

"Glorious Things Are Spoken
Of Thee O City Of God"

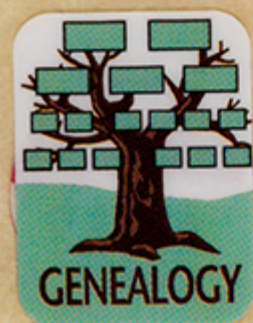


A Century Of Service And Mission

First Presbyterian Church

Kirk O' The Sea

Punta Gorda, Florida
October 15, 1995





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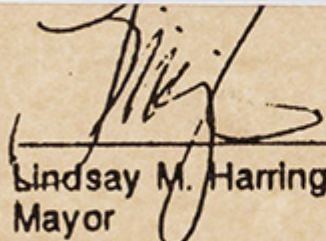
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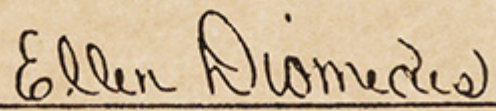
By

BERNICE ROUNTREE

**CHARLOTTE COUNTY
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**


Lindsay M. Harrington
Mayor

ATTEST:


Ellen Diomedes
City Clerk





Congregation first met at Jack's Hall, far left.

PUNTA GORDA PRESBYTERIAN COUNTY'S OLDEST

By Elder Lindsey Williams

As First Presbyterian Church of Punta Gorda — oldest of the denomination in the county — observes its 100th birthday it recalls the difficulties of gathering a flock in a frontier village.

The town's founder, Col. Isaac Trabue, built a one-room frame community hall in 1887 where Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Episcopalians shared services. With growth, each denomination organized congregations and met in available halls.

Eleven Presbyterians in September 1895 decided also to form a congregation and build their own sanctuary. R.E. Coffelt, was appointed to write The Rev. Henry Keigwin, Synod missionary at Orlando, and request advice. The *Punta Gorda Herald*, then a 2-year-old newspaper, reported the outcome October 25:

“A new church has been established during the week — the First Presbyterian. As a result of correspondence with friends in Punta Gorda, Rev. George Case visited the place Sept. 25. He preached on the following Sunday, and on every night of the succeeding week (except Saturday) and obtained the names of 16 persons on a petition for organization of a church.

“This petition was sent to the Presbytery of South Florida (in session at Dunnellon) Oct. 1. That body appointed Rev. Henry Keigwin and Rev. Case as a committee to organize a church if the

way was found clear. The committee met the petitioners on Sunday, Oct. 13, in the Methodist Church and effected an organization.

"Mr. R.E. Coffelt, lately of Chicago, and Mr. J.B. Noyes, lately of Mayesville, Ky., were installed in the office of Ruling Elders. The former held that position in St. Joseph, Mo. Prof. M.L. Williams and Mr. J.A. McHargue compose the Board of Deacons though they are not members. Rev. Keigwin preached the sermon, and Rev. Case delivered the charge to the Elders and the church.

"This makes four churches in Punta Gorda — Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian. The Lutherans and Catholics have services occasionally.

"Union evangelistic services are being conducted in the Baptist Church every night by Revs. Keigwin and Case, with the assistance of Rev. M.S. Stevens, resident Baptist pastor. Merchants have kindly consented to close their places during services."

Rev. Keigwin proclaimed the church "duly organized under the care of the Presbytery of South Florida, of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." This affiliation is of particular significance. As the Civil War drew near in 1857, Presbyterian churches split over the issue of slavery. Southern congregations became the "Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America." Those of the north were the "Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." After the war, the southern churches reorganized as the "Presbyterian Church in the United States."

The postwar period was a time of mission zeal by northern PC-USA into Florida. Friendly relations with the southern PC-US resumed in 1882 but tensions continued until 1983 when the two largest Presbyterian churches reunited under the PC-USA banner.

A PC-USA northern church in Punta Gorda — deep in former Confederate territory — was unusual for that time. However, the little town in 1895 was the southernmost terminal of the nation's railroad system — then the principal mode of travel. Col. Trabue of Kentucky, had been a Union officer during the Civil War. He obtained the 1890-92 Punta Gorda postmastership for an African-American named Robert Meacham.

Thus, Punta Gorda was a fertile field for PC-USA activity. The principal organizers of First Presbyterian USA church at Punta Gorda, Coffelt and Noyes, were noted as newcomers by the *Herald*. They did not stay very long after the church was organized. Rev. Case was appointed "missionary in charge" of the new church until it could support a full-time minister.

The original eleven petitioners adopted a constitution and signed the charter. They were Coffelt, Noyes, Mrs. Olive Coffelt, James W. Carter, James Irwin, Mrs. Nellie Swift, Mrs. Mattie Aull, Mrs. P.J. Barry, Mrs. E.J. Soule, Miss Juleien E. Soule and Charles Soule.

Deacon Williams was the teacher at Punta Gorda's new one-room school — now part of the residence at the southeast corner of Marion Ave. and Harvey St. His home, though was at Arcadia. It is probable that he and Deacon J.A. McHargue were members of the Presbyterian church there but living at the time of the census in Punta Gorda. Williams thereafter became a lawyer at Bartow but after a short stint returned to teaching at Fort Myers.

McHargue became a member of First Presbyterian Punta Gorda and signed the church Articles of Incorporation 18 months later. He was dismissed by letter of transfer to the Presbyterian Church at Moultrie, Ga., in 1900. Mrs. Mattie Aull was the wife of Eugene Patrick Aull, manager of the National Hotel at Cleveland, Fla. Mrs. Barry was a widow living at Charlotte Harbor Town. Other signers of the charter left no records of property and are missing from the 1900 census of Punta Gorda, Cleveland and Charlotte Harbor Town.

In the *Herald* church notices of January 1896, Presbyterians are noted as meeting Sundays at Jack's Hall — the second floor over a bakery on Marion Ave. — now site of the City Hall parking lot.

At a congregational meeting in Jack's Hall on Jan. 29, trustees were elected to acquire and hold property. They were R.E. Coffelt, J.B. Noyes, Dr. J.M. Samuel M.D., Miss Juleien Soule and Mrs. J. Mizell the wife of Postmaster Joshua Mizell. The minutes recorded that "it was agreed and understood that Mrs. Mizell should hold office as a trustee on condition she become an enrolled member of the church in Punta Gorda," which she did.

Coffelt and Noyes disappear from church records thereafter. Their memberships at First Presbyterian had been validated by letters of transfer from churches at their previous locations.

The fledgling church took its first steps toward obtaining a sanctuary and a resident pastor a year later. At a meeting in January 1897, it was decided to make an effort to have services twice a month. Rev. C.E. Jones was elected "stated supply minister" to preach on that basis. The congregation pledged to raise \$150 per year for the minister and asked the Board of Missions to provide another \$250. The arrangements were approved. Rev. Jones came twice a month to preach, pray and administer sacraments.

During an evening service at the Baptist Church a month later, Dr. Samuel, a 55-year-old widower, formerly of Tennessee, was elected an Elder. Three days later Col. John C. Pepper, a retired lawyer from Chicago, was elected a Trustee.

The church was incorporated in accordance with the laws of Florida in May 1897. Finally, in July 1898, The Rev. Clarence H. Ferran was called to become the first full-time pastor. Trustee Pepper was elected Elder. Both he and previously-elected Elder Samuel were ordained. Rev. Ferran set about building a sanctuary. At a congregational meeting held after prayer services in June 1900, five trustees were elected. They were Col. Pepper, Dr. Samuel, James R. Elliott, Charles E. Midget a carpenter, and Bruce Wade a druggist. These, with the addition of Belton Bassett, were appointed a building committee.

During that summer and fall, an "every-member-canvas" was conducted. Contributions were received also from friends in Arcadia, Eustis, Orlando, Illinois and Indiana. The Presbytery Board of Church Construction gave \$975.

With these funds, the lot upon which the church now stands was purchased for \$250 from Mrs. Isaac (Virginia) Trabue. A few years later she donated an adjoining lot for a pastors' residence though she was a charter member of the Good Shepherd Episcopal Church.

Construction of the frame church building began in Dec. 1900. It was completed four months later amidst a field of palmettos and dedicated April 14, 1901. Rev. Keigwin delivered the dedicatory sermon from Psalms 87:3 — "Glorious things are spoken of Thee, O city of God." Dedicatory prayer was offered by Pastor C.H. Ferran. Elder Pepper reported the church was completed at a cost of \$5,000 — and, in good Scot tradition, free of debt.

Rev. Ferran continued to push for church improvements, as reported in August the following year by the *Herald*: "A fine organ for the Presbyterian Sunday School was received this week. Pastor C.H. Ferran bought the instrument while he was passing through Jacksonville. The money was donated by J.M. Cameron, consulting engineer for the Consolidated Ice Company." Rev. Ferran served until Sept. 1903 when he accepted a call at Lake City, Fla.

The first sanctuary and steeple, withstood many storms until Hurricane Donna hit Sept. 10, 1960. This time, the steeple gave way. Rev. Reese Y. Henderson and Trustee President James Taylor discovered another misfortune which they disclosed in a letter published by the *Herald*:

“Dear Friends: Hurricane Donna hit First Presbyterian a crippling blow. The steeple has blown over, and the roof uncovered in a number of places. Water damage was considerable, and the front doors blown in.

“The board of trustees thought we had coverage for this type of disaster. However, upon investigation we find that we are not covered. In fact, in all its 60-year history, the church has never carried windstorm insurance — a mistake now apparent to all.

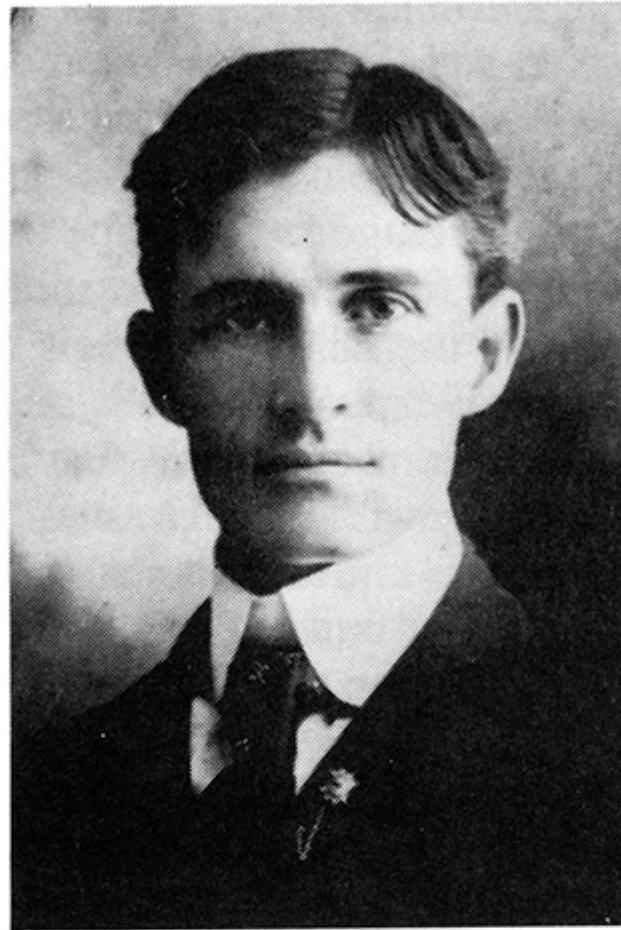
“However, that is not our immediate problem. We are desperately in need of major repairs and money with which to make them. Therefore, we are asking that members and friends make a sacrificial gift to the church so we may put our building back into operation. In the meantime, services will be held in the Community Hall at the Trailer Park on Nesbit St.”

