The men share breakfast prepared by a different two-member team each week. They then take part in Bible study, led by a member who covers a chapter of a selected book from the Old or New Testament. All Northminster men are welcome.

The *Men's Council*, formed in 1989 under the guidance of pastor Fred Mathias and elder Damon Auble, enables members of the congregation to meet in a social environment and hear special speakers. Programs have included dinners and talks about finance, real estate, politics, and sports. Meeting days and times vary with events.

Married, with Common Interests

Through the years, young married couples from the congregation have formed groups to get to know each other better, share emerging family experiences, and enhance the church's fellowship mission. The earliest of these — the *Mariners' Club* — was sparked by George and Verna Robinson.

In 1958, several couples (including Mr. and Mrs. Cloyd Rose, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Stout, and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Farmer) proposed forming the *Tandem Club*. A representative approached the session for permission to do so. Three turndowns resulted because the proposed group was not considered a religious organization. On the fourth try, early in 1959, they were approved, provided grace preceded their meals.

Themes for programs have included movies, Christmas and Halloween parties, square dancing, scavenger hunts, "hard-times parties," country fairs, a river cruise, and ice-cream socials. Starting in 1971, the club presented versions of Broadway musicals, including "The Wizard of Oz," "Oklahoma," "Annie Get Your Gun," "South Pacific," and a "Bicentennial original" written by members.

Tandem has contributed to many Northminster and community causes. A monthly project, "Tandem Helps in Giving" (THIG), was started in 1971. Since 1981 the Salvation Army has received the gifts. Tandem's membership stands at 156. Members meet monthly, September through June.

About 35 Northminster couples belong to *Two by Two*, organized by senior pastor A. Howard Lindquist and his wife, Miriam. Activities such as picnics, ballgames, and dinners often have included the couples' children. Members' current ages range from the 40s to the 60s, and recent activities have included line dancing, mystery dinners, and theater productions. Among Northminster programs supported by the group have been the Deacons' Fair, coffee hours, and the Clothe-a-Child project before Christmas.

The current *Doubles* group began in the mid-1970s as *The Tracers*, described as "married, 30-40 something." Early members included Terry and Becky Sheckell, Jerry and Marge Egger, Bruce and Jane Grimes, and Janet and Bill Pfadt. A Christmas party and ornament exchange, Bible study, road rallies, theater outings, game night, and progressive dinners have been among the group's activities.

Young Married Couples is the newest such group, organized in 1988 with the help of associate pastor Scott Marrese-Wheeler. Associate pastor Donna Wells now assists the group. Activities have included a pizza party, a family picnic, and a hayride. Members consider the group in the "building stage" and invite ideas for programs.

Serving Seniors

Two groups serve older adults at Northminster. *The Adult Fellowship*, formerly named Fifty Plus and then the Community Fellowship, has sponsored programs for members and neighborhood residents since the 1960s. The minimum age is now 55. Meetings take place monthly from January through May and September through December, beginning with games and continuing with a catered dinner and a program such as a travel film, music, or a speaker. Volunteers assist in this organization.

Associate pastor Karl Gillmeister and Bea Ketzler organized the *Leisure Day Group* for retirees in 1964. The group meets monthly to play cards and other games and have lunch. In the past, the group went on excursions to state parks and other places of interest. After Ketzler retired, Betty Belschwender and Lucille Auble became hosts for this group.

Assisting Singles

Several singles groups have been formed at Northminster. One of these, *Let's Go!*, was organized early in 1993 by Carolyn Green and Norel Hayden.

After consulting with associate pastor Heidi Hudnut-Beumler, they sent letters to more than 200 single church members, 50 and over, inviting them to a pitch-in dinner. The 40 who attended chose the new organization's name, suggested where they would like to go and recommended that the group be informal, with an emphasis on fellowship.

With attendance up to 38, programs have included bus tours to Boggstown, Conner Prairie Farm, Madison, Shipshewana, Purdue's Christmas show, a passion play in Bloomington, Ill., and a three-day trip for 18 to Branson, Mo.

Several friends from Tabernacle Presbyterian Church have joined the group, which meets monthly. All who are single and 50 or over are invited. ■

(Information for this section contributed by Lucille Auble, Ken Balay, Ruth Bradley, Nancy Durrett, Becky Erdel, Bernice Haas, Noel Hayden, Betty Kniptash, Margaret Loughlin, Barbara Shoemaker, Corinne White Walker and other correspondents.)

