

Chapter X

OUR RECENT HISTORY

After the retirement of Mr. Stearns in 1965 a Pulpit Committee was elected by the congregation. The committee's duty was to select a candidate for presentation to the church as a successor to Mr. Stearns. Mr. Ralph V. Moore was chairman of the committee and Mrs. Boyd McDowell II was secretary. Other members were Mrs. Claud L. Gingrich, Sr., Mr. Rexford L. Baxter and Mr. Ralph E. Miller.

After two hundred and sixty hours of formal meetings, countless hours of individual work on a multitude of details, 4,250 miles of travel, the mailing of several hundred letters and a careful study of seventy-five dossiers, the committee unanimously recommended the Rev. Robert Franklin Lester to the congregation for its approval.

The congregation accepted the committee's recommendation and extended a call to Mr. Lester on May 9, 1965. The call was accepted and Mr. Lester began his work in Elmira on August 8, 1965.

In 1944 Mr. Lester received a B. A. degree from Colgate University where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated with High Honors in philosophy, his field of concentration. In 1946 he received his M. Div. degree from Colgate Rochester Divinity School and was ordained in that year. In 1980, Mr. Lester received an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from Albright College in Reading Pennsylvania.

In 1945 he was married to Aimee H. Washburn, a registered nurse who had received her training at the Park Avenue School of Nursing in Rochester, New York. The Lesters have two married sons, David and James.

Mr. Lester came to Elmira from the pastorate of the Brighton Community Church in Tonawanda, New York. He had been pastor of that congregation since its founding in 1953. A member of the Brighton Church said that Mr. Lester came to a church not yet built and a congregation that did not exist. When he left there was a membership of nearly seven hundred and an educational program that involved nearly four hundred children, young people, and adults. His work with educational, religious, social service, and youth groups in the Buffalo area was too extensive to be reported here. One of his major interests was, and continues to be, The New York State Commission for United Ministries in Higher Education. This group has been responsible for facilitating the work of the Church on twenty-eight New York State campuses. Mr. Lester has served as President and Personnel Chairman for the Commission.

Since coming to Elmira, Mr. Lester has continued his community involvement. He has served as President of the Community Chest (now United Community Services), Planned Parenthood of the Southern Tier, and as a Trustee of the Chemung County Council of Churches. He has also served as a member of the board of Family Services, Chemung County Council on Alcoholism, and the Economic Opportunity Program.

Mr. Lester brought to The Park church a deep appreciation of our history and an equally earnest desire to build for the future. He has continued to remind us that we can be faithful to a great tradition only by being as liberal-minded, as innovative, as socially useful to the community as were earlier generations of The Park church membership. He is also greatly concerned with our growth as individual Christians encouraging us to find ways to be faithful to our understanding of the Christian gospel in our daily lives.

AFTER THE FLOOD

This history has already referred to the disastrous flood of 1946 during which The Park Church served as headquarters for the Red Cross disaster relief effort. But the flood of June 22-23, 1972 officially crested more than three feet higher than the 1946 flood and in many places was far higher than that.

Swirling waters filled the basement of the church building destroying the Christian Education offices, the Boy Scout room and the room set aside for the use of the youth groups. Beecher Hall had more than three feet of water as did the main floor of the nave at the chancel end. The water reached almost to the last pew on the Church Street end of the nave although the chancel floor itself remained dry.

Almost as soon as the waters receded, groups of church members whose own homes remained unaffected by the flood arrived to begin the massive job of cleaning up. Pews that were still in place had to be removed and carpets taken up and discarded. All the mud-encrusted basement equipment had to be either cleaned up or discarded. Many of the same people who helped to clean up the church building were busy helping the many church families whose homes had been damaged by the flood, many of them severely. One hundred nineteen Park Church families were affected, forty of them very seriously by the events of June 23, 1972. A considerable number located on the Chemung River side of Water Street on the northside and on streets adjacent to the Chemung River on the southside had water on the second floor.

Original architects' estimates of the damage to the Park Church building were \$227,000. The heating plant was virtually destroyed, the electrical system heavily damaged, kitchen appliances ruined, and considerable structural damage had been done by the force of the flood waters in the basement. Floors in both Beecher Hall and the nave buckled as the water undermined the foundations of the one hundred year old building.

