

# *The History of the First Presbyterian Church of Ontario Center*

*1900's*

In 1907 there was a membership of 145; and 25 new members were added that year. The Sunday School had a membership of 160, including teachers and officers.

The following list of pastors of the church in the order in which they served: Rev. Bliss, Rev. Merritt, Judson, Eddy, Burbank, Manly, Holcomb, Young, Dunning, Bosworth, DeLong, Dada, Snashall, Kingsley, Page, Pollock, Hodgeman, Hallock, Dyke, Newman, Mason, Funnel, Baker, Millard, Searles, Bell, Phillips, VanSlyke, McChesney, and Millard. Always since the church was built regular services have been maintained, either by a pastor, students from Auburn Seminary, or by the reading of sermons by the Elders. Midweek Prayer meetings have been held.

During Rev. Bell's pastorate the old cobblestone church building erected in 1843 was torn down and the present one erected on the site and dedicated July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1915. On the Building Committee were:  
Chairman—Dr. J.S. Brandt;  
Secretary—R.O. Brundige;  
Treasurer—Glen Hopkins; M. Risiely, Isaac VanHall, Wallace Williams and Thomas Payne. The total cost of the building was \$8,000.



The building of a new church was encouraged by the will of Sarah Whitcomb a long, faithful member who left the sum of \$1,200 toward a new church building fund. The piano now in use in the church was also a gift from her. The following Sunday School Classes gave furnishings for the new church: The G.C.L. (Golden Cross League) Class—installed new pews and the northwest art window; The Brotherhood—the new furnace; the Sagoweah (We Serve) Class—new carpet runners in the aisles of the church; art windows by the Gleaners Class; others were purchased by the G.C.L. Class in memory of the Mr. and Mrs. E. Harrison, E.F. Alborn, J. Albright, Sarah Whitcomb. The Missionary Society placed the one in the front of the church in memory of the Freers, Whitcomb, Lanora, Boynton, Howk, Whitney, Parnell, Hopkins and Fries.

During the pastorate of Rev. McChesney the manse was purchased from Mrs. Osborn for \$5,200. This was made possible by the sale of the old manse for \$2,500 and the sum of \$2,675 being left to the church by Mr. Oscar Whitney, many years an Elder of the church. Two years later a new garage was built on the manse property.

In 1924 Rev. H.C. Millard was given a "Re-call" to become pastor of this church. He began his pastoral work July 1, 1924 and is still carrying on. Some of the items of interest during this pastorate are as follows: the building of the Community Hall costing \$5,000 and furnishing this with piano and chairs, etc. Several hundred dollars have been spent in bringing the heating plant up to satisfaction, additional land bought and added to the manse property for use as a garden, water installed in the church kitchen by Charles W. Alborn; the service pension adopted; and the church mortgage paid up and burned. The sum of \$800 was left by the will of Mrs. T.J. Peer. New Church Hymnals have been purchased, piano for the basement, and shrubbery set out on the church grounds by the Willing Workers Class. The Church has been redecorated inside by the G.C.L. Class, and redecorated outside by the Sagoweahs. Eighty-five new members have been received; the total membership is about 160 today.

Miss Clara Pye was organist at the time of our 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in 1907, and still occupying the same position most acceptable to all concerned. Mrs. Nina Howk has been a member for the longest time, having joined the church in 1887.

The only indebtedness is \$300 on the Community Hall.

April 5, 1933 a special celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the First Presbyterian Church at Ontario Center, New York was held. The celebration took place in the Community Hall. A supper and program were planned for the occasion. Many came and others sent greetings. Congratulations were received from the following people: Mrs. Bertha Bell, wife of the former pastor; Mrs. Selden Brown of Rochester, Indiana; E.T. Searles, son of a former pastor; Mrs. Susie Dare, who attended the little old cobblestone church nearly fifty years ago; Alice Adams who was in Buffalo at the time; Rev. George Miller at Warsaw, New York; Rev. Charles W. Kerr, who was Moderator of General Assembly; Mrs. Lewis Whittleton and family; Dr. C. Stewart Nash. Also greetings were sent from the Congregational and Baptist Churches.