Enough money was scraped together to cap the bell tower and repair the roof. The church bell was given to the Presbyterian Conference Center at Lake Alfred, Fla. Complete repairs were estimated to cost \$19,000. The congregation elected to try and raise money for a completely new sanctuary. The drive started in March 1961. Fire started by spontaneous combustion of painting rags in the Sunday School wing hastened building plans.

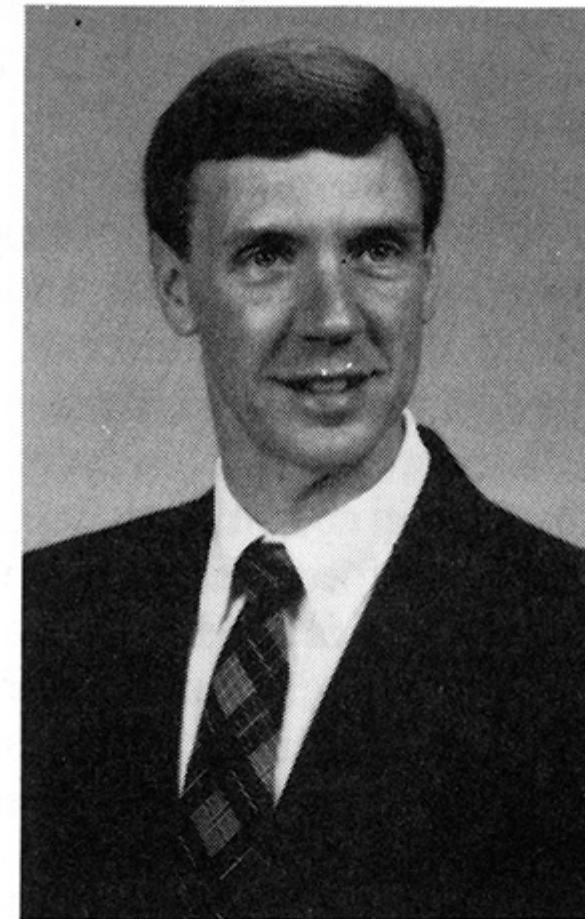
The new church, in modern A-frame style, was dedicated March 4, 1962. It incorporated the original chancel and window featuring an anchor, reflecting the church's beginning in a fishing village.

Over the years, First Presbyterian has been blessed with the services of 29 other pastors after Rev. Ferran. Most stayed only for brief periods in the early years. However, The Rev. Dr. J.H. Albert served from Oct. 1912 through 1917; The Rev. Dr. Larimore C. Denise served 1948-1952 inclusive; and Rev. Alexander Linn was pastor 1952-56. The Rev. Dr. Fred H. Buchholtz, father of Mrs. Vernon (Edna Jane) Peebles, of Punta Gorda served from Dec. 1945 through June 1947. Rev. Reese Y. Henderson holds the record for service — from March 1959 until his retirement Dec. 31, 1984.

Rev. James Nelson Latta, the present pastor, has served since April 1986 — the second-longest tenure. He will accept a call at Anderson, SC, Nov. 1, 1995. Under his leadership, the congregation has grown steadily and raised funds for the addition of bell tower, steeple, stained glass window of Jesus calming troubled waters, and an earth pendulum demonstrating God's power in the universe. With this demonstration of faith, the congregation is poised for another century of “ministry and mission” at Punta Gorda.



Rev. Clarence H. Ferran



Rev. James Nelson Latta

Historical Highlights

BY ELDER GLADWIN UNRAU

THE FIRST DECADE 1895-1905

Early in September, 1895, Mr. R. E. Coffelt of Punta Gorda wrote to Rev. Henry Keigwin of Orlando, Florida, requesting steps be taken to organize a Presbyterian Church in Punta Gorda.

Rev. George Case was sent to Punta Gorda on September 25 to evaluate the situation. He spent one week calling on families in Punta Gorda and Charlotte Harbor. He took the names of sixteen persons to a petition for organizing a church. The petition was presented to the Presbytery of South Florida in session at Dunnellon on October 1, 1895, and that body appointed Rev. Henry Keigwin and Rev. George Case to meet to organize a church. They spent about two weeks in evangelistic labors and organized a church on Sunday, October 13, 1895. On this Sunday Mr. R. E. Coffelt and Mr. J. B. Noyes were installed as Ruling Elders. Mr. Keigwin preached the sermon and proposed the constitutional questions and Mr. Case delivered the charge to the Elders and the Church.

The Church was declared duly organized under the style and title of "THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA," under the care of the Presbytery of South Florida of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Rev. Case was left in Punta Gorda as Missionary in charge of the Church.

The following eleven persons were enrolled as charter members:

R. E. Coffelt	Mrs. Maltie Aull
Mrs. Olive V. Coffelt	Mrs. P. J. Barry
J. B. Noyes	Mrs. E. J. Soule
Jas. W. Carter	Miss J. E. Soule
James Irwin	Charles A. Soule
Mrs. Nellie Swift	

Members of the First Presbyterian Church of Punta Gorda held a meeting in Jack's Hall on Wednesday, January 29, 1896 to appoint trustees to acquire and hold property for the Punta Gorda Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, namely: R. E. Coffelt, J. B. Noyes, J. M. Samuel, M.D., Miss Julien Soule and Mrs. J. Mizell. Mrs. Mizell should hold office on condition that she become a member of the Church.

At a meeting of the Congregation on January 18, 1897, it was decided to have services twice a month. Rev. C. J. Jones was elected to preach to the Congregation. It was also decided to report to the Board of Missions that this congregation would raise \$150 per year for the minister. The Board of Missions was asked to provide \$250 for 1897 preaching. During an evening service at the Baptist Church on February 7, 1897, Dr. J. M. Samuel, M.D., was elected to the office of Elder. At an evening meeting on February 10, 1897, the trustees formerly elected were re-elected. In addition, Col. J. C. Pepper was elected trustee.

On May 25, 1897, the First Presbyterian Church of Punta Gorda, Florida, was incorporated as a non-profit corporation by the Circuit Court of Desoto County. (In 1986 it was discovered that the State no longer had a record of the original charter. Therefore, old court house records had to be searched and articles of re-incorporation filed. Finally, on January 27, 1987, Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State of Florida. The name of this corporation is FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA, INC.)

On Saturday, July 16, 1898, the Congregation met at the close of evening services to elect Col. J. C. Pepper as Elder. Dr. J. M. Samuel and Col. Pepper were ordained and installed. Rev. Clarence H. Ferran became the first full-time minister and served as Stated Supply for five years.

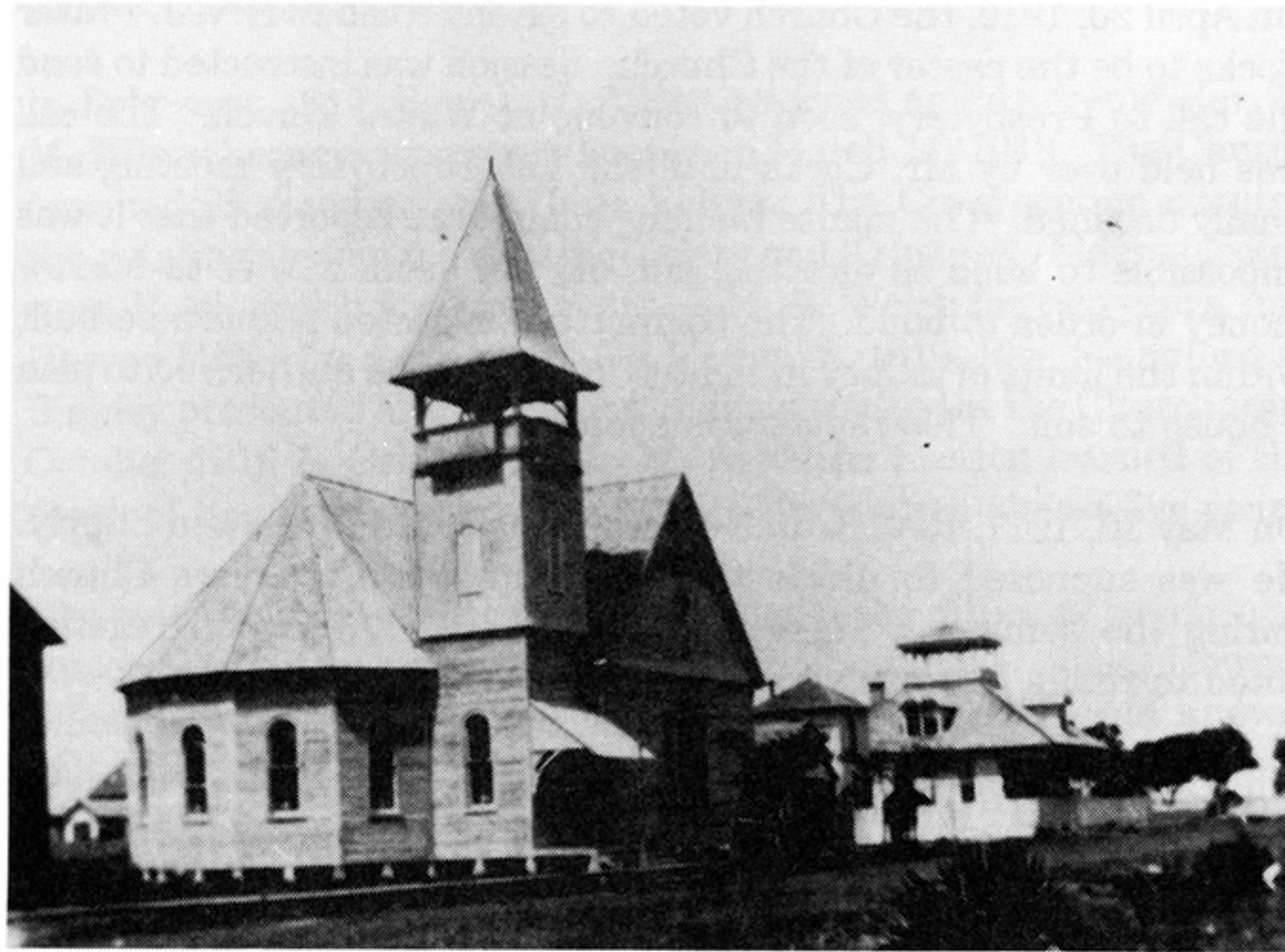
On June 18, 1900 the Congregation elected J. M. Samuel, Charles. E. Midgett, and Bruce M. Wade as Trustees. With the addition of Belton Bassett, this formed the building committee to solicit funds, select a site, and provide for the building of a church during the coming year. Funds were solicited during summer and fall from members and friends. Liberal contributions were also received from friends in Arcadia, Eustis, and Orlando, Florida, and from Illinois and Indiana. The Church Board of Construction provided \$975.

