

**First United
Presbyterian Church
Holly, Michigan**

1859

•

1959

CHURCH HISTORY

"One Hundred Years of Service"

The Township of Holly was one hundred years old in 1938, a year before the start of the Second World War. Situated in the northwest corner of Oakland County it was once the hunting grounds of the Chippewa and Ottawa Indians when the first white family came in 1831. Many of the early settlers of this part of the Northwest Territory were from the state of New York. With them came itinerant Presbyterian and Congregational preachers, although the first church to be organized here was the Baptist (1846) and then the Methodist (1857). The census of 1845 listed only 656 people in the township, which meant that only an irregular sort of Christian ministry was available for those of the Reformed Church "persuasion". On those occasions when no pastor was present the Presbyterians met with their families in one another's homes, and "Silas Newell would read to them a sermon, or they would hold a prayer and conference meeting".

The Reverend George Winter of Independence, Michigan, was one of the early itinerant preachers and it was his work which finally sparked the desire for a Presbyterian Church in Holly. On July 7, 1859, "a little band of Christians and five Presbyterians ministers" met in the old school house on South Saginaw Street (now the St. John's Episcopal Church) to form such a church. There were eight charter members (including Silas Newell). They held church services in the school until the Methodist Church building was completed in the following year. The Methodists generously offered to let them share their house of worship and the Presbyterians accepted. At this time Thomas Wright was pastor of both the Holly and Fentonville Churches, because Holly was unable to support its own full-time pastor. The church was accepted into the Presbytery of Detroit in the autumn of 1860 and continued as an active member until it was transferred to the Presbytery of Flint in 1934, by the action of the General Assembly.

Early in 1861 the Presbyterians made definite plans to secure their own building. A plot of ground was given by J. B. Simonson near the lake which bears his name. By spring, ground was broken for a building 32' x 52'. Many men gave of their labor and material, while the women raised money for the furnishing of the church. By Christmas it was finished, furnished, and free of debt for the modest sum of \$2200. The next spring two determined women raised the funds for the first "church-going bell" in Holly. The building was enlarged and redecorated in 1869, just four years after the township was incorporated and fifty years after Oakland County was first surveyed.

On a warm Friday evening in 1876, just seventeen years after the church had been organized, the pastor, Reverend Joseph Swindt, presided at an anniversary meeting where past efforts were recalled and letters from former pastors read. In one report the untiring and

persistent work of the church women was described this way. "In a number of instances the ladies paid the arrangements of pastor's salaries, paid sextons, repaired the house of worship, put on blinds, steps, etc." The first record of additional organization beyond Sunday School was a "female prayer meeting" in 1859. Just two days before the above mentioned meeting, the sum of \$300 was given to the church by the will of John Hadley for the rental of a pew with this resolve, "that this pew shall be known in this church as the Hadley pew, and to be held ever open to strangers and the poor of this church."

During 1879 an extensive job of remodeling took place when the basement was enlarged, a kitchen and furnace added, and the sanctuary furnished with new carpets, stained-glass windows, pews and cushions. With the addition of new pulpit furniture the total cost came to \$2,000—almost as much as the whole cost of the original building itself. From such a modest beginning this must have seemed like a gigantic surge of prosperity and a just cause for pride, but within ten years they experienced the greatest tragedy in the history of this church.

On Saturday afternoon, February 23, 1889, the church burned down. The records give this short account. "The church burned out about noon, it being the day for the annual sleigh-ride for the Sabbath School. Weather being zero all day . . . cause of the fire was the improper manner in which the thimble was bricked into the chimney." One of the boys of the church, Sherman Divine, tried to save the bell, while others frantically tried to rescue what they could. In the confusion a baby that had been brought to the church was momentarily forgotten, but rescued in time. That baby was Phoebe Divine. The church was not a total loss, for the two organs, the pulpit furniture, some pews and cushions were saved. After this crippling shock the records add proudly that another building was erected on the same spot within 246 days—in less time than it took to finish the first building. The clock which hung in the church was "carried out amidst fire and smoke and stopped at twenty minutes after twelve". And, on the day before the new church was dedicated the clock was hung in its place and re-started at the same time "and went on its way rejoicing".