There were those who felt that the congregation should plunge into an immediate re-building program regardless of the cost but others felt that a thorough evaluation of the congregation, its recent history and probable trends for the future should be undertaken before spending large amounts to restore the building. Some wondered whether a congregation of our size that had an average attendance of about two hundred on an average Sunday morning needed a building as large and as expensive to maintain as our present one.

Others wondered whether the time had come to explore the possibility of increased cooperation with other downtown churches perhaps including the sharing of facilities.

Immediately following the flood the First Presbyterian Church extended an invitation to any downtown churches whose buildings were not usable to join them at their building at West Clinton Street and Rambler Road for combined services. First Baptist Church, Lake Street Presbyterian Church, Christ's United Methodist Church, in addition to The Park Church accepted their invitation.

It was September before the first steps were taken toward restoring The Park Church building. Until that time, our congregation continued to share the facilities of First Presbyterian Church. After Labor Day, when the other congregations of what has become the Inter-Church Cluster returned to their own buildings, The Park Church held its own worship service at First Presbyterian Church at ten o'clock before the Presbyterians gathered for their own worship at eleven. By October, Beecher Hall was sufficiently restored to allow our return to our own building. At a special congregational meeting at the Mark Twain Hotel on September 19, 1972 the congregation by a vote of 141 to 52 authorized minimal restoration to permit this move.

Through the fall and winter months, Beecher Hall became the center of the worship life of the congregation. It provided an intimate setting and many expressed a sense of appreciation for the sense of fellowship which prevailed. More than two hundred fifty people worshipped there on Christmas Sunday and nearly that number attended the Candlelight Service on Christmas Eve.

During this period, the various church boards took a careful look at the church program and the Church Council analyzed membership trends and financial statistics. A series of meetings was held at the church to share the findings of the various studies. Finally, by vote of two-hundred twenty-two to thirty-four the congregation voted to proceed with the restoration of the entire building. Thus, the congregation re-affirmed its commitment to remaining in downtown Elmira. Attachment to the tradition of The Park Church, in which the building itself played a prominent part, carried the day.

The Board of Trustees under the competent leadership of Mr. Dean Butts plunged into the job of hiring contractors and arranging financing. Mr. John V. Moore, a member of the board and later chairman, did all the legal work and negotiating with the Small Business Administration which resulted in a flood recovery loan to The Park Church in the amount of \$139,000 which enabled the congregation to restore the building, including the construction of a new suite of offices for the church staff in the basement, and to complete the financing for a new church organ, a project which had been temporarily suspended following the flood.

It was May 20, 1973 when the congregation joyfully returned to the restored nave and chancel area of the church which had been devastated by the flood waters nearly a year earlier.

MUSIC

In February 1965, Mr. Albert J. Zabel, Jr. became organist and choir master of the church. He received a B.A. degree from Western Washington State College in 1957; studied at the University of Vienna in 1960; and received his M.A. in Music at Westminster College, Princeton, New Jersey in 1962.

During his fourteen year tenure, Mr. Zabel rendered outstanding service to the church as well as to the entire Elmira community. A graded choir program involving a Melody Choir for grades one through three, a Pilgrim Choir for grades four through six, and an Adult Choir greatly enriched the worship services of the church. Mr. Zabel also developed Handbell Choirs for both young people and adults during his time here.

Besides his considerable skills as an organist, Mr. Zabel also developed a considerable reputation as an arranger of music for handbell choirs and as a composer. Collaborating with a west coast friend, Trilby Jordan, Mr. Zabel composed three outstanding musicals for children's choirs: "Noel", a Christmas musical; "David and the Giants," and "Babble at Babel". Each of these has been performed by hundreds of church choirs across the nation.

In January 1968, Mr. Grandison Gridley, then Chairman of the Music Committee, called the attention of the congregation to the fact that the cost of maintaining the organ was becoming burdensome. Mr. A. Richard Strauss of Ithaca, who was in charge of maintenance, said that with the best of care the organ would not last more than ten years. The committee asked for permission to consult other experts. This was done and the answer was the same.

The committee then began a study of organs and organ builders. They visited factories and listened to newly installed instruments. After further study by the Board of Trustees and considerable discussion in congregational meetings, it was decided to install an organ built by the Schantz Organ Company of Orrville, Ohio. A canvass of the congregation by a committee which was headed by Mr. Ralph V. Moore produced about \$45,000. in pledges toward the new instrument. When, because of flood damage, it became possible to use SBA funds toward the purchase of the new organ, the order was placed. The organ was installed during January of 1974 and the Dedication Recital played by Mr. Zabel on March 3, 1974. The organ continues to be a great asset to both The Park Church and the wider community.