The lot where the church stands was purchased from Isaac H. and Virginia Trabue for \$250. The erection of the building was begun the last of December, 1900, and completed early April 1901. On April 14, 1901, the building was dedicated to the Worship of God. Rev. Henry Keigwin gave the dedicatory sermon from Psalms 87:3, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O City of God." Rev C. H. Ferran offered the dedicatory prayer. Elder John C. Pepper reported the church completed at a cost of \$5,000 and dedicated free of debt.

In September, 1903, Rev. C. H. Ferran was granted a release as Stated Supply to take up work in Lake City, Florida. Then in March, 1904, the Congregation approved employing Rev. Henry Broad as Stated Supply for one year. Later in March, the Congregation considered the refusal of Arcadia Church to join the Punta Gorda Church in calling Rev. H. Broad, but decided to retain Mr. Broad.

After a prayer meeting on February 13, 1905, the Congregation elected J. A. Roberts and J. M. Weeks as Elders. It was proposed to raise \$300 during the year to reduce the amount received from the Board of Missions.

Rev. H. Broad accepted a call to Starke, thus on November 26, 1905, the Congregation invited Rev. H. Keigwin to be Stated Supply after April 1, 1906. An invitation to Rev. A. S. Badger, Waukesha, Wisconsin, was approved for the winter for \$30 per month.



THE SECOND DECADE 1906-1915

In early 1907, the Congregation approved retaining Rev. Keigwin until a permanent pastor was secured. Then on August 28, 1907, Rev. A. S. Badger was invited to fill the pulpit during the winter and asked Mr. Iobe to come in the Spring with a view to settlement.

On July 22, 1908, the Congregation elected as Elders E. W. Smith, H. R. Dreggors, and B. W. Wade. However, Mr. Dreggors declined.

A committee of Rev. J. Fraser Cocks, chairman, B. W. Wade, H. W. Smith, and Mrs. M. K. Rankin were elected on February 23, 1910, to consider building a manse. This committee reported on March 2, 1910, that the Congregation build at once a manse to cost not more than \$1,200. The house was to be two stories, six rooms and a kitchen, lath and plaster finish. The work was to be done by day labor, if possible, and the committee could borrow \$400, if necessary, from the manse fund. A committee of five was to be elected at this meeting, and its membership was to be composed of some of the Trustees of the church. This report was adopted and the committee elected: H. R. Dreggors, B. W. Wade, Mrs. M. K. Rankin, Mrs. E. S. Smith, and J. M. Weeks.

On April 20, 1910, the Church voted to extend a call to Rev. J. Fraser Cocks to be the pastor of the Church. Session was instructed to send the call to Presbytery, soon to convene at Winter Haven. The call was held over by Mr. Cocks until the Fall Presbytery meeting and finally declined. The manse building committee reported that it was impossible to build as directed, and did not deem it wise to borrow money in order to build. The committee suggested a house be built within the limits of money in sight (\$1,000), and be authorized to plan a house to suit. This report was adopted.

On May 10, 1911, Rev. K. L. New was considered for Stated Supply. He was supposed to divide the time with the Ft. Myers Church during the summer. Then on October 1, 1911, the Congregation voted to retain Rev. New for the winter.

The Congregation met on May 15, 1912, to elect H. L. Dotson as Elder to fill vacancy of B. W. Wade. Five trustees were elected: J. H. Lipscomb, J. R. Elliott, H. R. Dreggors, T. S. Delk and H. N. Smith. After evening services on May 26, 1912, by Presbytery Pastor/Evangelist Rev. R. W. Edwards, the members agreed with Mr. Edwards suggestion to invite Rev. W. T. Morgan to be the pastor. Mr. Morgan accepted and began the second Sunday in June. After a fruitful five months Mr. Morgan closed his work at this Church on October 27, 1912. The manse was finally built and ready for occupancy in June, 1912. It was built on a lot presented to the Church by Mrs. Virginia T. Trabue, located across the street from the Church. The house was a two story, seven-room residence with lath and plaster finish costing \$1,200.

The Congregation elected A. B. Tucker as Ruling Elder on February 12, 1913, and set the Pastor's salary at \$900 for the year (Church \$600 and Mission Society \$300). On May 14, 1913, Rev. J. H. Albert, D.D. was called as Pastor for the coming year.

On March 4, 1914, the Congregation requested \$200 from Presbytery to add to \$750 from the Church for the Pastor's salary for the coming year. Due to Mr. Albert's vacation, the Church would be without a supply minister in August. In April, 1915, the Congregation called Mr. Albert for the year. Salary for the summer was \$50 and \$60 in the fall. A request for \$200 from Presbytery was made.

THE THIRD DECADE 1916-1925

In February, 1917, Rev. J. H. Albert resigned as Pastor and Rev. S. M. Wilson became temporary supply on March 17, 1918. The Church now had 88 members and three Elders. The Congregation adopted the rotating system for electing Elders and Trustees. Elders elected were E. W. Smith for three years, John A. Welch for two years, and Harvey Miller for a one year. On March 16, 1919, Rev. Stanford B. Binkley presented his resignation, having worked at the Church from October 1918 to October 1919. In April the Session learned of the death of Rev. J. H. Albert, who served the Church almost five years.

The records indicate that the Session had some difficulty acquiring a pastor, especially needed for the tourist season. Rev. Howard Billman, D.D., served during 1920, but exact dates are not known. Later Rev. J. H. Sutherland became the Pastor and served from July 25, 1920, until January, 1922. The Congregation voted to increase the number of Elders from three to five on February 28, 1921. J. A. Welch and J. M. Weeks were re-elected for three years. A. B. Tucker and H. R. Dreggors were elected for two years and Jonathan Skipper elected for one year.

Records for February 15, 1922, show Rev. Francis A. Kerns served as Supply Minister from 1922 to 1923. Then from April, 1923, to November, 1923, Rev. N. F. Meirs served as Stated Supply. There were 80 communicants, and 108 enrolled in Sunday School. On November 18, 1923, Session requested that Rev. Alexander Linn be installed as Pastor with a salary of \$125 per month for ten months and have two months vacation with no salary but use of the manse.

The Clerk of Session noted March 30, 1924, that the Church had become self-supporting for the first time. As a mission church, First Presbyterian had received financial support from the Board of Missions for its first 30 years.

Rev. Alexander Linn resigned to engage in field work for the Board on National Missions in South Florida effective April 1, 1925. The Church decided to call Rev. W. S. Bingham, D.D., as Stated Supply for one year, starting September 1, 1925. Rev. Lewis A. Worley would preach until then.

THE FOURTH DECADE 1926-1935

The Congregation met on March 31, 1926, to elect A. B. Tucker and W. T. Oliver as Elders for three years. On March 29, 1927, Session reported 80 resident members, 7 associate, and 18 non-resident members for a total of 105. Receipts for the year were \$3,324. Expenses were \$3,050. Elders J. M. Weeks and J. A. Welch were re-elected, and a motion to add an elder was approved. H. W. Smith was elected for one year.

At the annual meeting on April 10, 1928, Session reported 105 members and receipts of \$2,508. On December 16, 1928, the Congregation met to accept Rev. W. S. Bingham's resignation. On March 31, 1929, the Congregation voted to call Rev. James A. Callen as Stated Supply for one year. A. B. Tucker and Walter L. Jones were elected as Elders. A seventh Trustee was added. The Clerk of Session reported 104 members, 5 Elders, 7 Deacons, and receipts of \$1,648 with expenditures of \$1,466. It was noted that the Church attendance was growing steadily each month, so on September 8, 1929, Session appointed a reception committee to obtain the names of all newcomers at each service and extend an invitation to "come again." At the annual meeting April 3, 1930, Charles Cerny and W. T. Oliver were elected Elders. J. H. Miller was elected Elder to fill an unexpired term. Rev. J. A. Callen was retained for another year. In April, 1931, the Congregation elected Rev. J. A. Callen as Stated Supply. The number of Trustees was reduced from seven to five.

On February 14, 1932, Session approved the Pastor's salary at \$1,200 for the next year. However, Rev. Callen was about \$250 deficient, thus the Ladies Aid Society assisted in back salary in April, 1932. At the Annual Congregational Meeting of April 11, 1932, A. B. Tucker, W. H. Frederick, Jr., and Paul Eddy were elected as Elders for three years. In June, 1932, a student pastor was welcomed and assured full cooperation. Later in September, Mr. R. D. Dodge was recommended to take over the pastorate on September 25, however, Mr. Dodge would not accept a period of more than three months. Rev. Henry E. Hale, III, D.D., a Princeton graduate, could be secured for an indefinite period and he agreed to come. On October 2, 1932, the Session received Mr. Hale. At the Annual Meeting on April 2, 1933, Rev. H. E. Hale was unanimously elected Pastor for one year. Also re-elected as Elder was Charles Cerny. By action of the Presbytery, on April 27, 1933, Rev. H. E. Hale was named Pastor at a salary of \$550 per year. Elder J. H. Miller was re-elected for three years at



the annual Congregational meeting on March 28, 1934. In November, 1934, Rev. H. E. Hale requested dissolving the relationship between Mr. Hale and the Church.

At the Annual Meeting on March 27, 1935, the Congregation petitioned Presbytery to continue Rev. A. Claude Clever as a regular supply pastor. Earl E. Walker, A. B. Tucker, Paul Eddy, and Will Frederick were elected as Elders. Miss Norma Pepper was re-elected as Trustee, and Mrs. J. K. McClland was elected as a new Trustee. Mrs. Sophia Busselle was elected Sunday School Superintendent. In April, 1935, Session approved the Pastor's program for a Vacation Bible School for ten days beginning May 27. In May, 1935, Session approved joint evening services with the Methodist Church during June and July with the collection divided equally between the two churches. Brother K. Halister and Brother A. C. Clever were to preach alternately. Session decided to have only Sunday School during the Pastor's vacation.

Members of Session and wives were entertained with a turkey dinner at the manse by Rev. and Mrs. A. C. Clever on December 30, 1935.

THE FIFTH DECADE 1936-1945

The Annual Congregational Meeting followed the fellowship supper on March 25, 1936. Richard Rickenback gave a report of the Tuxis Club by the Junior Young People. Henry W. Smith was elected to Session. Mrs. H. W. Frederick, Jr., Mrs. Louise Troyer, and A. Rickenback were elected as Trustees. Mrs. Sophia Busselle was re-elected as Sunday School Superintendent. The Congregation voted to retain Rev. A. C. Clever for one year. At the April 11, 1936, meeting Session decided to invite Presbytery to hold the Fall meeting here. Session also approved a motion to have the annual Mother's Day Banquet on May 6 with the men fully in charge of the affair.

May 17, 1936, Session accepted with regret the request of the Rev. Clever to resign not later than May 31, due to his father's illness.