* * * * *

In 1893 the Session of this church recommended **Sherman Divine** as a suitable candidate for the Christian ministry. He went on to become the first member of this church to enter the preaching ministry and held important pastorates from New York to California. He was a pastor in the Synod of Oregon when the township here celebrated its centennial and returned as a speaker. And now, as this church celebrates its centennial, one of its former pastors, **Morton Booth**, is a pastor in the Synod of Oregon. At a later date another member of this church, **Edmund Chaffee**, entered the preaching ministry and was for fifteen years the Director of the Labor Temple in New York City. He died in 1936 at the age of 48 while delivering an address in St. Paul, Minnesota.

* * * * *

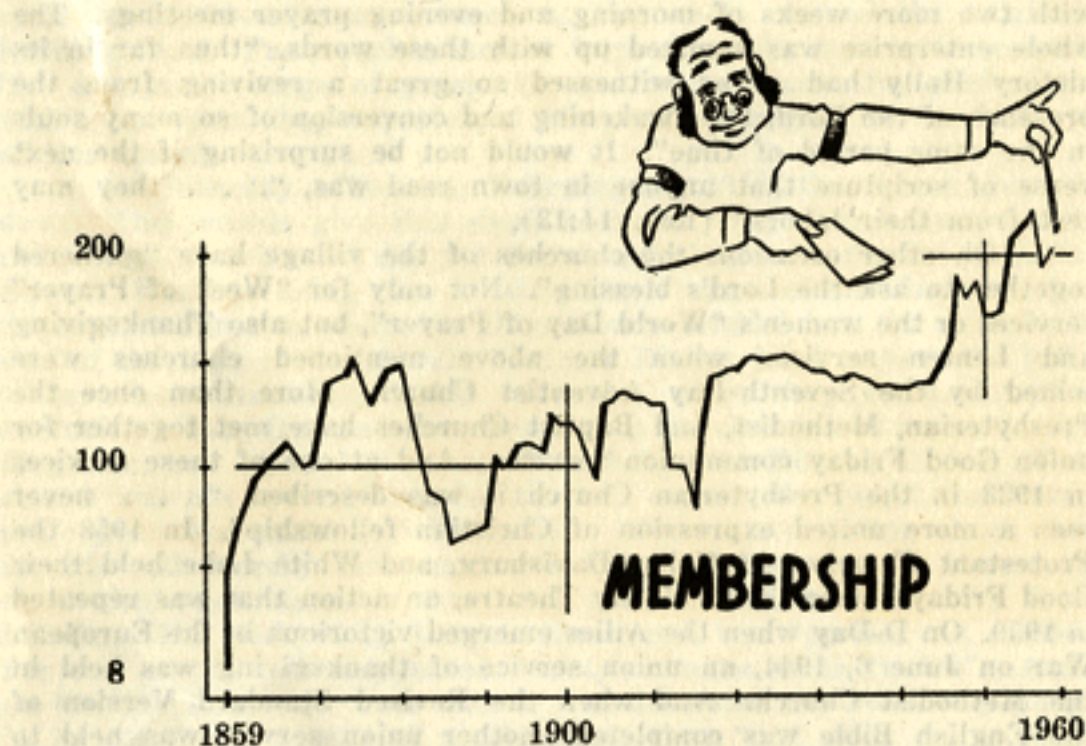
During the last quarter of the 19th century, a pattern of village church cooperation was in progress which has continued until this day. An early significant example of this which is worth describing in detail occurred in 1877. From November of that year until the spring of the following year, a series of union prayer meetings was held by the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist congregations. In early January revival meetings were then held in the Presbyterian Church four times a day under the leadership of two men who remained here for fifteen days. When they left, a Brother Rowland of the YMCA led meetings for another fifteen days. And when he left, the local pastors of the three churches led similar meetings for eight weeks. At the conclusion of this, the two revivalists returned for services on March 1, 2, 3 and the union services were climaxed with two more weeks of morning and evening prayer meetings. The whole enterprise was summed up with these words, "thus far in its history Holly had never witnessed so great a reviving from the presence of the Lord, the awakening and conversion of so many souls in the same period of time". It would not be surprising if the next verse of scripture that anyone in town read was, ". . . they may rest from their labors" (Rev. 14:13).