Mrs. Selden J. Brown said in her greetings; "There will always be a warm spot in my heart for the little old church."

Rev. Miller made the following comment: "The one hundredth anniversary of your church will certainly be an interesting event for your congregation because it will give you all an opportunity to review what has been accomplished in that one hundred years for the Kingdom of God, in your community and it will recall to your memories the lives of the good men and women who have loved that church and have sacrificed for the great Head of the Church Universal. It will be an occasion also when the men and women of this generation in

your church may challenge the past and determine that the future shall be more excellent in the individual lives and in your church's activities."

Gifts among the \$115.78 were given at the one hundredth anniversary.

Mr. Arthur Middleton and Mrs. Grace Middleton Brown presented the church with a Communion Table in memory of their mother, Mrs. Albert Middleton. Dedication of this gift was held on Sunday, June 9, 1935 at the morning service. At the same time James Donald Middleton, great grandson of Mrs. Albert Middleton and son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Middleton, was baptized.

In December 1935 new song books were purchased to be used in the Sunday School. The greater part of the expense was assured by one member who is always interested in the best for the Sunday School and its members.

At the annual business meeting held April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1936, Miss Clara Pye was presented with one of the silver communion cups, a memorial of the old church, in appreciation of her more than 30 years of continued service as a pianist in our church. During the summer of 1936 the final \$100 was paid on the Community Hall, clearing the church of all debts on its buildings.

The present pastor is Rev. Henry C. Millard, who has served very successfully since July 1, 1924.

When Sunday morning arrives, many a man says to himself "Why should I go to Church? It's so beautiful outdoors and I can turn on my radio if I want to hear a good sermon?"

Stay at home of course when you are sick, or when you are really needed there, for any one of a number of good reasons. That's the time to enjoy the radio church service. But as a rule, summer and winter, spring and fall, make a good practice of going to church. You may enjoy worshipping God out of doors, rolling along in the car, on the golf links, out in the garden, down at the shore or up at the lake, but I believe you will honestly admit that you get the real spirit of Divine Worship in a consecrated House of God along with others who have come there for the same purpose. You will surely receive something inspiring in the spiritual atmosphere, the hymns, the Scripture, the preached message. You are a child of the Heavenly Father, and His House is where you should be on His Day.

America is making a big mistake today by misusing Sunday. There is plenty of time for rest, for recreation, for enjoyment of God's out of doors on the wonderful day, and it is intended for all these good things, but it is above everything else a day of Divine Worship; for our lives will be happier and more worthwhile and successful if we make a practice of going to church. And the church will increase in power as its pews fill up with God-filled men and women.

*(This manuscript was given to me, Rev. Raymond Tennies; by Mr. William Augustine on March 11, 1960)*

***Notes Taken From Session Minutes***

04/06/1932----Pastor proposed a 10% cut to made to his salary—on account of local financial conditions, reducing salary of \$1,800 a year to \$1,620. Proposition joyously accepted by the entire board.

04/13/1932----100<sup>th</sup> annual Congregational meeting began with a family supper—Sagoweah Sunday School class acting as supper committee.

03/01/1933----Rev. Millard’s offer to donate one month’s salary if the budget is met was accepted.