The music committee at the time the organ was purchased and installed was: Dr. Paul I. Kingsbury, Jr., Chairman, Mr. Ronald P. Hamlin, Mr. Fredrick F. Loomis, Mrs. Boyd McDowell II, Mrs. John C. Roemmelt, Jr.

Following the resignation of Mr. Zabel in the spring of 1979 in order for him to accept an invitation to become organist and choir master at the Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church in Huntington, West Virginia, Mr. Charles L. Hickman, Jr. a member of the congregation assumed the post of interim organist and choir master. Mr. Hickman filled the position admirably until the Music Committee, chaired by Dr. Michael K. Wald, could find a permanent replacement. In April, 1980, Mr. Thomas Bohlert from Staten Island was hired to fill the important post of organist-choirmaster of our church. His initial work among us gives every

promise of continuing the fine tradition of church music which has characterized our congregational life.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Twenty-five years ago the Board of Christian Education was a new organization. It was then called The Board of Religious Education. The Director of Religious Education at that time was Miss Betty Johnson. Looking over the reports of this board makes one wonder how the church ever got along without it. There have been many persons who have filled the position on The Park Church staff which carried the responsibility for the educational program. Some have been ordained persons who also acted as Assistant or Associate Pastors. Others have been unordained professionals in the field of education. But regardless of staff, the Board of Christian Education has provided the leadership in planning and implementing an educational program. It has concerned itself with curriculum, the recruitment and training of teachers, and the week by week operation of the Sunday Church School. Especially under the direction of the Rev. Kenneth Ostermiller who served as the Minister of Education from 1971-1976, the board broadened its concerns and instituted an extensive and effective program of education for adults both on Sunday mornings following the worship hour which was advanced to ten o'clock but also during the week. Mr. Ostermiller was convinced that parents are the primary Christian educators of their children. Therefore, adult education takes an important place in the church program.

The Rev. Jonathan Guest, called as Associate Minister in 1976, continued to develop the educational program but also shared many of the pastoral duties with Mr. Lester. He preached regularly, visited the sick, and counseled as the occasion required. Mr. Guest, a graduate of Wesleyan University and Harvard Divinity School married Victoria Alford of Princeton, New Jersey during his time at The Park Church and their wedding on September 23, 1978 provided an occasion of great celebration for the entire Park Church family. The Guests left in 1980 to do graduate work at Harvard. Mr. Guest entered a doctoral program in New Testament Studies and Victoria entered a Master of Divinity program at the Divinity School to prepare herself for ordination. Mrs. Guest continues a tradition of women in the ministry that began with Mrs. Eastman and continued with the Rev. Lillian Chapman and the Rev. Rachel Brooks. Another daughter of The Park Church, Kathleen Brownback, has recently graduated from Harvard Divinity School in preparation for ordination. In this tradition, too, considering the present controversy in other denominations over the ordination of women, The Park Church was ahead of its time.

The tradition of a church library was also revived in recent years. The library, named for William E. Biery, for many years superintendent of the Sunday School, was relocated in 1970 to the anteroom between Beecher Hall and the church parlors. New books were purchased and the congregation encouraged to read them. Mrs. Hugh J. Longley, an experienced professional librarian, was instrumental in the move. Following her death, Mrs. Frank Wanbaugh became librarian.

Any discussion of the educational program at The Park Church in recent years cannot leave unmentioned the contribution of Mrs. Joseph O. Faber, one of our own members who as a volunteer and paid staff person, secretary and educational coordinator, for a period of ten years

provided continuing and creative leadership. She gave strong support to a series of women who served as chairperson for the Board of Education. They included Mrs. Richard O. Anderson, Mrs. James P. Kelleher, Mrs. David G. Ruffer, Mrs. Douglas C. Shoemaker, and the present chairperson, Mrs. Michael K. Wald.

YOUTH MINISTRY

In addition to the vocal choir and handbell choir two youth organizations related to The Park Church in the past twenty-five years stand out.