On June 21, 1936, the Congregation voted to call Dr. A. P. Vaughn as Stated Supply. Since he was not available during July, Professor Funderbunk was employed for July.

On April 5, 1937, the Trustees reported to the Congregation a gift of the lot on the north side of the Church, given by Captain and Mrs. A. B. Tucker. The property extends north to the alleyway. Dr. Arthur P. Vaughn gave details of his activities during past eight months. He had given sermons, addresses, or talks to general audiences, including general assemblies of the public high school every third week. Audiences totaled upward of 3,700. He also held the first meeting in Community Hall for the trailer population, and sent invitations to special services to members, members not in regular attendance, and friends. Dr. Vaughn considered Christian training of children in Sunday School to be the highest responsibility of the Church. Joint evening services were to be held with the Methodist Church during the summer months. The Congregation voted to retain Dr. Vaughn for the next year. The report to Presbytery listed 57 members and 87 Sunday School members.

The Session recorded the infant baptism of: Cora Ann, daughter of Joseph T. and Mary Glover Manning; Gussie Merle, daughter of Vasco and Lois Cole Peebles on Sept. 20, 1936; and Elizabeth Ann, daughter of Charles F. and Margret Goetz Cerny on Feb. 28, 1937. Session noted the death of Mrs. Eugenie Mizell on June 9, 1937. She was one of the oldest members (joined Feb. 16, 1898) and one of the first Trustees. Internment was at Pine Level Cemetery.

On June 27, 1937, the resignation of Dr. A. P. Vaughn, effective June 30, 1937, was accepted. Session approved Dr. W. G. Kennedy of Fort Myers to be the pulpit supply in July, and Rev. W. Randal Spurlock of Pinellas Park to serve in August, September, and the first Sunday in October.

On October 19, 1937, Rev. Dr. D. J. Williams was appointed as Stated Supply by joint action of the National Board of Mission, Southwest Presbytery, and the Session of the Church.

At a joint meeting on January 10, 1938, Session and the Trustees proposed a two-year (1938-39) budget of \$2,000.00 with \$450 coming from the National Board of Missions. The Pastor's Salary was increased from \$600 to \$750 per annum. An every-member canvass committee including Sallie Jones, Chair, A. B. Tucker, Norma Pepper, and Miss Mayes was established.

(Note: In reviewing Session minutes one frequently notices the names of Norma Pepper, during the early years, and later, Sallie Jones, and Lois Peeples, indicating that these ladies were deeply involved with activities of the Church and Sunday School.)

At a Congregational meeting on April 4, 1938, approval was given to create a Board of Deacons. The five Deacons elected were C. L. Frederick, D. F. Gibbens, Joseph L. Manning, Paul Tucker, and Fred S. Williams. Increasing the number of Trustees from five to seven was approved. The Trustees elected were Miss Cerna Pepper, Mrs. J. K. McClland, C. J. Cerny, Vasco Peeples, and H. W. Smith. Elected as Elders were C. W. Moore and J. Z. Neville. A. B. Tucker was elected as an Elder for life. Dr. D. J. Williams was called as Pastor for the ensuing year. Dr. Williams reported 22 new members were added in the last six months.

In 1939 the Church was entitled to send a commissioner to the General Assembly meeting in Philadelphia. Mr. H. W. Smith was chosen to represent Southwest Presbytery.

In March, 1939, the Congregation elected D. F. Gibbons as an Elder. Elders H. W. Smith and W. H. Frederick were re-elected. The Congregation unanimously called Dr. D. J. Williams to extend his service.

In August, 1939, Session sent condolences to Mrs. A. B. Tucker expressing appreciation for her husband's many years of service and sympathy at his passing.

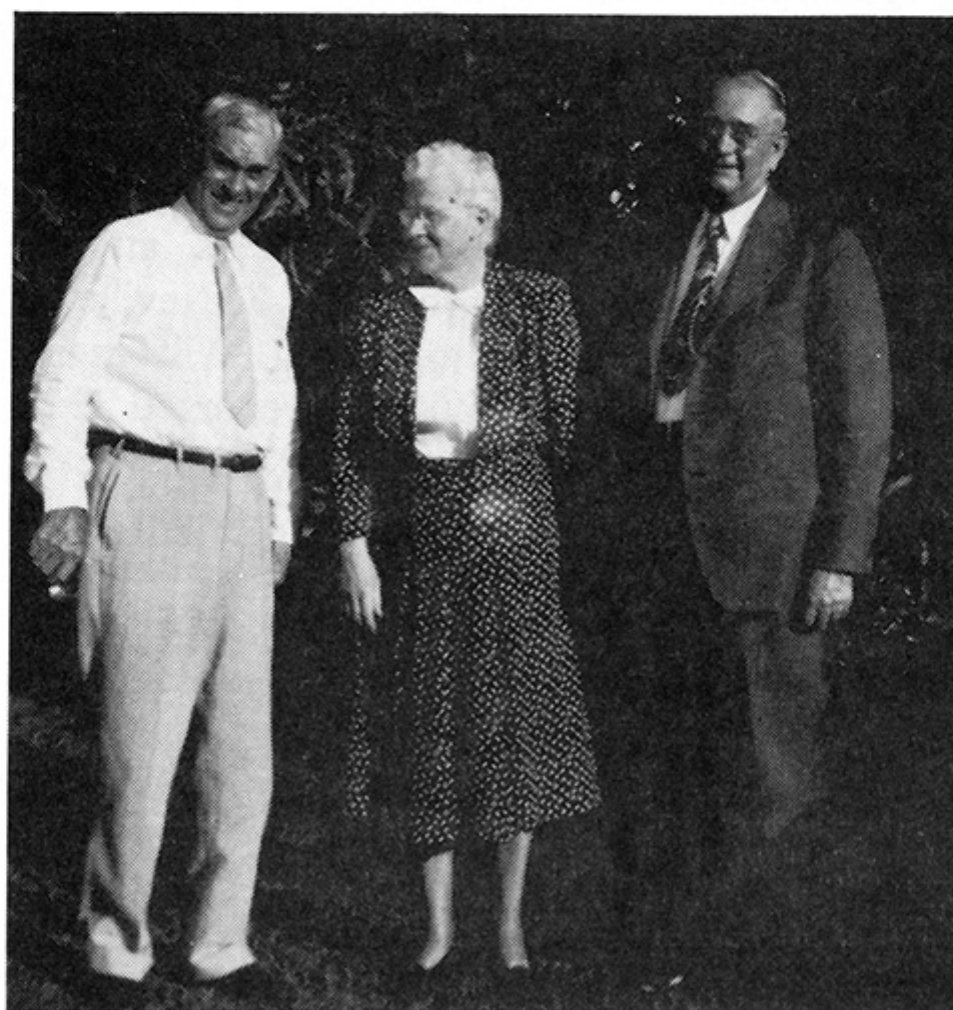
December 18, 1939, Session approved holding joint services with the Methodists and Baptists on New Year's Eve at the Methodist Church.

The budget for 1940 of \$2,065 was adopted by the Session and Board of Trustees at a joint meeting on January 3, 1940. Securing a janitor for the church was also approved.

After being examined on March 18, 1940, three boys, John Carl Cerny, Vernon Elmo Peebles, and Jimmie A. Kelly were received into membership by Session.

At the Annual Congregational Meeting on April 3, 1940, Dr. D. J. Williams was invited to return after his summer vacation. The Church now had 92 members.

Mr. A. Rickenback and J. S. Manning were elected as Elders at the Annual Congregational meeting on April 8, 1941. Session records noted "no Session meetings held for the year now closing".



Elder Emmett Perkins, Mrs. White, Rev. Carl White

On August 13, 1941, the Congregation unanimously called Dr. Carl H. White to fill the pulpit beginning September 1, 1941, at a salary of \$1,350 per annum with a month's vacation.

In October, 1941, Session approved the revival of the Men's Brotherhood and asked the ladies to put on a supper for them near the 20th of November.

On the 10th of November, 1941, Session members and their wives met at the Manse for a wonderful supper served by the Pastor and his wife. Matters of the Church were discussed, and while no official action was taken, it was "one of the best meetings in a long time."

Session designated March 1942 as "Go to Church Month" and all Elders were to help the Pastor get all members to attend.

The Annual Congregational Meeting on April 1, 1942, received the reports of various organizations and re-elected H. W. Smith, D. F. Gibbons, and W. H. Fredrick as Elders. The question of electing lady Deacons for the year was referred to Session. The Secretary was instructed to write a letter of appreciation to Miss Norma Pepper for her many years of service as a Trustee.

In September, 1942, Session approved calling every member of the Church to invite them to attend World Wide Communion on October 4. Session also approved the purchase of Testaments for each man in military service from this Church and the making of an Honor Roll of members and sons of members who were in the Armed Forces of the United States.

In April, 1943, the Congregation voted to increase the number of Elders from five to six, and in May a meeting was called by Dr. C. H. White to present his resignation.

On March 29, 1944, the Congregation approved a motion to reduce the request from the National Board of Missions from \$500 to \$400 for the next year. Finances were in good shape and all indebtedness paid to date. Session approved that Dr. R. L. Offield remain as Supply during June and July and extended an invitation to Dr. Offield to return in September if conditions permitted.

At the March, 1945, Annual Congregational Meeting, Dr. L. G. Baugher and W. H. Fredrick were elected as Elders. Then in April,

1945, the Session and Trustees decided to connect the Church building to City water and to sell the water tank.

In August, 1945, Dr. Offield indicated that he expected to return.

The Session on September 19, 1945, decided to request Dr. F. H. Buchholtz to come to Punta Gorda from Caldwell, New Jersey, for two Sundays. Session decided to request permission from Southwest Presbytery to sell the manse and build a new one. The Trustees and Session decided the selling price would be \$6,000.

On October 25, 1945, the Congregation decided to call Dr. F. H. Buchholtz as Pastor at a salary of \$1,800 per annum (Church to pay \$1,400 and National Board of Missions to pay \$400), plus free use of the manse and participation in the Service Pension Plan. The Installation of Dr. Buchholtz was held on December 5, 1945, with the sermon delivered by Rev. W. M. Johnson. Charges were given by Dr. White to the Congregation and by Dr. J. T. Wherry to the Pastor.

THE SIXTH DECADE 1946-1955

The Congregational meeting on April 3, 1946, elected F. T. Gardner as Elder, and as Trustees, J. T. Rose and Wallace King (3 yrs.), L. G. Baugher, (2 yrs.), and Vasco Peeples, (1 yr.). A motion to sell the manse for \$6,300 was approved. Then on May 1, 1946, Session and the Trustees decided to take the manse off of the market. A \$1,000 maximum estimate for plastering the Church was given by C. P. Wilhelm. Session decided to discontinue services during the repairs, and Dr. Buchholtz would vacation at this time.

In December 1946, Session wanted to investigate the purchase of government buildings to complete the Sunday School building.

On April 2, 1947, the Congregation elected E. L. Perkins and Wallace King as Elders. Vasco Peeples was re-elected as a Trustee. The Sunday School reported \$60 given for lepers, of which \$30 was earned by little Gussie Peeples.