**Budget for 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year—4/1/1933:**

Pastor’s Salary .....	\$1,500.00
Board of Pensions .....	130.38
Fuel .....	125.00
Community Hall Debt.....	100.00
Janitor.....	100.00
Organist.....	50.00
Lights .....	30.00
General Assembly Tax.....	33.00
Insurance on the manse .....	22.00
Subscription envelopes .....	12.00
Funeral Flowers .....	10.00
Water.....	10.00
Safety Deposit Box .....	2.50
Incidental.....	<u>5.12</u>
<b>Total Budget .....</b>	<b>\$2,130.00</b>

**Meeting Proposed Budget:**

Interest on Endowment .....	\$291.00
Brotherhood .....	150.00
Sisterhood .....	100.00
Golden Cross League.....	50.00
Sagoweah .....	50.00
Plate Collection.....	59.00
<b>Total Budget .....</b>	<b>\$700.00</b>
By envelopes & other subscriptions .....	\$1,430.00

**Grand Total of Release.....\$2,130.00**

04/11/1934----Miss Clara Pye elected pianist.

06/05/1935----Dedication of Communion Table by Middletons to cost \$25 to \$30.

09/04/1935----Plans to increase church attendance by securing 100 person’s promise to attend regularly.

04/04/1936----Bookcase given by Ed Adrienson.

04/08/1936----Clara Pye presented old silver communion cup for more than 30 years of service as an organist.

09/02/1936----Final payment of mortgage on Community Hall \$100.

01/07/1937----Contract with Ed Mason to shingle half of the manse for the sum of \$20.

02/03/1937----Theda Alborn organist.

04/12/1939----Call extended to Rev. Millard to be pastor—salary of \$1000, free use of manse, one month's vacation (includes \$50 raise).

04/10/1940----“If the business places change to day light savings time, the church services will be on that time.”

07/26/1940----Pastor Millard to remain on yearly basis and resignation be considered after each annual meeting.

02/04/1942----Church adopted War Time after Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>.

04/14/1943----Each month a letter is to be sent to the boys in service.

04/12/1944----Due to our fine financial condition we noted not to ask The Board of National Missions for a grant this year. Reception of 34 new members received.

07/09/1944----Session Fund to be used for aiding the expense of pipe organ lessons. Voted that a memorial plate be placed on our organ in honor of Mrs. Elvira Vaughan because of her gift to the church.

09/17/1944----Pipe Organ Committee—to select and collect necessary funds, arrange for the installing and dedicating services, players, etc.

10/06/1944----To investigate oil heating for the church.

01/03/1945----Pipe organ expected for Easter Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> 1945.

10/08/1945----Mr. Dixon—pulpit supply.

04/10/1946----Mr. Dorothy Kutruff organist. \$1,360 reported as our quota for Restoration Fund.

05/01/1946----Presbytery advised that Session & Trustees keep separate minutes.

05/02/1946----Rev. Talman installed.

10/05/1947----New heating plant to be installed. Cost—\$1,545.

07/06/1948----Rev. Childs called.

03/20/1950----Motion made and carried that church service be held at 8:30 a.m. through July and August.

01/03/1952----Couples Club started during the year. Rev. Childs spoke of increased interest in church—both financially and physically.

03/30/1952----Repairs outside of church, replace front doors, canopy to be removed. Weather protection placed over north and east doors. Estimated cost \$2,575.

04/15/1952----Church was found to have been incorporated and on files in Lyons. Session records prior to 1931 not available. Rev. Childs to inquire to see if they can be located.

10/02/1952----To finance through Presbytery a furnace in the Community Hall.

04/10/1953----Four dozen communion glasses purchased.

05/08/1954----Campsite talked about—Camp Whitman—volunteers to help in construction. About \$50 given.

07/09/1954----Approximate cost for fixing and repairing church property around \$75.

04/18/1955----Cross and candlesticks purchased for \$97. Dedication service for remodeled sanctuary two months hence.

11/14/1955----First newsletter to be published and sent.

07/09/1955----Mrs. Luther Howk to act as church historian.

11/12/1956----Brass candle savers purchased.

12/10/1956----Guest registration book to be purchased.

01/14/1957----Dedication service for alter set for next Sunday.

06/10/1957----Carlton Cone donated three dozen knives, forks and spoons.

11/11/1957----H. Waltz donated electric fan for kitchen of Parish House.