The Sunday Evening Club for the young people of the church dates from Mr. Cornwell's ministry and continued until the early 70's. For most of those years it involved large numbers of high school young people, many of them from other churches. It not only included the Sunday evening meetings but a variety of activities. The basic form for the Sunday evening meetings was: a short devotional service led by a member of the club; a discussion by the members themselves; or a speech by an outsider, often followed by a discussion; a social hour with games and refreshments. Like all organizations it had its ups and downs. We have already spoken of particularly good times under the direction of Miss Dilts and Tom Wright.

From the beginning the club had a cooperative relationship with other Christian youth groups in the city. There was much visiting back and forth among the groups on Sunday evenings, and work on joint projects such as Easter sunrise services, Trick or Treat campaigns for UNICEF, etc.

The club often sent representatives to state and area meetings. Its leaders attended training conferences at Wells College, Blair Academy, and Lisle Conference Center.

At the time of this anniversary, the youth ministry of The Park Church continues but in a different form. There is a group of Junior High young people who meet Sunday mornings with their advisors, William Lindsay and Ronald Hooper. A group of Senior High young people meet with Clair and Billie Glossner who have worked with both Junior and Senior High groups for a period of several years. Both groups have discussions on topics of interest to them and also carry on projects to help finance field trips to various places of interest. Youth activities centered in church occupy a much less prominent place than they did twenty-five years ago. The Park Church, although it continues to have many children of younger age, seems to be a part of this trend in the high school age groups.

The Boy Scouts represent the second youth-serving organization that has remained active until the present time. In 1970 Troop 18 celebrated its fiftieth active year of service to boys. Mr. Frederick C. Tomlinson, Mr. Robert P. McDowell, and Mr. Frederick B. Gridley were Park Church men who were important in early scouting in Elmira. Until recently, Mr. Gridley held the record for length of service to Troop 18, having been Scoutmaster from 1918-1931. The present Scoutmaster, Mr. Dean E. Butts, has now exceeded that record having served for twenty-one consecutive years since assuming the post in 1959.

Although Troop 18 has met in The Park Church and its leadership has come largely from the church, its membership has always been much broader. One year, eleven churches and Temple B'Nai Israel were represented in the membership and among the troop committee. Two boys from the Temple became Eagle Scouts. Other boys have won the Eagle award for work done in Troop 18.

From 1955 to 1959 the Troop was inactive, largely, it seems, because of lack of leadership. When Mr. Butts returned from college he reactivated the unit. Since then it has prospered. It has an exceptionally active camping program and a long-time interest in conservation. It was cited in the Elmira Star-Gazette for April 21, 1970 for having cleaned up an illegal, unsightly dump on the Dutch Hill Road in the Town of Southport. At the time of our 135th anniversary as a church, Troop 18 continues to serve any interested boys in the community.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The lineage of the Women's Fellowship goes back to the "Sewing Society" which was organized soon after the church was founded. An account of its beginning given in chapter six of this history says that its purpose was to promote acquaintance and friendliness among the women of the church, and to sew for home and foreign missions.

At the beginning of this thirty-five year period, the work of the Women's Fellowship still included the two original purposes. The members were still sewing for the Red Cross for whom they had done much work during the Second World War. They made layettes for the needy, hospital garments and dressings for mission hospitals. They also sewed for our own church, making robes for junior choirs and costumes for Christmas pageants.

The Fellowship also has its own fund for benevolences. It has been interested in education, contributing to mission schools, theological seminaries, negro colleges, and scholarship programs. The women gave five hundred dollars toward the education of an American Indian boy as well as contributing to such local groups as Planned Parenthood and Meals-on-Wheels.

The Fellowship has also looked well to the housekeeping needs of the church. Over the years it has decorated the pastor's study, re-covered pew cushions, bought new draperies for Beecher Hall and the parlors, refinished and reupholstered furniture, bought several new dining tables, a refrigerator, dishwasher, and new kitchen range, as well as many lesser items.

Other services to the church itself include preparing dinners for the Annual Meetings and other important occasions. For many years these dinners were under the general chairmanship of Mrs. Dolphis Bourgeois. More recently, that responsibility has been rotated among a group of the members. The Fellowship has been responsible for teas and receptions honoring new ministers and new members, and for celebrating anniversaries and other important occasions. It has provided luncheons for various community groups including Family Services, the Wednesday Morning Club, and the Chemung Co. Historical Society. It out-did itself in providing the wedding reception for Jonathan and Victoria Guest to which the entire congregation was invited.