The Congregation met on August 6, 1947, to dissolve the pastoral relationship between Dr. Buchholtz and First Presbyterian Church. Dr. Buchholtz submitted his resignation to accept a call from the church at Coral Gables.



Sunday school wing dedicated to Othelia Bishop, May 6, 1956

On January 4, 1948, Session agreed to secure the services of Dr. Larimore C. Denise who was available as a Supply for four months. Dr. Denise will be here on Sunday January 18, 1948.

Following dinner in the Church parlor, the Congregation held the annual meeting and elected as Elders, L. G. Baugher and W. H. Frederick for three years and Vasco Peeples for two years. Deacons elected were: Mrs. Wallace E. King and Mrs. E. L. Perkins (3 yrs.), Mrs. Frank Gardner and Miss Nell Reed (2 yrs.), and Vernon Peeples and Edward H. Scott (1 yr). Trustees elected were: Mrs. W. H. Frederick, Jr. (3 yrs.), and W. H. Sharp and H. S. Garnett (2 yrs). The Congregation voted to invite Presbytery to meet in Punta Gorda on April 14-15, 1948.

In April 1948, Session asked Dr. Denise to remain after the four months previously agreed on and he agreed to act as Stated Supply for another year. Dedication of the new Sunday School Room was held Sunday April 25, 1948. Over \$1,700 was subscribed on Dedication Day. Speakers at evening service were Rev. F. H. Buchholtz, Rev. Carl H. White and Rev. M. E. Myer, Chairman of the local Ministerial Association, who brought the greetings. The Men's

Chorus from Arcadia Presbyterian Church gave a sacred concert and the Women's Association served refreshments to all after the service.

Session met on May 23, 1948, to note the death of Wm. H. Frederick, Jr., Clerk of Session, and Elder John M. Weeks. Mr. Weeks joined in February 1901 and was an active Elder most of the time from 1905 to 1929, and Clerk of Session from 1905 to 1912 and 1919 to 1929. He attained the age of 90 years. Mr. Frederick joined the Church in May 1930 and was ordained as Elder in April 1932, serving as Clerk of Session from 1932 until the time of his death at age 65.

In June the Congregation met to elect E. L. Perkins to fill the unexpired term of Elder Frederick. Session voted to dispense with preaching services during July and August but Sunday School was to be continued. Following dinner served by the ladies of the Church, the Congregation held their annual meeting. The active membership on January 1, 1949, was 102. The Sunday School membership was 68. Motions were approved to request Dr. and Mrs. Denise to remain indefinitely and also be given \$150 per month. Terry Gardner was elected as Elder. John T. Rose, Jr. and George Sanderhoff were elected as Trustees. Deacons elected were Mrs Charles Brunk and Mrs. C. F. Cartwright.

In June, 1949, Session decided there would be no services during July and August while Dr. Denise was away. Nine boys and girls have signed up to attend Summer conference.

At the annual Congregational meeting, held after dinner served by the ladies Jan. 18, 1950, the Session reported a total of 107 members and Sunday School had 64 enrolled with an average attendance of 37.

The objective for 1949 was purchasing an organ, which was bought in May. Fund raisers included bazaars, food sales, teas, waffle suppers, and rummage sales. One social each month contributed to the organ fund. Dr. Denise reported an increase from 79 to 107 in membership during the past two years, all from Charlotte county except those in service of the Country. Elders elected were Vasco Peeples and C. C. Brunk. Trustees elected were W. H. Sharp, H. S. Garnett and E. B. Mann. Nellie Reed and Mrs. Charles F. Cerny were elected as Deacons. Dr. L. C. Denise was asked to serve as long as able.

In June, 1949, Dr. Denise recommended Gussie Peeples, Ann Rose, Lois Peeples, Cora Ann Manning, Glenda Paterau, and Elizabeth



Original sanctuary with anchor window

Cerny to attend High School Camp. The Treasurer is to arrange for room, board, and transportation to Lake Alfred. Delegates to the Young Peoples Conference at Grinnell, Iowa, were George Sanderhoff and Beal Johnson.

The dedication of the new Wurlitzer Organ was held on Sunday, October 8, 1950.

The Congregational meeting in January, 1951, noted a total of 118 members. The Women's Association shipped 175 lbs. of clothing for overseas relief and arranged to have flowers put in the Church each Sunday. Sunday School had a total of 99, including eight teachers. The Westminster Fellowship held regular meetings each Sunday evening; held several suppers to purchase cloth for making robes for the Youth Choir, which held practices twice a week beginning in August; and sponsored a Halloween costume party with 40 attending. The Fellowship also arranged for a picture in technicolor of Dr. Baugher mowing the beautiful Church lawn. Elders elected were Wallace E. King and Mrs. Anna B. Frederick. Mrs. Wallace E. King and Mrs. E. L. Perkins were elected as Deacons. Trustees elected were Miss Sally Jones and E. L. Perkins.

In February, 1951, Session noted the death of Dr. L. G. Baugher who was an Elder, Trustee, and Treasurer of the Church. He also was a



Rev. Denise and Teen Age Choir

member of the City Commission and Mayor of Punta Gorda. Session noted his diligence in beautifying the grounds of the Church.

The 50th Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church Building was held on Sunday April 15, 1951 with Rev. Albert Pierce and Rev. Alexander Linn attending.

Mr. Pierce, who supplied the pulpit in 1899, the summer of 1904, and again in 1908, had the longest service in Florida of any living pastor of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. He was Stated Clerk of Synod for 23 years and served as pastor of Green Cove Springs Church for over 34 years and was then Pastor Emeritus. Rev. Alexander Linn began his pastorate of our Church in 1922. Only Mr. H. R. Dreggors and Mrs. Mabel Pepper Weeks, two of the original members 50 years ago were still living. Representatives of people living in Punta Gorda at the time the Church was built attended the anniversary services. Dr. Smith Harden, pastor of the Punta Gorda Methodist Church at the time the First Presbyterian Church was dedicated gave the address, "The Look Backward".

In September, 1951, Session noted the need of a minister after Dr. Denise retired from active ministerial work on January 15, 1952. Rev. Alexander Linn of Englewood tentatively agreed to fill the pulpit. The Congregation accepted the services of Rev. Lin for one year. Salary was \$1,800 per year, use of the manse, and \$25 per month for

car use, and one month vacation. Session decided that Dr. Denise purchase a plaque to hold the Honor Roll of Service Personnel.

The Congregational meeting on January 9, 1952, noted a membership of 121. Elders elected were Mrs. W. H. Frederick and F. T. Gardner; Deacons elected were Mrs. Brunk and Mrs. Cartwright; and Trustees elected were J. T. Rose, Jr. and George Sanderhoff.

Dr. A. J. Tamshamy, Evangelist, from the Synod of Kansas concluded a series of meetings from December 30 to January 6 with 1,083 in attendance, or an average of 108 each service. Two hundred ten dollars was given in collections. Dr. Denise reported nine duffel bags of clothes were sent to Korea.

Mr. Guy Cambell was elected as Trustee and Vernon Peeples was elected as Elder on May 4, 1952, and ordained the next Sunday.

On January 14, 1953, the Congregation elected C. C. Brunk and Vasco Peeples as Elders. Mrs. Margaret Cerny and C. E. Swisshelm were elected as Deacons. H. S. Garnett and Frank Smoak, Jr., were elected Trustees. Church membership was 125.

On December 16, 1953, the Congregation accepted a new Charter for the Church. This Charter changed the amount of property the First Presbyterian Church could own. Officers elected were Wallace King, E. L. Perkins, Dr. Robert H. Shedd, and Miss Sallie Jones as Elders; Mrs. Wallace King and Mrs. E. L. Perkins as Deacons.



Rev. Linn and teacher Ruth Perkins, second from right, with Easter 1953 Sunday School.

On March 21, 1954, the Congregation authorized the Board of Trustees to proceed with the building of an addition to the Church for classrooms, and to purchase pews as funds permitted .

In April, Session decided to request Presbytery to appoint the Rev. Alexander Linn as our Supply Pastor for the next six months.

On June 13, 1954, the Congregation authorized the Trustees to obtain a loan of \$2,500 but in no case to exceed \$5,000, to finish the building project.

In June, 1954, Session decided to assist with the Youth Program Conference expenses of Cora Manning, Ann Rose, and Marj Whitaker, as well as the expenses of Miss Manning to attend General Conference Youth Fellowship.

In September Session again recommended to Presbytery that Rev. Alexander Linn serve as Stated Supply for the next six months.

A Congregational meeting on October 24, 1954, was called to approve the changing of the Harvey Street entrance to the middle of the Church and to make the present entrance into an office or study.

On January 2, 1955, the Congregation elected Mrs. W. H. Frederick and F. T. Gardner as Elders and J. T. Rose, Jr., George Sanderhoff, Jamison Brandon, and Richard Neal as Trustees. Deacons elected were Mrs. Brunk and Mrs. Cartwright.

In February, 1955, Session again asked Presbytery to re-appoint Rev. Linn for another six months.

In August, 1955, Rev. Linn requested to hold Sunday Evening services during the winter months. Those meetings would include some films to be shown.

In October, 1955, the Congregation met to discuss the purchase of Mrs. Mabel Baugher's property on the corner of Harvey and Marion. Dr. Brandon reported on the condition of the house and changes needed to comply with building codes. The price was \$10,000, with \$2,500 down, \$100 monthly, at 5% interest. The changes needed might cost \$5,000 or more. By secret ballot the motion to buy the property was defeated.

THE SEVENTH DECADE 1956-1965

On Jan. 11, 1956, the Congregation elected Vasco Peeples and H. S. Garnett as Elders; Mrs. Margaret Cerny, Mrs. C. E. Swisshelm, Mrs. Frank Smoak, Jr., and Mrs. James Jessel as Deacons; and Frank Smoak, Jr. and James Jessel as Trustees. There were 144 members.

This Spring Session decided to give each High School graduate a white Bible. Session sent a letter of thanks for the new piano Dr. Robert Shedd donated for the Sunday School.

In June, 1956, Rev. Linn stated he wished to retire December 31, 1956, and would like re-appointment for the rest of the year.

On September 30, 1956, Dr. Robert Shedd, Chairman of the Pulpit Committee, reported to Session on two ministers interested in coming to First Presbyterian Church. It was agreed that Rev. Earl C. Downey would preach on October 14, 1956.

In October, 1956, Session reviewed Rev. Earl C. Downey's qualifications, history, and letters of recommendation, and agreed to present Mr. Downey to the Congregation. On October 21, 1956, the Reverend Earl C. Downey of South Miami, Florida, was unanimously called to serve for the coming year beginning January 1, 1957. Mr. Downey was 29 years old.

In November, 1956, Rev. Alexander Linn reported on repairs needed at the manse and the Trustees borrowed \$2,000 for 90 days for this work. Sunday School attendance was growing fast since using the annex, with over 100 on the roll.

