

Our History

In the Beginning

In 1928 a group of people met in various homes for prayer and Bible study. They became affiliated with the Church of God, but in the fall of 1928 decided that was not the denomination for them because they had no minister, just leader who filled the pulpit.



The "Little White Church" on 124th Street and dedicated it May 18, 1928. There was no denomination until May of 1929 when they approached the Milwaukee Presbytery.

In January of 1930 a remodeling project was started on the "Little White Church". Most it was done by members because these were the depression years and money was scarce. Many of the men had lost their jobs and had time to help out.

Excerpts from Mr. Blom's story.

"But as the transportation was not so good at the time as it is now with automobile and so on, we wanted to have a church out there closer to us. There was a new subdivision out there called Conrad Park, and a few people moved in there, and all interested in some church work, but it seemed too far out in the woods at the time. So in 1927 a group called Church of Cod came out and started some church work, with service in homes and Sunday School in the Shady Nook School. The one room school got to be too small so the Sunday School had to get out. So in the fall of 1928 the Sunday School was held at my home while they were building the so called church (or hall on cider post with a dugout under the floor for a heating unit. So at last we had a church.

The people did not seem to take to the Church of God wery well. They had no minister, just a leader called J. Henry that filled the pulpit. So the next year they arranged to sell and move out. Then we got busy to get some other church to buy. We did not want to loose the religious work that we had started. We inquired to different churches but it seemed to be too far out and none seemed interested until we contacted the Presbyterian Church in West Allis. They had a field man, Dr. Franz, and we got him interested. So he took it up with

Presbytery and in 1930 they bought the property, two 30 foot lots 120 feet deep and the so called building."

Remodeling was the biggest job without money and it was hard to borrow on a new church in the wilderness, but we managed to get some from individuals. The first thing we did was a kind of porch or narthex and a steeple to make the building look like a church. The labor was all furnished by the congregation. The janitor work had to be carried out by Elders. Sunday mornings one of us had to go over there at 6 o'clock in the morning before service. We would shovel the snow away from the dug out, and start the fire in the furnace to get the church warm for Sunday School and Services. In the afternoon we had Elder meetings to arrange for the next week. We held midweek Services with prayers and testimony from almost everybody and all had a good time. We found God's will was with us."

The 1930s

On March 2, 1930, Forest Park Presbyterian Church was organized with just 19 members. Until 1930, the Sunday School met first in the Shady Nook School and then in the home of Mr. and Mrs. August Blom. Services were held in the homes of members and friends.

On April 6, 1930 the old church on County Line Road with the tower added and some changes made inside the building was dedicated as the Forest Park Presbyterian Church. The church had been purchased from the Church of God.

The first monthly budget, dated November 18, 1930, was set as follows:

Pastor's Salary\$ 42.50

Janitor 10.00

Light 5.00

Fuel	3.00
Interest	6.00
Insurance	1.25
World Service	4.00
Miscellaneous	4.00

\$75.75 or, \$18.93 per week!

Excerpts from Mr. Blom's story.

"in 1936 we started the big remodeling job. We started to put a basement under the church, which was badly needed, the Cedar post began to rot out and something had to be done. So the work was started to dig the basement with pick & shovel and wheelbarrow. This took some time, but only way without money. We dug it out and placed the footing. Barrowed a set of Jack & Timber and raised the building 1-1/2 feet. This labor was all furnished by the congregation. Men doing the work and the ladies furnished coffee and cake or doughnuts. It was hard work but wd had a good time too. We hired a mason to lay the blocks but he only worked 3 day and quit, and we had to finish it our self. One time we almost got in trouble with the Milwaukee Police, when me and the Finance sect. Brought over two I - Beams from a junkyard on Clinton Street. The beams were 12" high and 20 feet long, and we hauled them with my car and trailer. The trouble we had was to make the corners without holding up the traffic, but it seemed that the Police was with us too. They let us pass the corners without interfere. So we got them to the place without any extra cost and that was a good thing with us. We did not have any money, but we got the basement done. So we could have some doings down there to help things along."

On September 20th, 1936, they laid the cornerstone with a special dedicatory service by Rev. Allan Zaun.

On May 1, 1938, Dr. Leo Reid Burrows came as sated supply. His installation service was October 18, 1938.

Excerpts from Mr. Blom's story.

"Then it came to inside furnishings. And we found out that an abandon church in Waupun was willing to give us the pews and pulpit and an old organ. So we hired a van and me and the finance Sect. went up there and brought them here."

On July 10th, 1938, Moving Pictures were shown. The price of tickets were 15 cents for adults and 5 cents for children. Ice cream cones were sold for 5 cents each.

In December 1938, the Women's Guild held a bazaar which netted \$104.90. They sold aprons for 20 cents each.

The 1940s

In 1940, Helen Masset recalled that "Dr. [Leo] Burrows didn't have a car. He lived in Milwaukee and came out on the interurban to walk through the subdivisions calling on people."