On other occasions the churches of the village have "gathered together to ask the Lord's blessing". Not only for "Week of Prayer" services or the women's "World Day of Prayer", but also Thanksgiving and Lenten services when the above mentioned churches were joined by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. More than once the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist Churches have met together for union Good Friday communion services. And at one of these services in 1933 in the Presbyterian Church it was described, ". . . never seen a more united expression of Christian fellowship". In 1958 the Protestant Churches of Holly, Davisburg, and White Lake held their Good Friday service in the Holly Theatre, an action that was repeated in 1959. On D-Day when the Allies emerged victorious in the European War on June 6, 1944, an union service of thanksgiving was held in the Methodist Church. And when the Revised Standard Version of the English Bible was completed another union service was held to celebrate this landmark in Biblical history.

* * * * *

Church worship services and Sunday Church School are not the only activities offered to Presbyterians. As early as 1874 the Ladies' Missionary Society was formed. This group continued along with the Women's Aid Society until 1944 when the two groups merged into the Westminster Guild. In 1956 the Westminster Guild under the direction of Mrs. Howard Wareham compiled a Centennial Cookie Book. In the same year as this merger, the youth groups were formed. This was actually a new grouping of the Christian Endeavor Society that had been active for a great many years in this church. The new groups mentioned above were a Junior High and Senior High fellowship organized in cooperation with the youth of the Methodist Church, with the former meeting at the Methodist Church and the latter meeting at the Presbyterian Church. The only record of their meetings is this one caustic remark, "Methodist young people came over with

the Presbyterian young people, but the Methodists wouldn't let them play cards". In 1949 a Christian Men's Fellowship was formed, and in 1958 they sent their first delegate to the annual meeting of the National Council of Presbyterian Men in Chicago. During the autumn of 1953 the Senior High Church School class of Mr. Gerald Niles was used as the basis of a re-forming of the youth group into the Westminster Fellowship. In June of 1958 this group (sixteen senior highs and four adults) made a 3100 mile trip to the Skyline Ranch in southeastern Wyoming to attend the Senior High conference of the Presbytery of Laramie. They also planted and dedicated a Colorado blue spruce to the memory of Wilber Fox, who with his wife, was the sponsor of the group when he died.



At the present time we have four women who have been members of this church for fifty years or more. They are: Cora Kenaga (Mrs. Allen) who joined on July 27, 1890, Margaret Peterson (Mrs. Vern) who joined on May 2, 1897, Phoebe Divine Van Deusen who joined on December 4, 1902, and Harriett Peek (Mrs. R. E.) who joined on December 13, 1908. The first three witnessed the fire, in one way or another. One member who joined the same time as Mrs. Kenaga was Miss Emma Sargent, who, the records said, requested baptism by immersion. She was for 26 years the secretary of the Sunday School. Another life-time member was Mrs. Myrta E. Lockwood who once wrote, "I have known and worked under eleven of the twenty-four pastors since my membership in 1899". She died in 1954. Holly's only commissioner to the General Assembly was Mr. William Maybee who attended in 1952 at New York City.

* * * * *



Rev. and Mrs. William Lankton, Greg, Mark, Cathy



SESSION—Raymond Barber, Mrs. Clarence Bendle, Donald Stark, Rev. William Lankton, Olen Cornell, Mrs. Sam. Wright, William Sargent.



TRUSTEES—Russell Barrett, Steve Yobuck, Mrs. Jack Eby, Max Freeman, President; Mrs. Hilding Anderson, Treasurer; George Hayes, J. W. Keasey, Mrs. Jay Perry.



WESTMINSTER GUILD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE—Mrs. George Swaney, Mrs. Devona Nelson, Mrs. William Lankton, Mrs. Jess Furbush, Mrs. Howard Wareham, Mrs. Gerald Niles, Mrs. Jack MacKenzie, Mrs. Leland Wood.



CANVASSERS FOR BUILDING FUND CAMPAIGN, May 17, 1959—4th row: R. Barber, S. Wright, H. Giles, W. Alberts, D. Goodearl, L. Wood, A. Jones, E. Barbersek, H. Anderson, R. Rainey, I. Burgess, W. Crosby. 3rd row: G. Niles, O. Cornell, R. Barrett, D. Stark, V. Shields, J. W. Keasey, M. Bendle. 2nd row: J. Furbush, B. Dryer, D. Edick, G. Barton, J. Perry, J. Bennett, S. Yobuck. 1st row: W. Lankton, D. Kramer (Campaign Director), E. Anderson. Not pictured: A. Schwartz, G. Swaney. In one afternoon's calling these men received \$37,908.50 in pledges.