The Congregational meeting December, 16, 1956, elected the following officers: George Sanderhoff and Frank Smoak, Jr., as Elders; Robert Shedd, Sallie Jones, Vernon Peeples, Paul Wedell, David Hill, John Jessel, Jr., and James Kelly, Jr., as Trustees; Mrs. F. T. Gardner and Mrs. Slicken as Deacons.

The installation service for Rev. Mr. E. C. Downey was held on February 17, 1957. Mr. Downey's father gave the installation sermon. Rev. Monty Johnson, Rev. Howard of Englewood Church, Rev. Montgomery of Ft. Myers, Dr. Smart of Ft. Myers, Rev. Bowers of Ft. Myers Beach, and an official of Presbytery participated.

In April, 1957, Session invited Presbytery to meet in Punta Gorda in September. Session also decided to join First Methodist for evening summer services and Youth Fellowship of both Churches to have union services. Joint Bible School would be announced later. Session approved the Women's Association plan for Fall and Winter suppers to generate funds.

On September 15, 1957, Session approved a budget of \$1,750 for the coming year. At the Congregational meeting, Vernon Peeples, Treasurer and Budget Committee Chair, presented the 1958 budget. Application to the Board of Missions to supplement the Minister's salary by \$600 per year was approved.

The Congregational meeting on January 15, 1958, approved nine elders. Elected for the class of 1958 were F. T. Gardner, Vasco Peeples and Mrs. W. H. Frederick; for the class of 1959, E. L. Perkins, Frank Smoak, Jr., and George Sanderhoff; for the 1960 class, Vernon Peeples, Mrs. Paul, and James Jessel. Elected to the Trustee-Deacons class of 1958 were Paul Wedell, David Hill, Mr. Loper, Sallie Jones, and Mr. Brannamen. Elected for 1960 were Mrs. Edwin Roundtree, Mr. Ruggles, Dale Baker, and Mr. Hull, making a 12 member Trustee-Deacon Board.

In February, 1958, Session approved forming a club to be known as the "Sunset Club" of the First Presbyterian Church, with members to be 50 years or older.

On April 14, 1958, Session established the Rev. Earl C. Downey Fund to take care of special needs for Mr. Downey and family due to sickness in the family. In June, Session called a Congregational meeting to release Rev. Downey as of July 31, 1958, and appoint a nominating committee to secure a new minister. Mr. Downey wished to be released due to his wife's health and also his father's health. Session approved two weeks vacation beginning July 10. Vernon Peeples, delegate to General Assembly, reported as of April 14, 1958, the name of the church would be "The First United Presbyterian Church U.S.A."

At a Session meeting, Rev. Earl Downey announced a joint meeting of Session and the Pulpit Committee to be moderated by Rev. John Montgomery of Ft. Myers. Session engaged Calvin Moss to be Choir Director from September until May 1959. Sunday School Curriculum Group was invited to meet at our Church on September 14, 1958.

Local school officials asked to use the Sunday School class rooms as class rooms. Session approved.

On July 30, 1958, the Pulpit Committee reported to Session on the names of applicants and dates and churches where the candidates would be delivering sermons.

In September, 1958, Session learned that the School Board had rented an old school house and would not need to use Church classrooms. Vasco Peeples was appointed Chair of a committee to carry on church affairs until a minister was obtained.

On January 4, 1959, the Congregation heard the report from the Pulpit Committee, Dr. Ralph Brandon, Chairman. The Committee was unanimous in recommending a call to Rev. Reese Y. Henderson of Louisville, Mississippi. Dr. Brandon made a motion to Rev. Henderson, Dr. Robert Shedd seconded the motion, and by ballot the Congregation approved the call.

The Trustees were authorized to proceed with the building of a new manse if Presbytery approved. Plans called for a three bedroom, two bath house to cost \$13,500 on a lot to be purchased for \$2,000 on West Marion and Berry Street. The old manse was to be sold for a minimum of \$8,000, and the money applied to the new manse.

On January 15, 1959, the Congregation elected as Elders for three years: Sallie Jones, Dr. Robert Shedd, and Ralph Brandon. Deacons-Trustees elected were Ralph Potter, Darwin Pearson, James Taylor, and Don Moody for three years; and Anna Frederick, Jack Thompson, and William Simpson for one year.

On February 15, 1959, Session approved Vernon Peeples as Clerk of Session and noted F. T. Gardner, delegate, and Anna Frederick, alternate, at Presbytery on January 20 to prosecute the call of Rev. Reese Y. Henderson. Session also invited Presbytery to meet at Punta Gorda on March 3, 1959, to receive Mr. Henderson in this Presbytery and to install him as minister of the Church. Presbytery approved the sale of the old manse and the building of a new one. When Presbytery met here to receive and install Mr. Henderson, the program would be as follows: Rev. Dickson, Moderator; Sermon, Rev. John Stump, Sarasota; Rev. John Montgomery, Ft. Myers, Scripture reading and prayer; Rev. Alexander Linn, Englewood, charge to the Congregation; and Rev. Miller, St. Petersburg, charge to the minister.

Session, meeting on March 12, 1959, approved establishing and sponsoring a Brownie Scout Troop in the Church.

On April 9, 1959, Session authorized Bill Crosland to be employed as organist at \$35 per month. In May, Session approved to pay half the expenses for six children to attend to summer camp or conferences.

At Session meeting on June 23, 1959, a proposal by the Presbytery Committee on National Missions for a program toward developing the Port Charlotte area was approved in principle. The proposal consisted of a part time associate minister for one year, with primary responsibility for determining the best approach to the future work of the church in Port Charlotte. Session authorized a part time secretary, salary not to exceed \$50 per month.

A Congregational meeting was called on September 3, 1959, to approve joining Southwest Presbytery's National Mission Committee to ratify the Rev. Mr. T. J. Simpson as a worker in the Port Charlotte area. Presbytery Moderator Rev. Stuart Dickson discussed a plan to engage the services of Rev. Thomas James Simpson, Arcadia, Florida, to call on people in Port Charlotte on a part time basis. The plan was to spend two days calling in Port Charlotte, plus Sundays at First Presbyterian Church, Punta Gorda. This Church would share in the ministry of Mr. Simpson, and aid in the payment of his salary. The Session would direct his activities. It was further understood by the National Missions Committee (S.W. Presbytery), Board of National Missions, and the Punta Gorda Church that the relationship was not permanent. The work would be reviewed within one year to determine future strategy. After a secret ballot vote, the Moderator declared the motion carried.

On September 30, 1959, Session approved 13 Sunday School Teachers assigned to nine classes. Twenty persons were received as members by the Session. A special Session meeting was called on November 20, 1959, to receive nineteen new members into the Church.

The Congregational meeting held on January 13, 1960, elected Vasco Peeples, Frank Hunter, and Conrad Theiss as Elders. Trustees-Deacons elected were Clyde W. Griffith, James Kelly, James Taylor, and Virgil C. White.

At a joint meeting of the Session and Trustees on March 15, 1959, the official name of the church was changed to read: The First United



After 1960 Hurricane Donna

Presbyterian Church of Punta Gorda. The Memorial Fund was to be administered by the Trustees. Session accepted the resignation of Edna Jane Peeples as Sunday School Superintendent.

In April, 1960, Session granted a request to form a Young Adult Sunday School Class. Vacation Church School would start the first two weeks after the end of school.

On Saturday, September 10, 1960, the Church received extensive damage from Hurricane Donna. Ten days later Session recommended that Trustees obtain costs of repairing the hurricane damage and obtain a sketch and general cost estimate of building a new church.

Ray Griffith presented sketches of a proposed new church building to a joint meeting of Session and Trustees on October 12, 1960.

In December, 1960, Earl Keltz, Finance Director, Synod of Florida, reported what aid could be expected from Synod and Board of Missions to compensate for the loss to the Church from Hurricane Donna. The loss was estimated to be \$19,000. Possible funding: (1) \$2,000 Contribution from individuals, (2) \$17,000 possible funding

from Synod and the Board of National Missions, (3) \$10,000 Loan from National Board at 4% and a 5 year moratorium, (4) \$23,000 Loan from Synod Corporation at 5% to be paid in 5 years. The Board of National Missions would put on a fund drive that was hoped to raise \$450 to \$500.

On January 11, 1961, the Congregation elected Robert Davis, Mrs. Edwin Roundtree, and Robert Crosland as Elders for three years. Mrs. Anna Frederick was elected to fill the unexpired term of Sallie Jones. Trustee-Deacons elected were Ruth Moore, Raymond Griffith, Mallery Sandridge, and David Hill.

The Building Committee's recommendation was to build a new building. A seven-man building committee was selected by the Congregation. The estimated cost for alterations and the new building was \$54,385. Session approved a building campaign to start March 9, 1961. A contribution of 3% of income, if possible, was requested of everybody.

In May, Session gave the church bell to the Conference Center. Due to the building program, there was no Vacation Bible School. Mrs. Edna Jane Peeples was appointed Sunday School Superintendent.

The last Service in the old Church was held on World Wide Communion Sunday in October, 1961. The chancel, pulpit, and pews of the original church were installed in the new building.

On January 24, 1962, the Congregation elected Mrs. W. H. Frederick, Darwin Pearson, and Claude Congdon as Elders. Omar Duff and James McLean were elected as Trustees. A separate Board of Deacons was elected: Mrs. Daniel Wasserman, Donald Moody, Bob Cerny, Frank Smoak, Mrs. Myrtle Lund, and Mrs. Harvey Stevens.

The part of the church that burned was completely covered by insurance and was paid in full.

The new Church, rebuilt on the same location, was dedicated March 4, 1962. The cost of the new structure was \$70,000.

In December, 1962, the United Presbyterian Women presented 52 chairs to the Church.

At the annual meeting on January 23, 1963, the Congregation elected



Frank Hunter, Clifford Ryan, and Vasco Peebles as Elders for three years, and Clyde Griffith for one year. Deacons elected were Mrs. Harry Stevens and Robert Cerny. Trustees elected were Dr. Robert Shedd, James Kelly, James Taylor, and Virgil White.

In April, 1963, Session approved setting up an organ fund.

Officers elected on January 22, 1964, at the annual Congregational meeting were Elders Raymond Muller and Mallony Sandridge for three years, and Charles Harmes for two years; Newman Mahaffy, Charles Applebach, John Clancy, Jr., and Ruth Moore were elected as Trustees; and Myrtle Eisele and Clarence L. Frederick were elected as Deacons.

In May, 1964, the Session and Trustees selected James Kelly, Chair, James McLean, Ralph Potter, Warren Eldrett, and Charles Harmes as a committee to canvass every family unit to obtain three-year pledges for the Building Fund.



The new sanctuary

On January 20, 1965, the Congregation elected as Elders Claude Congdon, Raymond Griffith, and Alice Goldsmith. James McLean was elected to fill the term of Frank Hunter. The Board of Trustees was increased from nine to twelve and Eldon McKean, Donald Moody, and Warren Eldrett were elected. Deacons elected were Mrs. Ann Hitchcock and Mrs. Madia Van Dyke. There were 228 active members on the church roll.

During Rev. Henderson's absence due to illness and possible eight to ten weeks convalescence, Rev. Floyd Hager, Dr. Fred Buchholtz, and Dr. J. B. Sloan were to fill vacancies.