Our 1980 history mentions many of our young men who were in the military service after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The Sunday School purchased an Honor Roll for the boys In Service. The women of the church rolled bandages for the Red Cross. Members of the congregation gave ration points to the church for meats, fats, oil, and sugar so we could have dinners and bake sales.

In December 1944, the Rev. Burrows submitted his resignation to take effect on January 1, 1945, due to illness. He was elected Pastor Emeritus as an expression of appreciation of his nearly seven years of service. The office was to be without salary in view of the church's financial situation. Dr. Leo Reid Burrows died on February 2, 1945.

On May 8, 1945, the world celebrated VE Day, and on August 15, 1945, VJ Day. Do you know what those letters meant at the end of World War II? They stood for Victory in Europe and Victory in Japan.

The Rev. Everett Delaware, who served from December 1944 to April 1946, was our next pastor. He served both Forest Park and Greenfield Avenue churches during that time. From May 1946 through May 1953, The Rev. John Dzuro also served the two neighboring Presbyterian congregations. Expense of the manse in West Allis was shared by the two churches. Volume 1, No. 1, of the Forest Park Messenger was published in December 1949.

The 1950s

In 1950, various types of electronic organs were investigated.

It was paid for by having members of the congregation pledge \$5 for each key.

The newly-organized Junior Choir made their first appearance. This choir was limited by the number of robes available to 15 members.

The old church on 124th Street provided adequate facilities until after World War II, when our area began to experience the overflow growth of the City of Milwaukee. In August 1951, a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously passed that the membership favored relocating the church by purchasing three acres of land on the southeast corner of Sunny Slope Road and the proposed extension of Lincoln Avenue. In the meantime, it became necessary to work on the old church building. In May of 1952, the old church was raised and



Forest Park 1957



Looking on as Mr. Ferd Schoenbaum, Jr. takes his turn with the shovel are, (left to right) Dr. Francis P. Ihrman, The Rev. Garth G. Gee, Dr. I. E. Bradfield and the Rev. D. Wayne Amsler. October 1955

the entire south wall of the basement was replaced with new cement blocks, as the wall was buckling. Men of the church did the work, with a \$300 loan made to finish the job.

In July, 1952 a Finance Committee and a Plans and Construction Committee were elected. Mr. Ferd Schoenbaum, Jr. was chosen General Chairman to coordinate the work of both Committees. Mr. E. L. Horst was named Chairman of the Finance Committee, and Mr. Werner Blom was designated Chairman of the Plans and Construction Committee.

From 1953 through most of 1955 the Plans and Construction Committee met at frequent intervals, going over every detail of the proposed new building. Eventually the plan for our present church was approved and we were ready to begin to build. The Building Fund Drive; called the "Forward in '53" Campaign, with a goal of \$20,000 was carried out during April, 1953. The drive went over the top by an additional \$1,011.

Session minutes for February 1953 record a vote by Session to achieve a full-time pastor for our church. The Rev. Garth Gee was called to serve, with an annual salary of \$5,000, with free use of a suitable manse and one month vacation per year.

At the 1955 Annual Meeting, Rev. Gee stated, "Our active roll at present is 219. We are about one-fourth stronger than we were a year ago. With regards to the Sunday School, our roll now has the names of 183, including officers and teachers. . . . We have reached the saturation point under present facilities. Every effort will be made to get our new building under construction this Spring There were some times of anxiety but we came to the end of the year almost with a shout. I believe that you share my conviction that we are over the hump. We are now on our way. Give us that new church then watch us grow!"



From left to right are Dr. I.E. Bradfield, Synod Executive; Mr. Herbert Moore, Moderator of Milwaukee Presbytery; Mr. Ferd Shoenbaum, Jr., General Chairman of the Building Program; Mr. Werner Blom, Chairman of the Plans and Construction Committee; The Rev. John Dzuro, Pastor of Greenfield Ave. Presbyterian Church and former pastor of Forest Park Church; Dr. A. Gladstone Finnie, Chairman of Milwaukee Presbytery's Committee on National Missions; and the Rev Garth Gee, pastor.

Ground breaking for that new church (the building we worship in right now) was on October 30, 1955, on a windy and cold afternoon. Starting November 7th of that year, we had our worship services at the Hickory Grove Schoolhouse. Rev. Gee remarked "It is a commentary on the type of people living here that not one taxpayer has raised his voice against our use of a public school for religious services It is well for us to keep in mind the debt we owe"

The cornerstone-laying ceremony was held on May 5, 1956, standing in ankle-deep mud. All of the contents of the cornerstone box from the Little White Church, together with up-to-date information of the organization, were placed in the new cornerstone.

November 11, 1956, marks the date of the first worship and Sunday school held at our "new" church; dedication took place on February 3, 1957.

The Manse was dedicated on May 5 of that year. In 1958, Hickory Grove School received permission from Forest Park to use Fellowship Hall for Kindergarten classes. Five area churches joined with Forest Park to form a United Church Women organization in December 1960.

The 1970s

In January, 1970, Rev. Roberts announced that he had accepted the Synod position of Educational Consultant in Oregon.