CHOIR—3rd row: J. Perry, E. Furbush, H. Giles, M. Young, D. Kinney, D. Piening, W. Hayes, D. Goodearl. 2nd row: N. Nelson, D. Anderson, J. Goodearl, R. Perry, G. Gilbert, organist and choir director. 1st row: S. Riddle, J. Doty, M. K. Henry, J. Fisher, D. Bennett.



SENIOR HIGH WESTMINSTER FELLOWSHIP (just before trip to Skyline Ranch, Wyoming)—2nd row: J. Wood, P. Van Buren, N. Stark, N. Nelson, D. Anderson, J. Fisher, J. Doty, M. Young, S. Riddle, M. K. Henry, D. Walker, S. Niles. 1st row: L. Bensett, B. Fox, D. Kinney, W. Hayes, W. Lankton, J. Andrews.

CENTENNIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Paul Dryer

Ival Paulsen

Miss Donna Piening

Mr. and Mrs. Garth Barton

Mrs. Clarence Bendle

Mrs. Howard Wareham

The church here has not only been active in peace but has given of itself in times of war. In all the major national wars since its organization, members of this church have died in the performance of their duty.

Civil War: Charles Hadley died on December 18, 1864. The Session record gives this brief note, "a prisoner in the hands of the Rebels of the South".

World War I: Amel Swartz died on August 1, 1918, in France. A memorial service was held in this church on September 22, 1918. The local American Legion Post in Holly was named in his honor. His brother, Arthur, is an active member of that Post and this church.

World War II: Paul James Foss died on August 8, 1941, at the age of 27. He was assigned to an Army post in Missouri at the time of his death.

Robert Bravender died on August 31, 1943, in Europe while on a mission in a B-17 "Flying Fortress". The local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post was co-named in his honor.

Robert Macombs died on August 5, 1950 in a mid-air collision over Chesapeake Bay. He had flown successfully in the Normandy Invasion of France, though he had been wounded at the time. Morton Booth officiated at his funeral.

Korean War: Thomas Hadley died on November 9, 1951 in a jet fighter "Shooting Star" over North Korea. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The absence of many relatives and loved ones in the war affected every family in the country directly or indirectly, and the members of this church were no exception. In 1943, at the suggestion of Mrs. Claude Lacey the women of the church wrote letters to all servicemen connected with the church. In fact, this notation appeared in the minutes of the congregational meeting of March 1944. "Each month since April 1943 they have been sending letters to from 52 to 80 Army and Navy addresses and the society has been well rewarded by the answering letters received from camps in the USA and Alaska and the battle-areas in Europe, Africa, and the South Pacific. We also sent 69 Christmas boxes . . ."

* * * * *

Congregational singing is considered an essential part of Protestant Christian worship, but such was not always the case even in this church. On December 6, 1871, action was taken by the Session ". . . to consider what steps should be taken to use singing as a part of Sabbath worship. After some discussion, voted to adopt congregational singing". The following spring this notation was found in the minutes. "Congregational singing as an experiment has failed in this church. In a small congregation like ours a good choir is desirable to lead the worship." A volunteer choir was not immediately formed, but certain ones were employed to sing for "50c a Sunday" in 1889. Yet even this small amount was too much to pay because

the Session "voted to try and get along without paying any of the choir during the year, on account of having to raise the entire salary of the pastor" (Feb. 1893). The music of the church has gone from this unpromising start to an honored position in the church. In 1945 a new organ, purchased by the efforts of the choir, was installed and dedicated. Chimes were given by Mr. and Mrs. Axel Johnson and dedicated at the same time. Many in the community can remember driving out to see how far the chimes could be heard when they were so faithfully played by Mrs. Mildred Ellis. Both the organ and the chimes are still an important part of our Sunday worship.

From time to time the officers of the church were forced to wrestle with the problems of the financial condition of the church. **Reverend Hoskins** was called as pastor in 1882 for \$1,000 a year, but in 1890 **Reverend Bates** was called for only \$800. In 1934 during the Depression the church owed \$500 in back salary, and even as late as 1946 a meeting was called to consider the "poor financial condition of the church". Since then, though, the situation has improved. A new heating plant was installed and the kitchen and basement were remodeled. In 1954 the Simonson property north of the church was purchased, and the following year a parking lot was developed back of the church. The next year the Bentley property east of the church was secured. Two years before any of these property purchases, the sanctuary of the church was remodeled extensively and in May 1952 a Dedication Service was held for the gifts of a chancel window, sanctuary stained-glass windows, and chancel furniture. In 1959 building plans were made and a building fund campaign was held with the assistance of the Board of National Missions.