01/13/1958----Bulletin board to be erected in vestibule by Mrs. Flora Ameelee for missionary news.

02/22/1959----Session expressed opposition to establishment of a race track in the Town of Farmington.

03/05/1959----Women's organization requests to operate a bazaar at Firemen's Carnival.

04/13/1959----New hymnals given to Mrs. Middleton and Mrs. Syron.

09/14/1959----Front steps of church repaired.

03/14/1960----Baptismal Bowl given in memory of Harold Fisher.

11/14/1960----Purchased four dozen communion glasses.

01/12/1961----Resolved—the congregation of First Presbyterian Church in 1962 form a Unicameral Board of 12 members.

12/11/1961----Unicameral Board changed to 9 members.

01/11/1961----Unicameral Board members: 3 one year, 3 two year, 3 three year (terms).

12/03/1962----Tentative offer of \$12,000 for Scheel property—condition of sale – manse to be sold for \$9,500 – to borrow \$2,500.

12/20/1962----Mrs. Boch rejected the offer on Scheel property, therefore, renovate and repair the manse.

01/06/1963----Repairs and renovation of manse not to exceed \$3,500.

03/26/1963----Motion made and passed to purchase four brass collection plates.

12/17/1963----Future growth of the church—build a new church in a new location or add on to the present church?

01/28/1964----Mr. Whitney is drawing plans for redecorating sanctuary—painting, floor, woodwork?

03/31/1964----Recognition of the splendid work done by Malcolm Winchell in building the new cross.

05/05/1964----A Fredricks and Son paid \$2000 with balance due upon completion of painting.

05/24/1964----Rededication service held.

06/02/1964----Approved gift of two \$65 center chairs provided a matching table be purchased later.

04/06/1965----Church basement tile purchased. New outside sign arrived and installed.

05/04/1965----Permanent partitions will be installed in church school rooms.

06/01/1965----New oak pew card holders received.

07/06/1965----Carpentry work in basement completed.

09/07/1965----Two basement rooms nearly completed.

10/05/1965----Saturday Nighters to refinish nursery.

11/02/1965----Two new flags presented by Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Williams to be used in the chancel.

04/05/1966----Dry-walling and decorating two bedrooms of manse.

11/06/1966----New door and mercury light installed at rear entrance to church.

11/20/1966----Upstairs manse, two rooms—\$1,169—hall?

01/03/1967----New robes for cherub choir purchased.

02/26/1967----Authorization to sell manse given (30 yes, 7 no).

03/07/1967----Purchase order for manse \$15,000. Transfer date to be 07/15/1967. New manse price to be \$23,500.

04/16/1967----Ground broken at Evergreen Lane for new manse.

07/20/1967----New manse occupied—mortgage \$10,200.

12/05/1967----Six moveable partitions ordered for Parish Hall.

11/06/1968----New senior choir robes worn.

04/01/1969----Thirty new folding chairs to be purchased for choir.

06/03/1969----Chairs purchased for \$202.50.

06/08/1969----McRea property purchased for \$13,250 (41 yes 0 no).

05/12/1970----Dirt fill leveled in parking lot.

06/02/1970----Rev. Sloan to leave August 1970.

01/05/1971----Saturday Nighters group to renovate the Pastor's study.

08/29/1971----Wooden Shoe Nursery School to begin renting the church basement for 3 days a week.

09/07/1971----Rev. Coffman installed September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1971.

02/04/1972----Women's group had carpet installed in nursery.

07/23/1972----New roof on church \$1,300.

01/02/1973----Fifty folding chairs purchased at \$6 each.

06/05/1973----Fire extinguishers purchased \$100 from Memorial Fund.

12/04/1973----Gift of bronze plaque depicting the Last Supper from Joan and Robert Klein in memory of her father Harold Chamberlain.

06/03/1975----Pine trees in front of church to be replaced with shrubbery. Shrubs and materials given by Margaret Augustine.