The Rev. Ned Benson applied to be our next Pastor and he was installed on November 22, 1970.

In January, 1971, the Women's Association voted to disband as a formal organization, but would maintain a relationship with Presbyterial and Synodical.

Baptized children were allowed to participate in the Sacrament of Communion with their families' permission in January, 1971.

During the energy crisis, due to an Arab oil embargo in retaliation for U.S. aid to Israel, the lights on the sign board and tower were turned off in November, 1973. The lights were turned on again in June, 1974.

The Youth Group went to South Dakota July 13-28, 1974. They donated a portable organ and spent the two weeks leading Vacation Church School, and working with the Native American families there. They returned again to help the Native Americans in July, 1975.

In October, 1974 Sylvia Larsen presented the congregation with beautiful red par aments, completing a set of four colors for the full church year. Sylvia was assisted by Ruth Fulwiler, Sally Daugherty, Midge Peterson, Maureen Wise and Joyce Garves,

It was decided that on the Sunday following the birth of a child to a Forest Park family, a Cradle Cross should be placed on the Communion table, and later be given to the family. The first of these were made by Arthur Harder and later by Clarence Reimer.

Rev. Ned Benson dissolved the pastoral relationship with Forest Park and answered a call to Des Moines, Iowa.

September 7, 1976 Play and Learn Nursery Center opened with Ruth Budic as teacher.

The first printing of the "Forest Park Favorites" cookbook was in October, 1976. Proceeds of \$1850 were given to CROP.

Volunteer drivers made the trip to Fort Thompson, South Dakota in July of 1977 and brought back 12 Indian youngsters from the reservation. They lived with Forest Park families and attended Vacation Church School for two weeks and then were taken home again.

October 23, 1977 Rev. Roger Waid Sr. was installed as Forest Park Pastor.

The Rev. James Williams was installed as Parish Associate on July 22, 1979. He had heard of a way to sponsor an Indo-Chinese refugee family and brought the distressing concern to the attention of our congregation on October 10, 1979. When the members voted to sponsor one of these families, many hours were spent preparing for the arrival of Hong Viet Ngo, his wife Luu Thi Le, their son Tung, and daughter Katty. The family arrived at the end of December and the church members donated clothes, furniture and other essentials, as well as taking them to doctors, dentists and school to learn the English language.

The 1980s

On March 2, 1980, the 50th anniversary of the organization of Forest Park, a special worship service and dinner were held to rededicate ourselves "to the constant service of God in the Christian service to man."

In 1981 after extensive study by a committee we became the proud owners of an Argus Sound System. Pentecost is the festival of the church's birthday. For the party we had cake, balloons, and The Lord's Supper. We were asked to wear red because red is the color used to remind us of the Fire of the Spirit. Forest Park was the sponsor of a square dance for youth every Sunday evening. Attendance was usually 16 20 young people.

Amazing Grace, Holy Holy Holy, and Faith of Our Fathers were voted by the congregation as their favorite hymns.

Expenses mounted when the City of New Berlin installed sanitary sewers and community water connections for both the manse and the church building. In January 1982 it was decided to reduce expenses by using volunteers to staff the office, clean the church, play music for worship, shovel snow, cut grass, etc. Careful Crafters were able to contribute profits of \$2,000.00 to pay the secretary for 12 hours a week. To get more money we had paper and aluminum drives, book and bake sales, a booth at the New Berlin 4th of July celebration and a second mile table. The situation was improved in 1985 when land we

owned on the South side of the manse was sold for \$24,000.00. A quote from the church treasurer in February 1984 Messenger "The financial situation keeps us feeling like sore feet in new shoes Pinched." The operating balance at that time was \$46.70.

Forest Park reached THE AGE OF COMPUTERS. The 1984 annual report was the first done on a computer.

Rev. Waid resigned to accept a call to Bridgeport, Nebraska in June of 1985.

Bob and Dorothy Odell were among an estimated 15,000 persons of all ages who came from all over the country to participate in a peace demonstration in Washington, D.C. Ruth Fulwiler and Sally Hasselkus made the new banner with the new symbol of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The symbol represents the reunion of three churches, the United Presbyterian Church of North American, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and the Old Presbyterian Church, USA.

The congregation voted in favor of accepting Rev. Craig Lindsey as Pastor of Forest Park. He was installed June 8, 1986. November 2, 1986 a special program for education was held. Portions of the church were transformed into habitats for survival for nuclear holocaust. The Radiation and Light Protection Habitat computer led us through the simulation of what may have been our survival.

Play and Learn Nursery Center celebrated their tenth anniversary by installing an outdoor play structure.

Rev. Lindsey went on a study leave to the Soviet Union in August 1987 and gave a slide presentation about his trip in October.

The Repair and Renovation campaign was in full swing by March of 1988. By the end of the summer the inside of the church was completely painted by volunteers, new carpeting was laid, the tower repaired and painted, and microphone jacks for the sound systems was in. A very busy and satisfying year.