All of this represents a considerable sum of money. Certain ways of earning money have become almost traditional with the Fellowship – rummage sales, bridge luncheons, as well as planning social events and serving meals for outside groups and individuals. Some of the proceeds from these activities has gone into the purchase of a large display case to house Beecher memorabilia and other relics of the early church. In the last few years, two extremely successful Holiday Bazaars resulted in the establishment of a \$500 annual scholarship for a graduating Park Church senior. The first three recipients have been Molly Streeter and Shelley Whitlock who shared the 1979 award and Scott Moore who was the 1980 winner.

In place of the more traditional programming the Women's Fellowship in recent years has cast about for more innovative ways to serve the women of the congregation. In addition to a study group on personal Christian growth, classes have been offered on a wide variety of subjects including painting, cooking, bridge, aerobic exercises, and a variety of crafts. Tuesdays in the fall and winter months have found many women busy pursuing different interests at The Park Church.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

From its beginning, The Park Church has been concerned with service beyond the church walls. Community-mindedness has been one of the marks of the congregation. In the past thirty-five years, two committees have been formed to facilitate ministry in the areas of mission and social action. These committees, the Stewardship Committee and the Social Concerns Committee, because they found their interests and responsibilities were closely related, combined into a single committee in 1975. The Stewardship Committee had been primarily responsible for the allocation of mission funds to various groups, agencies, and causes on the local, national, and international levels. The Social Concerns Committee had concerned itself with involving the church membership in specific projects and in the effort to find solutions to social problems.

The purpose of the Social Concerns Committee as stated in the church By-Laws was: "It shall have the responsibility of involving church members in a search for answers to the problems of society such as race relations, housing, employment and world peace, and for carrying out projects to solve these problems. It shall keep the church informed on social issues in the community, the nation and the world, and recommend methods of organizing the resources of the church to promote human welfare." Under the sponsorship of this committee and using only the contributions of individual church members designated for this purpose, the committee purchase a house in 1969 and resold it without a down payment to a large family having housing difficulties. In other ways the buying of this home was made easier for the family than is usually the case and the family has continued to make the payments faithfully.

In 1970 the Social Concerns Committee established in The Park Church a Day Care Center for the infant children of young mothers still in school. The education of such mothers is often threatened by the need to take care of their children during school hours. A grant was received from the Economic Opportunity Program of Chemung County to pay the salary of the director, Mrs. Edward Horner, a Park Church member. In 1970 Mr. Richard Denton, chairman

of the committee, said, "Jane Sheets (another Park Church member) has been sub-chairperson for this project and has almost single-handedly pushed and pulled it into existence." The babies were being born but the mothers were not quick to take advantage of the service. After two years, small numbers participating, the difficulty of getting Health Department approval for the facilities, and the possibility of incorporating the Day Care Center into the School-out-of-School program at Grace Episcopal led to the termination of the program.

In 1979 the combined Social Concerns and Stewardship Committee acted as the catalyst in the formation of a local Hospice Committee which is dedicated to providing better, more humane services to the terminally ill and their families. At the time of this writing, that effort gives every promise of coming to a successful conclusion with the provision of Hospice services scheduled to begin in a three-county area of the Southern Tier in April of 1981.

Even more recently, through the interest of Mr. Tony Layng the combined committee has been responsible for bringing a young woman, Helena Williams, from the Island of Dominica to Elmira so she can pursue her education. The Allyn Hoffman and the Michael Wald families have been serving as Helena's hosts. She is adjusting well to life in the United States and has become an active participant in the life of The Park Church.

The Social Concerns and Stewardship Committee continues to be responsible for allocating the Benevolence Funds of the church to a wide variety of groups, organizations, and causes. Agencies working in the fields of health, education, social change, and ecumenical religious services have been supported. Many organizations that would not have been thought of at the time of The Park Church Centennial are now supported. Those on the list in recent years include: Planned Parenthood, United Negro College Fund, Quaker Committee on Social Rehabilitation, United Ministries in Higher Education, Cornell Centre for Religion, Ethics, and Social Policy, Glove House, Chemung County Council of Churches, Church World Service, Ryder Hospital in Puerto Rico, Second Place East, Southern Tier Hospice, and Bread for the World. In 1979 \$11,908 was distributed to thirty-seven different agencies.