Making a Joyful Noise

W

ith enthusiasm, talent, and dedication, in choir lofts and pews, the people of Northminster have responded to Psalm 100: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord... come into his presence with singing."

The adult Chancel Choir members have enhanced thousands of worship services and other occasions during Northminster's 50 years. Generations of children have learned to sing together in public. And inspiring harmonies of voices, bells, organ, piano, and other instruments have enriched the lives of all who have come to Northminster.

Beginning with 10 to 12 members rehearsing in the home of Grace and Bill Hennessey in 1945, a growing choir moved with the new congregation to their first locations, settling in 1947 at the current site on Kessler. Subsequent choir directors in the early years included Ray McCormick, Henry Watkins, Robert Kintner, Mr. and Mrs. Potts, and Kenneth Williams.

Moving into the current sanctuary in 1957 was a major change, along with the installation of a new Reuter pipe organ in 1962. In 1991, Dr. Cecil Ball and his wife Elnora made a gift to refurbish, update, and add pipes to the organ. A magnificent Steinway piano, the gift of Charles and Agnes Byers, was added to the sanctuary in 1992.

David Foster directed the music program from the late 1950s to 1964. He reported in 1959 that 236 persons, from the early school grades to adults, were taking part in six choirs at worship services and special holiday events.

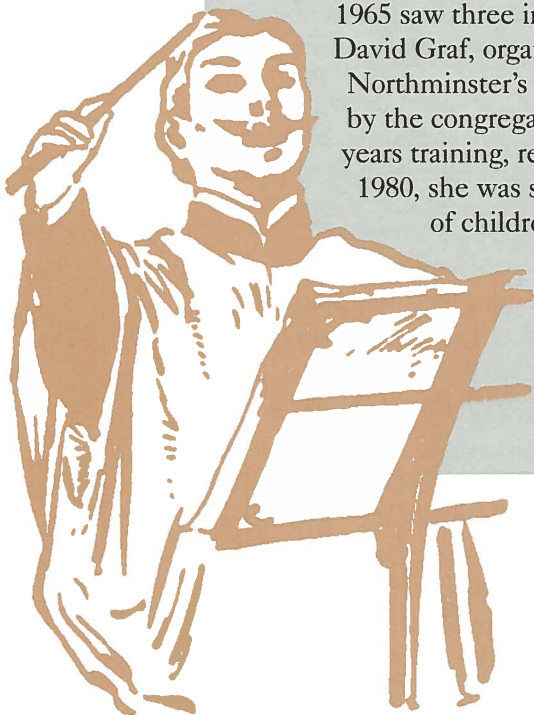
1965 saw three important appointments for Northminster's music program.

David Graf, organist at Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, became

Northminster's organist. He still is, with continued admiration for his music by the congregation and his colleagues. Wanda Wheeler spent the next 15 years training, rehearsing, and conducting children's choirs and bell choirs. In

1980, she was succeeded by Natalie Giltner Strater. The other two directors of children and youth choirs have been Marybeth Harding (1989-90) and Lenette Wack since 1991.

The third 1965 appointment was that of Richard Laughlin to direct the adult and high-school choirs. He, Bill Tatum, and John Lofton directed these groups until the 1972 appointment of John Williams, who stayed for more



John Williams was appointed director of the adult and high school choirs in 1972. During his tenure the Chancel Choir grew to more than 70 voices and presented major choral works.



than 20 years. Under his direction, the Chancel Choir grew to more than 70 voices and presented major choral works. When Williams requested a leave in 1993, Gregory Gibson served as interim director until Betty Bergin White became the permanent music director in September 1994.

The Chancel Choir has presented the Brahms, Faure, and Mozart Requiems as sacred concerts and participated with other local Presbyterian choirs and the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra in a presentation of the Faure Requiem at Clowes Memorial Hall. The choir also has performed at Christmas concerts in the community.

Besides providing spiritual leadership through music, the Chancel Choir has become a strong fellowship group built on longtime friendships and shared laughter. Annual "Cute But Tacky" awards, picnic skits, and parodies of songs have brought smiles and added to members' memories. Deacons' fund activities such as making Christmas decorations, compiling a cookbook (now out of print), and creating note cards featuring the sanctuary at Christmas also have been supported. ■

(Chancel Choir members Eileen Alsop, Ruth Bradley, and Terri Hubbard contributed information for this section.)