On November 18, 1965, Session approved a motion to name and dedicate the Church Library as the MacCallum Memorial Library in honor of Mrs. Hartt's parents.

THE EIGHTH DECADE 1966-1975

The Congregation met on January 16, 1966, to elect Anna Frederick, James McLean, and Jack Garries as Elders for three years, and Earl Walker was elected for one year. Virgil White, Robert Cerny, Paul Ankrom, and Ray Gelstrop were elected as Trustees. Deacons elected were Harry Stevens and Mrs. Vasco Peeples. Active members number 235 and the annual budget was set at \$16,770.

It was noted that the Presbyterian Women's Organization furnished new curtains for Fellowship Hall and the kitchen, paid for bathroom renovations at the Presbyterian Conference Center at Lake Placid, and presented the United States and Christian flags to the Church. They also contributed to the cost of the Nursery during Church Services and supplied cookies and juice on Sunday mornings and at Vacation Bible School. These funds were obtained from a bake sale. On June 20, 1966, the Worship Committee designated Dr. Fred Buchholtz and Rev. Donald Lagle to supply the pulpit in August when Rev. Henderson would enter the hospital for surgery.

Session agreed to sponsor a symposium for the betterment of the Church on 22 October. All organizations were to be represented, as well as all church officers.

At the Congregational meeting on January 18, 1967, Raymond Muller, Bruce Clinesmith, Bernice Roundtree, and Seymour Payne were elected as Elders. James Taylor, Darwin Pearson, and George Warren were elected as Trustees. Deacons elected were Myrtle Eisele and Mary Benham Tucker. The Women's Organization paid off 3 mortgages in the last two years. The Organ Committee would obtain bids for a new organ and use the Memorial Fund toward that purpose. There were now 188 members.

On June 19, 1967, the Building Committee was to investigate the three properties on Durrance Street and report to the Congregation. Purchase prices were: Paul Leach property - \$25,000, Hendrickson property - \$5,000, Smith property - \$8,000.

In September, a new speaker system was installed. Session approved hiring a student organist play before services and when the regular organist was absent, and to pay for training.

On November 20, 1967, Session requested a five-year extension on the \$800 Board of National Mission Grant.

On January 24, 1968, the Congregation elected Raymond Griffith, John Jessell, Seymour Payne, and Leon Williams as Elders. Deacons elected were Mrs. Anne Hitchcock, Mrs. Edward Malin, and Mrs. Thora Grahek. Trustees elected were Ray Gelstthrop, Eldon McKean, and Dr. Harold Miller. The Parking Lot/Real Estate Committee was to negotiate on the three properties in any amount up to \$25,000. Membership numbered 212.

A Congregational meeting on February 18, 1968, was called to recommend the purchase of the Saunders property (402 West Marion) for \$16,500 and the Hendrickson property (114 Durrance St.) for \$5,000 including removal of the building. The Congregation voted to purchase this property and to accept an offer from a member to finance the Hendrickson property. A loan from the Board of National Missions would be requested to finance the Saunders property.

In June, 1968, Session recommended the Church assume the mortgage of \$9,021, financed by Port Charlotte Bank for 18 months.

On January 22, 1969, the Congregation elected as Elders Delbert Gilhousen, Mallary Sandridge, and Leon Williams for three years, Harold Collins for two years, and Roy Smith and Frank Hess for one year. Thora Grahek and Inez Sutton were elected as Deacons. Elected as Trustees were Harry Beebe, Ralph McLaughlin, and Edward Mertz for three years and Robert Davis for one year. An increase in the Pastor's salary to \$7,500 was approved. Salary increases for the Organist to \$50 per month and Choir Director to \$65 per month were approved. Also approved was setting up a Property Acquisition Fund and a committee to set up by-laws for the church and to report at the annual meeting. Members were 223.

In April, 1969, Rev. Henderson read the Rules and By-Laws to the Session. Copies could be purchased by Session members.

In September, 1969, Session and the Trustees decided to purchase 66 chairs (seating by the outside wall) from the Memorial Fund.

In October, the Trustees noted that the Vasco Peeples family donated a 21-note set of Maas Cathedral Chimes in memory of their daughter, Lois Zole Peeples. In November, 1969, the Congregation elected as Elders Raymond Andrews, Charles K. Burnham, and James McLean for three years and John W. Roffe for two years. Deacons elected were Mrs. Truman Trucker and Mrs. John Schuster. Clarence Curtis, Virgil White, and Dorwin Pearson were elected as Trustees. The committee for By-Laws reported the Charter for the Church and the old By-Laws were missing and when found would be up-dated.

In February, 1970, Session discussed with guests Dale Taylor and Edward Stepp, Youth Group Organization Representatives, and Inez Sutton, Sunday School Superintendent, a new Youth Group program and possible leaders.

In May, 1970, Rev. Henderson discussed the celebration of the church's 75th anniversary, chartered on 13 October 1895 and rebuilt in 1962 after destruction by a hurricane. A gala was planned.

In June, 1970, Session appointed John Roffe and Charles Burnham to write a condensed history of the church to be read at the anniversary. A letter of appreciation would be sent to the



Presbyterian Women served a high tea to celebrate 75th anniversary

Presbyterian Women's Association for their effort in the installation of the carpet and greenery in the sanctuary. In June, Virgil White reported that the alley in back of the church had been closed and would not present a problem if property was sold.

On November 17, 1970, Session approved the reconditioning of the chimes and invited the Peeples family to take part in a dedication service in honor of their daughter, Lois Zoel Peeples.

At a joint meeting on January 10, 1971, Session and the Trustees decided to repair the chimes, and that the cost would be paid out of the Memorial Fund.

Raymond Andrews was the Elder-nominee to Presbytery as a delegate to the General Assembly meeting in Rochester, New York.

At the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 20, 1971, Rev. Henderson reviewed the By-Laws governing election of officers. Elected were William Larson, Guy Warren, and Harold Collins as Elders, Mrs. Grace James and Mrs. Eldon McKean Deacons, and Claude Congdon, Stanley Hawley, and Dr. Harold Miller as Trustees.

Rev. Henderson advised that it would be best to hire a lawyer, make a new charter for the Church, and to search for the By-Laws and update them. Dr. Ralph McLaughlin, Trustee Chair, advised that the manse be repaired and restored to good condition. Trustee Pearson suggested that the manse be sold and proceeds applied to a condominium. He advised calling a Congregational meeting as soon as the manse was restored to decide whether to sell the property.

At Session meeting on February 16, 1971, a Trustees recommendation to increase the Pastor's car allowance from \$600 to \$900 per year was reviewed. Their report also recommended an increase the janitor's pay to \$720, and to increase contingency expenses from \$1000 to \$2000.

In March, 1971, Session received a report from Trustees concerning the repair of the A-Frame of the main church structure.

In May, 1971, the Congregation met to consider the Trustees report on the manse. A recent inspection found the original construction inferior and the grade level too low in case of storm tide. The joint Church Boards believed it best to sell the present manse and buy or

build a new one. The vote taken resulted in an eighteen to eight decision to sell the present manse.

Session meeting on June 15, 1971, noted the Committee on Church and Race of General Assembly was giving a \$100,000 for the legal defense fund of Angela Davis. Because of this action a letter of protest was to be sent to Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly and the Self Allocated Benevolence Funds to General Assembly were to be withheld for the balance of 1971. Benevolences would be paid to West Coast Presbytery. The site of the new manse was approved and action would be taken soon on the lot and building as costs were steadily increasing. The Presbytery had sanctioned the building of a new manse. Session approved buying new collection plates.

On July 4, 1971, Rev. Henderson read a letter from Presbytery advising Session about the Angela Davis case and her request for aid from the legal defense fund established by Presbytery. The fund of \$100,000 was used according to rules of the General Assembly. A letter to Session expressed regrets for actions by some Church Sessions in protesting the legal defense fund for Angela Davis.

On August 24, 1971, Session received a reply to our letter of June 20, requesting reconsideration of the action of withholding funds from General Mission programs of the General Assembly.

One hundred seventy five free copies of "Presbyterian Life" were ordered to give to the Congregation. The National Church sent our Church revised copies of the Lord's Prayer and Apostles Creed to be used until the first of the year. If accepted by the Congregation, would be used permanently. At a joint meeting on May 3, 1971, Rev. Henderson advised Session and the Trustees that the Peebles family requested that additional equipment be added to the chimes at a cost of about \$650 so that they might be heard outside the church. The Trustees reported termite damage to the structure and Orkin would be notified to take care of the problem. The roof was leaking and it seemed advisable to consult with a contractor about an inspection. A site for building the new manse had been selected at the corner of Grace and Lemon streets in Punta Gorda.

After interviewing several contractors, Michigan Homes Inc., presented the most favorable plans to date. The following persons were elected to the building committee: Mrs. Ray Griffith, Mrs. Harry L. Craig, and Mrs. Frank Hunter from the Congregation.

Representing the Trustees were Col. Clarence Curtis, Dr. Ralph McLaughlin, and Mr. Eldon McKean, alternate. Representing Session were John W. Roffe, and Raymond Andrews, alternate. Mrs. Myrtle Eisele represented the Presbyterian Women's Association.

In September, 1971, Session advised that the Grace Street lot had been purchased and four contractors were bidding on the new manse. A \$1,000 payment had been made on the building site.

In October, 1971, Session approved the Trustees' recommendation to apply the Reserve Fund to the manse. The Trustees agreed to buy the Henderson's furniture for \$1,470 to sell with the old manse. The Session also approved the Trustees' resolution drawn up by First Federal Savings and Loan, Charlotte County, which stated there was a mortgage of \$18,000 on the Marion Ave. manse, to be known as a construction mortgage and a \$10,000 mortgage on the new manse.

The Congregation met on Nov. 28, 1971, to elect officers. Elders elected were John Roffe, Delbert H. Gilhousen, and Harold Abner. Trustees were Harry Bebee, Dr. Ralph McLaughlin, and Eldon McKean. Inez Sutton and Mrs. George Link were the new Deacons.

In December, 1971, Rev. Henderson advised Session about information concerning a church steeple from Campbell Industries, which would enhance to appearance of the church. The cost of two models would be over \$2,000 and \$3,000. The idea was shelved for the time being. The condition of the organ and cost of repairs and cost of a new one were compared. It was decided to return to the old version of the Lord's Prayer and Apostles Creed.

In January, 1972, Session decided to have the A-frames of the main structure treated with wood preservative. The new manse would be ready for occupancy soon and it was suggested to hold an open house before the Minister takes residence. Drapes for the manse cost \$750, with the Women's Association giving \$500 and individuals \$200, leaving \$50 to be collected.

On January 19, 1972, the Congregation received committee reports. There were 192 members. The chimes were repaired and re-dedicated on February 17. The cost of repairs and a new keyboard for the chimes was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Peeples. The Finance Committee reported the Church's total debt would be about \$32,000 for 1972. The young people were active in the life of the Church.