07/05/1976----Painting of interior of church, repair of outside masonry and woodwork, new roof over south building extension.

12/02/1976----New burner for church furnace purchased for \$200.

06/26/1977----Recommendation to contact all members and ask for a one-time gift to the church to cover the \$2,400 sewer commitment.

12/01/1977----Sewer installation at church, parish hall and rental property—\$1,697.80.

1977-1980 ----Mission Study Report

09/14/1981----Rev. Barker contracted—half-time.

11/16/1982----Manse on Evergreen Lane now mortgage free.

04/13/1983----Church directional signs installed on highways.

05/00/1983----Rev. Barker's membership in Presbytery as a Presbyterian Minister.

06/00/1983----Rev. Barker stated supply Pastor.

### *Notes Gleaned from Annual Reports and Newsletters*

1985 .....Sale of McCrea property. Original price in 1968—\$13,250; net received—\$38,078.32.

1986 .....Basement speakers installed.

1987 .....GEM program for Ethiopian Refugees, sponsored Engeda Shiffera, 25 stars (gifts) for Christmas Sharing Program, Janice Fitzgerald stated supply pastor, sent letter in opposition to the super collider in Wayne County, exterior masonry repaired and water proofed.

1988 .....Hearing loop installed in sanctuary. PA amplifier and tape recorder installed.

1989 .....From half-time pastor to three-quarter time.

1990 .....New stairway installed for back entrance—\$3,762.

1991 .....Handicap access completed (lift installed). First parents' Sunday afternoon out. First Christmas Wish List—provided \$2,000 for church needs. Third church picture directory created.

1992 .....Parish Hall insulated and vinyl sided. Sponsored first booth at October Fest. New communion set made of myrtle wood, baptism bowl resilvered. Ten children attend Camp Whitman.

1993 .....Hymnal racks installed for choir. Temporary ramp made for entrance to Parish Hall. Hosted meeting of Geneva Presbytery.

1994 .....Junior High School earned \$700 for Habitat for Humanity with a Rock-a-Thon (mission).

1995 .....Missionary Marcy Punnet visits and directs preparation of Thai dinner. New Board of Deacons ordained. Choir chimes purchased—half from Memorial and half from Pastor's

Discretionary Fund. Congregational planning for years 1996-2000. Pastor Janice Fitzgerald elected Presbytery Moderator.

1996 .....Endowment Fund approved by Session. Janice Fitzgerald leaves. Carolyn Groham comes as interim pastor. Heifer Project International (mission), 16 children attend Camp Whitman and 71 stars for Christmas gift sharing. The Pastor Nominating Committee is formed.

1997 .....Three confirmands were approved by the Session for church membership.

- Preliminary interviews have been conducted with two potential candidates after looking through 100 applications, tapes and a video.
- A representative from Habitat for Humanity spoke about the upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Crop Walk. Five walkers and one runner participated in the walk.
- An application for funding from the New York Landmarks Conservancy Sacred Site program was submitted.
- Friends for Fellowship hosted the Presbyterian Women's Spring Gathering.
- Thirty-two people attended the 209<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Syracuse, NY on June 15.
- Sixty-one churches make up the membership in Geneva Presbytery.
- Seventy-four people were in attendance (26 Presbyterian) at the ecumenical service with the Baptist and UCC churches at Casey Park on July 27.
- Presbyterian Association of Musicians summer conference at Westminster College was attended by Kasha Grisley and Kathy Mellander.
- Interim Pastor Carolyn Grohman's last Sunday is July 31, 1997.
- Pastor Nominating Committee unanimously recommends Rev. Cheryl D. Galan to conduct worship service on Sunday, June 22, 1997, followed by a special congregational meeting to vote on the PNC's recommendation of Cheryl.
- Rev. Cheryl D. Galan begins her term of call on Sunday, August 1, 1997 as the full-time pastor and installation to occur on October 5, 1997 with a reception to follow.
- Rev. Galan moderates the August Session meeting. She was ordained July 20, 1997 at the Carlisle Presbytery at the Market Square Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg, PA.
- The November Geneva Presbytery meeting was hosted by First Presbyterian Church.
- The children in Christian Education presented as special Christmas worship service on December 14. Caroling at Brown Square occurred on December 22.