* * * * *

The governing body of a local Presbyterian Church is the Session, composed of the Pastors and the Ruling Elders. Together they are the ones who through the years are responsible for the ongoing work of the church, and the changing times are often reflected in the actions and notations included in their records. Especially was this true in the earlier days when all manner of picturesque news was preserved, although "no records of the Holly Church were kept from April 1862 until January 1863 because **Reverend Thomas Wright**, also pastor of the Fentonville Church, was engaged in raising funds for the rebuilding of that church which burned down." Many times, though, no information is given for some actions taken, and the reader is left with an unsatisfied curiosity. ". . . Resolved that the pastor of this church be requested to read no public notices from the pulpit but such as pertain to the religious and social interest of the churches of Holly" (1875). Or this one a few years later. ". . . Unanimously resolved . . . that hereafter the wine used in this church at the Communion service be the unfermented juice of the grape" (1884).

It is also the duty of the Session to supervise the worship of the church. During the interim after **Reverend Hoskins** left, the church was vacant for 13½ months (April 1885 to May 1886), but it was not closed during that time because services were by the laymen who read a sermon at each service. Mention of a more "chatty" nature

was made when delegates from Holly, at a meeting of the Presbytery of Detroit, met two former pastors (Kuder and Carmichael) "who each came to this church newlyweds". Sometime later Morton Booth, a recent graduate from McCormick Seminary in Chicago, was ordained in this church and later married Margaret Craig, a member of the church here.

In the One Hundred years that the Presbyterian Church has served Holly we have had the leadership of twenty-six pastors as well as the devoted work of two recent interim pastors—**Dr. Longman** and **Dr. Kearns**. The untiring work of such pastors as **Morton Booth**, who converted the upstairs of the manse into a meeting place for a Hobby Club are things that are remembered for years to come. The Testimonial Supper for Reverend and Mrs. Joseph Lindsay in 1956 was an expression of gratitude for their labors here in this parish. But a church is more than just the sum of its pastors, and to make it a living being means the unselfish devotion of a steadfast congregation. Throughout the years we have been fortunate to have had many faithful men and women who have carried on in good times and bad.

But the best days lie ahead. Plans for a fuller ministry are maturing as arrangements for additional facilities are in progress. With their completion it will prove to be the most important single step in the life of this church since the building of the original structure just One Hundred years ago.

(Collected from written records, scrapbooks, and memories)



PASTORS

George Winters	1859-60	1 year	
Thomas Wright	60-62	2	
W. P. Wastell	62-65	3	
George Winter	65-66	1	
J. Sanford Smith	66-68	2	
W. A. Critter	68-70	2	
Edward Dickenson	70-74	4	
Joseph Swindt	74-80	6	
Edward Harvey	81-82	1	
Richard Hoskins	82-85	3	
Charles Evens	86-87	1	
Thomas Towler	87-89	2	
Charles Bates	90-95	5	
William Buck	95-1901	6	
F. A. Kuder	01-04	3	
Donald Carmichael	05-06	1	
James Warren	07-09	2	
Charles Ellis	10-15	5	
Simon Benson	15-24	9	
A. E. Preston	24-25	1	
Franklin Ogle	25-29	4	- H.R. Edwardsburg, Mich.
W. N. Fulcomer	29-34	5	- died, Aug. 17, '57, Pinellas Park, Fla. age 87
Morton Booth	34-41	7	- 925 W. Sixth, Albany, Oregon
Paul Allured	43-46	3	- H.R. 917 W. Genesee, Lansing, Mich. 3624 Brentwood Dr., Flint, Mich.
E. H. Longman*			
Joseph Lindsay	48-56	8	- H.R. 1792 Allen Rd., Port Huron, Mich.
Ralph Kearns*			1450 Lavender, Flint, Mich.
William Lankton	57-		

(H.R. means "honorary retired")

*interim pastors

*"forgetting what lies behind and straining forward
to what lies ahead, . . . press on toward the goal for
the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

--Philippians 3:14