In this portion of our history another of the pastors who served The Park Church during these years should be mentioned. He is the Rev. Gary M. Balgemann who served as Minister of Education from 1966 to 1969. He was particularly interested in youth work and social action. His attitude can best be expressed by quoting from his annual report for 1968 – "Someone asked me during the summer if I was a social worker or a minister suggesting I should be one or the other. It seems to me that Jesus was both."

The Park Church continues to be concerned for the community in which it is located and serves. Not only does it involve itself in specific projects and allocate funds for the support of many ministries but it continues to supply a great many of the volunteers who make the work of so many of the service agencies in our community possible.

BUILDING TIES OF FRIENDSHIP

An organization which dates from the Cornwell era and was active until the 1960's was the Mr. and Mrs. Club. It was founded to encourage friendship among the young married people of the church. It was not long until it was carrying responsibility for a variety of church work.

The Club sponsored a refugee family from Holland and helped another Dutch family. The sponsored family lived for a time in the third floor apartment where the Eastmans had lived and which was later the sexton's apartment. They did not make a satisfactory adjustment to American life and returned to Holland. The second family stayed and are now United States citizens.

During the Second World War, the Mr. and Mrs. Club sent the Reader's Digest to all Park Church men in the armed forces. In 1947 it paid for the redecoration of Beecher Hall including drapes. A few years later it bought new dining tables. It bought a movie projector. It made other contributions and seemed always to be "taking up the slack" somewhere. It had one money-making project – an annual dance called The Snowball. This activity not only raised money but was a delightful social event.

Twice the Club entered one-act plays in drama festivals sponsored by Elmira Little Theater. One year its play was judged best in its class.

History repeats itself. The Mr. and Mrs. Club after nearly a quarter of a century of life and liveliness is no more, but in 1968 a new group called The Park Church Couples' Club was formed. Although it is interested in welcoming new couples into the church it has no age limit. It is an informal group having no formal organization – just a steering committee. In the 1969 report of church activities Mrs. Robert W. Lester (wife of the un-reverend Bob Lester) said, "The Couples' Club has become and will continue to be important in Park Church life. Even though the club activities are generally social, the ties made in this group will, as with former groups, serve an important role in sustaining our church as a church family." {

From Mr. and Mrs. Club to Couples' Club, and recently to an even more inclusive social group. With many single parents, unmarried young adults, widows and widowers in need of friendship, the Couples' Club has become the vehicle for planning a monthly social event to which all interested persons are invited. The name has been dropped, someone suggested they be called simply, "The Sociables," and the program has managed to continue very well. Certain events seem to have become traditional so each year the program begins with a Corn Roast at Sullivan's Monument and is almost sure to include a "Hanging of the Greens" party at Christmastime, a Progressive Dinner, and an evening of recreation at the Twin Tiers Tennis Club.

The group continues to provide an entry point for newcomers to the community and others who are interested in becoming a part of The Park Church family.

THE TRUSTEES – THE DIACONATE

By the very nature of their work the Trustees and Deacons and Deaconesses follow much of the same pattern year after year. Clubs and committees may come and go, change their programs and their names, and even disappear, but the groups charged with maintaining church life remain.

The Trustees handle the financial affairs of the church, looking after investments, raising the annual budget, and overseeing the church property. Following the flood which has been dealt with earlier in this chapter, the Trustees carried particularly heavy responsibilities.

As the decade of the 70's wore on the problem of inflation became a particularly troubling one. Despite the fact that the budget more than doubled between 1965 and 1975, little more than routine maintenance was done on the church building. Therefore, plans were made for a special three-year building fund to up-grade the building and care for some long-delayed maintenance projects. Finally, in the fall of 1978, Mr. Douglas Shoemaker chaired a 135th Anniversary Building Fund Campaign which resulted in \$71,345 being pledged by the membership. Some of the work already accomplished includes the installation of energy saving devices on the heating system, the painting of the entire nave and chancel area of the church, repointing of deteriorated masonry walls, and the installation of storm windows on the basement windows in the office area. Many smaller maintenance items have also been taken care of. Outstanding leadership has been given to the Trustees by recent chairmen, Dean Butts, John Moore, Cecil Scott, Walter Hayter, Paul Kingsbury, and Jan Updegraff, the present chairman.

