

Our Jubilee Year “Ponderings From the Past” July 2007

During our Jubilee Celebration year, Joan VanPatten, a member of the Communications Minis- try team will dig into the archives to feature some piece of history every month in Focus.

The following information was found in an old publication in the church archives. “Church suppers in Clifton Park were largely farm-style meals. Most of the food was prepared from the produce grown and donated by the church members, who were mostly farmers. Often, one donated a bushel of potatoes, a barrel of pumpkins, or some farm product.

Church suppers were prepared by farmwomen who liked typical country cooking. Churches became known for their own specialty, often the type of food or the timing of the event. There was turkey in the fall, roast beef in the spring. There were also roast pork suppers, pie suppers, and oyster suppers. Side dishes would be sweet or white potatoes, gravy, pick- led beets, squash, a relish of cranberries and oranges, always coffee, and often homemade pies.”

Virginia Tracey remembers when the original church was being built in 1958 and 1959. She was teaching high school math in the school building just across Route 146 and all her students enjoyed watching the progress. At that time Clifton Park was still a little town, but when the Northway opened in the early 60’s, things rapidly changed.

Norma Morris remembers when the first parsonage was purchased on Route 146 and the Circles went out and bought used furniture. It seems there was a local couple who were selling all their furniture in order to buy new. The Celia McIntyre Circle was able to buy a used bedroom set, dining room furniture and also items for the living room. Two church members with trucks drove to the Troy area to pick up and deliver the items to the parsonage. Church members apparently also held a shower for the parsonage so that more pieces of household goods could be secured.

According to *Edna Borst, Virginia Tracey and Joyce & Dave Fifield*, Rev. Mikels may have merged four churches into one but there was a lot of tension and strife with the merger. In each of the four small churches the respective members were a close knit group who had known or were related to each other for years. They may have been meeting in one building but they were not a united church. Rev. Hoch and Rev. Haley both attempted to unite the group, but the feeling is that didn’t really happen until Rev. Schwartz ar- rived at SUMC. The walls between the groups were broken down as people had time to know each other.

Preschool The Nursery School was founded in 1969 and the doors opened to students on September 30 of that year. Classes were held on Tuesday and Thursday mornings for a two and a half hour session. The cost was \$4 a week and there was a \$5 registration fee.

Joyce Fifield, former director of the Pre-school, feels that the nursery school is a great place for children to get to know more about the church and since it's a private school there can also be religious celebrations. In addition, it's a good venue for encouraging young parents to join our church.

FOCUS The FOCUS was originally called The Pastor's Pen until the name was changed in 1969 under Rev. Charles Schwartz' ministry. In 1982, the FOCUS became a weekly communication and it also included the Sunday bulletin. The weekly publications stopped in 1983 and the monthly format resumed.

In 1970, some of the ladies of the church made banners to be used in the Sanctuary during Lent. A new one was added each week. In 1973, Lora Maxstead donated bells and electronic equipment so that we could have a Bell Choir. In 1976, the new organ was installed and used on for the first time on Mother's Day.

Church Gardens From *Dodie Goody* come recollections about our church gardens. "When *Ed Tracey* retired from General Electric, we all gained a special gardener. The property at SUMC was beautified. Ed had the idea and also many plants he propagated from his Moe Road home. He had an uncanny way of recruiting many helpers and getting the work done. He would invite the men for coffee at home, and before they realized it, they were involved in a planting project. Sometimes they just came over to supervise the lady garden-ers. Thanks to Ed our church property is a spot of beauty in Clifton Park, and it is up to us to continue his good works."

Choir Laughs When asked of some of their memories of choir happen-ings, Virginia Tracey and Dave and Joyce Fifield had some inter-esting tales to tell. Did you know that when Rev. Ray Stees was pas-tor, the choir used to grade his sto-ries and jokes on Sunday morn-ing? In the old sanctuary, the choir used to sit behind the con-gregation in the church loft where the congregation couldn't see them. They had cards on which they wrote a number from one to ten and they would hold them up for Ray to see. It must have been embarrassing to get a low number. And they also had an initiation rite for new members. They used to tie the sash cords on the robes of new choir members to their chairs when they weren't looking and then when the person tried to stand up, the chair came with them. There was also the time when one of the choir members accidentally knocked off a hymnal that had been placed on the railing upstairs and it hit someone below on the head. *Dave Fifield* wants to re-mind us that lest you think it was all work back then, there was also some play.

Thank you *Norma Morris, Edna Borst, Virginia Tracey, Dodie Goody, Laura Rogers and Joyce and Dave Fifield* for sharing your memories with us. *Joan VanPatten*