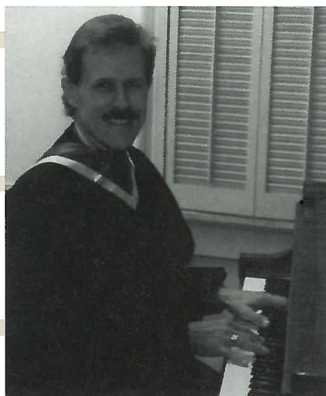
Combined children's choirs sing in the sanctuary, 1980s.



The Bell Choir in the 1960s



David Graf



We're Singing Our Song

Northminster churchgoers are celebrating our 50th birthday in song — in a most special way. We have our own hymn, written by a one-time interim pastor of this church and set to the tune of a favorite piece of sacred music.

Sung for the first time in worship on the first day of our anniversary year, the text is the work of the Rev. Dr. Gerald R. Johnson, who was the popular stated supply pastor here from 1981 to late 1983. The tune is familiarly known as “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past.”

The title is the theme of our celebration:
“Cherishing the Past — Charting the Future”

Through generations God has been
Our dwelling place secure.
Great mercies we have ever seen
That helped us to endure.

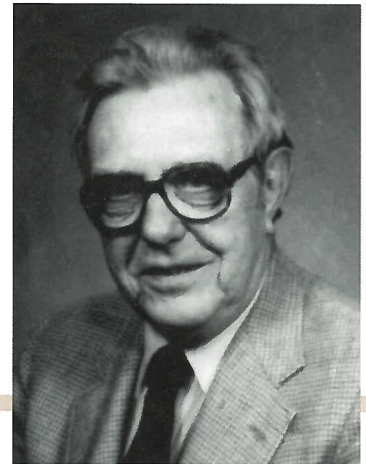
We cherish how God's loving hand
Has led us through the years;
Enabled us in faith to stand,
Midst all our doubts and fears.

Throughout these passing years we've found
God's presence in this place.
And now we sing with joy profound
That never-ending grace!

Our future is uncharted land;
We know not what shall be.
But this we know: What God has planned
Shall guide our destiny.

So, tabernacled in that love,
We own the joyous dream
Of coming years in our dear church
Where Christ still reigns supreme.

Rev. Dr. Gerald R. Johnson



Lenette Wack directs a children's choir practice.



that it be strengthened in the coming years.

Furthermore, our personal and common prayer, worship, and study life must remain vital and constant.

Nurturing our children and youth in these practices will be crucial.

We also must oppose and conquer any forces — blatantly tempting, subtle or hostile, from inside or outside — that would reduce our commitment as God's church to be involved in and of service to God's world. We also need to hold to the conviction that the individual seeker/disciple is needed as much by the church as such a person needs the church.

When those who come after us make plans for the 75th and 100th years of faith work on this corner, I pray they will be able to safely conclude that those who went before them did indeed "run the race and keep the faith."

One cannot take seriously these days every "churchgoer" who comes along, seeming to sport a crystal ball in which the church's future is foretold. Risking the possibility, however, that one "expert" is more insightful than another, I am drawn to a provocative new book titled *Dancing With Dinosaurs*. Author William Easum suggests that we cannot afford to be uninterested in the revolutions taking place in the world beyond the church today. If we are insensitive to the increased pace of change, we will be dangerously close to "dancing with dinosaurs" near the tar pits of doom.

Ministries of the church that worked for the industrial society will fail, for the most part, for the informational society. The expression of truth in the "chariot age" will not work in the "space-capsule age." The time has come, says Easum, "for new wine skins."

According to Easum, some assumptions we need to make to be effective as a church are these:

- North America is the new mission field.
- Society will be increasingly hostile to Christianity in the 21st century.
- Distinctions between laity and clergy will blur.
- If churches stay the same, they will wither and die.
- The best way to fail today is to improve only a little on yesterday's successes.
- Bureaucracy is the major cause of denominational decline.
- Traditional churches that thrive in the 21st century will initiate radical changes before the year 2001.

Scary as such predictions and calls for change may be to many of us, we must insist on distinguishing between "maintaining essential beliefs" and "shedding nonessential practices." Dinosaurland may already be upon us if we continue to "do business" exactly the way we have done it in the past.

As I read church history, all the earlier ages of change were just as wary of and intimidated by the demands of new winds and ways required as we may be. God willing, from 1995 on into the 21st century, we in Northminster and those who follow us would do well to — as our anniversary theme expresses it — "cherish the past and chart the future."







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