A part of the upgrading of the building in recent years has been the installation of eight new stained glass windows. Desiring to install a window in memory of his wife, Carroll W. Legge recruited the other donors and personally oversaw the pattern.

To balance the Prophet windows on the west wall, it was decided to install on the east wall of the gallery windows depicting the Four Evangelists. Pike Stained Glass Studios of Rochester, New York who had designed and built the Prophet windows were chosen to design and build the new windows following the same general pattern.

Mr. Legge, not wishing to stop a project well begun, recruited several more donors who underwrote the cost of four more windows. Those at the south end of the west wall continue the theme of the Prophets; Christian action, commitment to social righteousness, and humanitarian service. Albert Schweitzer and Roger Williams are the subjects.

The two windows at the south end of the east wall continue the theme of the Evangelists; the inner world of contemplation. Christian thought, theology, John Calvin and Johann S. Bach are the subjects of these windows.

Donors whose generosity and desire to memorialize members of their family made the windows possible were: Mr. Carroll W. Legge, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie D. Clute. Mr. Allen W. Smiley, Dr. and Mrs. David M. Iszard, Mrs. Harry Y. Iszard, Mr. and Mrs. William V. M. Iszard,

Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Iszard, Mrs. Jay W. Butts, Mr. Jay W. Butts, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Dean E. Butts, Mr. and Mrs. Grandison Gridley, Mrs. Ralph H. Roberts, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Donald C. Hawkes, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. William H. Hawkes, Mrs. Charles M. Streeter, Sr., Dr. and Mrs. Marsden F. Stamp; Mr. and Mrs. Norman H. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Peck, Dr. and Mrs. William G. Walter, Miss Emma Hawkes, and Mr. and Mrs. Samuel T. Geloso.

Traditionally, the Deacons and Deaconesses are especially concerned with the spiritual affairs of the church. They prepare and serve the elements of the Communion Service. They meet with prospective members of the church and welcome them to our fellowship. They visit the sick and the shut-in, distributing the flowers from the Communion Table each Sunday.

Recently, to make our church more of a caring community, to keep the lines of communication open among our members, and to meet particular needs as they arise, the Diaconate has instituted a Parish Zone Plan whereby each Deacon is responsible for a small group of church members in a geographical area. It is the Deacon's function to keep in touch with his neighborhood group, encouraging the members to become active in the church, and being ready to meet particular needs which the members for whom he or she is responsible may have. It is hoped this plan may be particularly helpful to our elderly and inactive members.

At the beginning of the period covered by this last chapter of The Park Church history, the Deacons and Deaconesses were separate boards. Through the years they began to meet together and functioned virtually as a single Board. Finally, at the Semi-Annual congregational meeting in October of 1979 the church By-Laws were brought into conformity with the practice and a single board known as the Diaconate was provided for. Its members will be known simply as Deacons, half of them to be men and half women. Mrs. Richard P. Emery is presently serving as chairperson for the Diaconate.

THE REMEMBRANCE FUND

Many members and friends of the church have found gifts to the Remembrance Fund a satisfying way to honor friends and loved ones who have died. The Remembrance Fund began in a modest way more than twenty-five years ago. It began as a scholarship loan fund. It is still used for this purpose as well as for any other purpose deemed appropriate by the committee responsible for it. This committee is made up of the chairman of the Diaconate, the church treasurer, and the pastor. Examples of the uses to which it has been put in recent years are: contribution toward the purchase of the new Schantz Memorial Organ, purchase of a new piano, supplies for the library, a public address system for the Sanctuary, several scholarship loans, and the purchase of additional handbells. The most recent allocation from this fund has been to underwrite the costs of our 135th Anniversary Program including the cost of up-dating and reprinting this Park Church History.

SUMMARY

When I was asked to update this history, I reread the centennial history and album to give myself background. I read the annual reports for the last thirty-five years and other documents. I talked with members of the church who shared their memories with me, and to them I am grateful.

To take a phrase from the now generation, for the first part of this period we spent considerable time and energy deciding who we were, and what we might become. Not a little soul searching went into some of this. As a result, we found ourselves an Independent Congregational Church in an historic building in the center of a medium sized eastern city.

With our foundation thus re-established, we were free to broaden and deepen our concerns. I believe readers of this report can find evidence we are doing so.