1998 .....John Domm procured 35 face cords of wood to be sent to the northern parts of the state affected by the recent ice storm. The Geneva Presbytery to underwrite \$1,050 (half of the cost).

- Mission funding request through the Geneva Presbytery application process for the Pines of Peace facility in Ontario, NY.
- Rev. Galan to be the Camp Director at Camp Whitman in July.
- 110 people attended the Mt. Olivet Gospel Brunch. All felt that it was certainly one of our major highlights for the year.
- The March 10 coffee hour honored John Domm for his ten years of service as church treasurer.
- Application accepted by the Sacred Sites Historical Register.
- A recommendation for the purchase of new choir robes at a cost of \$94.95 each with funding from Endowment Fund interest and Memorial funds was addressed at a special congregational meeting and approved. Dedication of the robes to occur in the fall.
- Summerfest participation plans include a beanie baby raffle by the youth, distribution of book marks and cookbooks available for sale.
- Church web page on the Internet was created.
- An anonymous donor donated a stainless steel table for the Parish Hall kitchen.
- The baptismal font was constructed by Ray Schlosser in memory of Robert Domm and a memorial plaque placed on the inside door.
- Two Special Congregational meetings were held in September for the approval of financing \$45,000 for the roof project and the second to approve the recommendation of the Building for Our Future Task Force document prepared and forwarded to the Presbytery Strategy Committee for approval.
- Congregational cottage meeting sign-up regarding the improvements proposed for the church facilities is not as expected. Other ideas to seek input from the congregation discussed. Thirty-seven attended the offered meetings.
- Pastor Galan is involved in an effort to establish a community network for support of the students and families of the Wayne Central School District. Social Service agencies and churches are convening.
- There are 10 participants in the Active Parenting Class for parents of 2-12 year old children.

1999 .....Building for Our Future: preliminary report from the architect showing the number and size of Sunday school classrooms reviewed along with expansion of the parking lot. “The Session agreed that our strategy for church growth should be through growth of our church school program...with the goal of our building plants to provide for an attendance of 100 pupils in church school.”

- Study done to look into clerical help for the pastor.
- Rev. Galan provided the Feasibility Study for renovations and additions to the church and listed the priorities: 1. Building repairs that are required to stop deterioration of the existing building. 2. Immediate needs: items which currently impact negatively on the life of the congregation. 3. Long term needs: items which will enhance the life and growth of the congregation. A mission component will be added to the fund drive. The vote for the plan will be May 16, 1999 with drawings of the proposed plans displayed. The cost of the campaign is \$405,200 which includes 5% of the receipts for mission. Church Financial Campaign Service will conduct a special stewardship campaign to commence in the fall with congregational pledges to be paid over three years. The campaign will be called, “Building on Faith.” Carolyn Ferguson is named treasurer for the Capital Campaign.
- The Hamilton Brass Choir provided special music at the May 2, 1999 worship service.
- Howard and June Rosser renewed their wedding vows in celebration of their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on May 16, 1999.
- The Session voted to become a “Linked Partner” with a new program at Wayne Central called Hopeworks with 5% of money received from the Capital Campaign be given to it and Habitat for Humanity.
- \$700 was raised from the successful Soiree on September 25, 1999.
- The new sign for the front lawn to be purchased from Memorial funds. If funds allow at year-end, the lift balance of \$875 to be paid in full.
- Church Secretary, Debbie Reynolds was hired for 12 hours per week.
- Candlestick holders and glass hurricane chimneys were purchased from Memorial Funds in memory of Ray and Betty Pendleton.