The boys served on the Junior Usher Society and as acolytes at morning services. The girls served as Hostesses at the orange juice tables, presented a play, "The Strange Night," and decorated the Christmas Tree. Rev. Henderson advised that a committee to make new by-laws that would not conflict with the by-laws of the National Church was necessary. The Articles of Incorporation were missing and efforts to locate them were being made.

In February, 1972, the Trustees reported to Session on the treatment and repairs of the A-frames of the main structure, and on the repair of the cross beam at the front of the main building. The total cost of the project amounted to \$1,500.

At a joint meeting on March 5, 1972, Rev. Henderson advised the Session and Trustees that the lot and the small, old house could be bought from Mrs. Hendrickson for \$5,000. Adjoining this lot was a vacant lot (50x100 feet) to the north. These lots were too small for building sites, but if combined could make building sites or good parking space. Session approved making an offer of \$1,000 for the vacant lot, and if it could be purchased at that figure consideration would be given to buying the second property with the old house.

On April 18, 1972, Session learned that the Articles of Incorporation, thought to be lost, had been located. Industrial stock donated by Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Link as a gift to the Church had been sold and converted to cash. The offer to buy the vacant lot for \$1,000 was rejected by the owner.

In June, 1972, the Trustees were negotiating to purchase the vacant lot at rear of the Church for \$1,500. If the owner produced a proper title to the property, it would be bought. Rev. Henderson requested permission to purchase the manse at 229 West Grace Street. The Session would consider the matter and a committee of three Elders would look into the matter and report back.

In July, at a joint meeting of Session and the Trustees it was learned that Mr. and Mrs. Howard M. Zoty of Indiana agreed to purchase the old manse on Marion Ave. for \$23,000. The contract had to be closed by August 15 or they would forfeit the \$500 down payment. Since First Federal Savings and Loan Company of Punta Gorda already held a mortgage on the property they would assume the mortgage on the property for Mr. and Mrs. Zoty and negotiate a new contract.

On August 15, 1972, Rev. Henderson withdrew his request to purchase the manse.

On October 17, 1972, Session received information on the Synod's proposed new development at Harbison, South Carolina. Session wanted to know about the financing. If it did not meet their approval, the church would cancel its Benevolence allotment to Synod and recommend that it be paid to COMAR. Harbison Development Corporation had entered into a sales contract to purchase 1,020 acres from the Board of Missions at \$2,500 per acre with principal and interest due January, 1975. Session recognized Mrs. Perry English for long and loyal service as organist and she would receive an extra month's pay as a gift of appreciation.

The Congregation met on November 15, 1972, to elect Raymond Andrews, Clifford Prindle, and Dana South as Elders. Deacons were Mrs. Viola Rice, and Mrs. John Schuster. Clarence Curtis, Dorwin Pearson, and Virgil White were elected as Trustees. In November, Session received word from Synod concerning the financing of the Harbison development. To aid the financial position of Presbytery, Session approved a special offering at Christmas.

On Jan. 17, 1973, at the Annual Meeting, Church membership of 216 and a Sunday School enrollment of 36 in five classes was reported. There were 15 weeks of Catechism classes for Junior and Senior High ages from December until Easter. The Trustees reported the new manse was completed in May, and the lot in back of the church was purchased in 1972. John Roffe, Dana South, and James Bishop will examine the by-laws and suggest any changes.

In March, 1973, the Church By-Laws were reviewed and proposed amendments were considered. Session approved sending \$200 to Presbytery, earmarked for destitute ministers. This would be matched by the National Board of Pensions. The Trustees presented a resolution on the financing of a church loan of \$5,000 from First Federal Savings and Loan on property Lot "G" subdivision of Block 8 of Punta Gorda. This would pay off the loan from National Missions. In May, 1973, Session sent a letter of appreciation to Don Whitter, President of First Federal Savings and Loan, for help given by him and his staff in getting our church papers (deeds, abstracts, etc.) in order and all records in the bank vault. Rev. Henderson was to attend a Seminar in Virginia in July and General Assembly in May. Chaplain Eli Richards was in charge of the Services in his absence.

In September, 1973, Rev. Henderson reported on his two weeks of study at Union Seminary at Richmond, Virginia, and advised that Warren Wilson College was in need of funds. Session approved an increase of 25% in the Benevolence Budget amounting to a sum of \$1,857 for 1974. In November, Session approved establishing an organ fund for the future purchase of a new organ.

On Nov. 28, 1973, a Congregational meeting was held to review the budget and elect officers for 1974. William E. Larson, Guy Warren, Lewis Williams, and Russell Mays were elected as Elders. Deacons were Mrs. Grace James and Mrs. Philip Unthank. Trustees were Claude Congdon, Stanley Hawley, and Norman Rabe.

In 1973, church debt was reduced from \$21,000 to \$4,650, sidewalks placed around the parking lot, new doors to the Sanctuary installed in April, and the organ repaired. The new organ fund stood at \$5260.

On January 16, 1974, the burning of the mortgages of the manse and church was performed by Rev. Henderson; Eldon McKean, Trustees Chairman; Mrs. W. F. Fredrick, U.P.W.O. President and Elder; and Mrs. Grace James, Deacon.



Rev. Henderson and Mrs. W.H. Frederick, Elder, burn the church and manse mortgage.

The By-Laws of the Church were read and a motion to accept these as read, with the modification of "vacancies on Session or Deacons to be filled at a special meeting of the Congregation or the November meeting". Ralph McLaughlin, Trustee, advised of the Board's proposal to enlarge the Fellowship Hall and the kitchen facilities and to fix the leaking roof over Fellowship Hall. A committee to make recommendations for the purchase of an organ was established. Church membership was 188 and Sunday School enrollment was 38 in five classes.

On February 19, 1974, Session denied a request to let Sunday School members take lessons on the organ in view of the organ's present condition. Due to complaints, a committee would review hymn books and obtain other hymnals. An ice cream social and entertainment by "Mister Mystery," a magician, was to be held on March 23, for members and friends. Tickets were to be \$1.25, with \$1.25 matched by the Trustees. The money was to go to friends of Presbytery Benevolence of West Florida. A part-time secretary was approved.

In May, 1974, Session approved the purchase of 240 copies of "The Hymnbook" with a Pastor's copy and one organist copy. Any remaining amount due after contributions from individuals and U.P.W.O. would be taken out of the Memorial Fund.

In July, 1974, Session approved leaving the old hymnals in back of the church for those interested in having a copy. The rest would be advertised to transfer to a church in need. In September, Session approved card games to be played in Fellowship Hall for pleasure only, and without prizes.

On November 20, 1974, the Congregation approved changes in the By-Laws to limit persons on Church Boards (Session, Deacons, and Trustees) to one full term of three years. Serving an unexpired term of one year would not constitute a full term. Following a full term, a person would be ineligible for one year. The Congregation also approved remodeling the church and a request to borrow \$25,000 from Presbytery.

Elected as Elders were Harold W. Abner, G. Russell Mays, and David A. Riemann. Mrs. William Bittner and Mrs. George Link were elected as Deacons and Trustees elected were Paul Buzinec, Alexander T. Chepeleff, Gaylord G. Hendrick, and George C. Hanford. The question of why the church did not have an active

youth program was raised. At a later Session meeting in December a letter in answer to that question was approved for distribution:

"SUMMARY: Ours is a viable church serving retirees, who comprise the bulk of the population of Punta Gorda on this side of Peace River. As we lose members by moving or attrition we find new people who add new ideas and vigor to our Church. We expect to grow as Punta Gorda grows. Meanwhile our members must decide where their interest lies; if they are willing to accept the challenge of personal leadership and participation, and if they are willing to contribute dollars in proportion to the Church's needs. THE SESSION."

In November, 1974, the Trustees recorded a bid of \$7,200 for fiberglass shingles with a 25-year guarantee, and labor for installing a new roof over the entire church. Alterations and new roof over kitchen and Fellowship Hall and other areas were estimated at \$4,400. Total, including air conditioning, amounted to \$14,800.

On December 31, 1974, the Church had no debt. It had 45 Sunday School members in six classes and 218 members.

The Congregation met on January 15, 1975, and approved a new building committee to proceed with the building modification. In February, Session accepted the recommendation to purchase a new organ with the target date of September 1. The estimated cost was \$10,000. Session approved an 8%, ten-year loan for \$20,500 for the remodeling program.

In March, 1975, the Trustees obtained a \$15,000 loan from First Federal Savings and Loan to re-construct Fellowship Hall and to redesign the kitchen. Trustees bought 100 squares of John Mansville singles at \$28.50 per square, and accepted the Early Bird Roofing bid for labor.

On April 15, 1975, Session approved a motion to develop a program for a unicameral board and to present it to the Trustees and then to the Congregation.

On September 17, 1975, the Congregation met to vote to accept or not accept a single board by combining the Session and the Trustees.

The unicameral board was to consist of 12 members, with six of the remaining Elders and six of the remaining Trustees to be ordained as Elders. Due to a lack of attendance, this meeting was adjourned to be re-convened on October 12. On this date there were 102 members present and the plan to join the two boards into a single board with 12 Elders was approved. Church membership was 231.

The Congregation met on November 19, 1975, to elect J. Douglas Ramsey to replace Elder Guy Warren due to health. Frank Shore was elected as Elder to serve on the Joint Board for 1976 and 1977. Deacons elected were Mrs. Marie Hawley, Mrs. Helen Osbourne, and Mrs. John Zsefar. The Congregation directed the Trustees to negotiate with Mrs. Hendrickson for the property on Durrance Street, providing a clear title could be obtained.

THE NINTH DECADE 1976-1985

On February 4, 1976, Session voted to install three double hearing stations in the sanctuary. In July, Session decided on a second service from November through Easter. The building on the Durrance Street property was to be razed and the \$25 advance refunded to the tenants.

Session noted in October, 1976, the need to get a qualified person to remedy the dry rot problem in the A-frame. Session sent Robert Hollander, City Manager, a letter of thanks for help in razing the house on Durrance Street.

On January 2, 1977, the Congregation met to elect Mrs. Graham Thompson to replace Mrs. Stanley Hummer due to health. Active membership was 233.

On March 8, 1977, Session made an agreement with the City of Punta Gorda for the joint use of the Church's parking lot. As part of the agreement, the City would install a suitable asphalt driveway from Marion Avenue. A second bid was received to repair the A-frame. It was decided to accept Do-All Home Service Company's bid for \$980. New choir gowns were purchased for \$1,064.

On May 10, 1977, Session was informed that damage to the A-frames of the church was more extensive than the bid by Do-All Home Service considered. They proposed to repair the rot, and to seal and cover all of external A-frame with heavy paper and sheet aluminum

for \$2,940. Session decided to check if this was advisable. Since the contractor was unable to guarantee that this work would eliminate the possibility of continued rot, Session decided to obtain a consultant (Benson and Surman, Inc.) to see what steps should be taken. After receiving word from the consultant on the repair and maintenance of the A-frame, the Property Committee was authorized to spend up to \$3,000 on the project.

In September, 1977, Session considered hiring an assistant pastor to serve as Director of Christian Education and Youth Program. No action was taken but it was agreed that the church had a problem, as only a few children remained in Sunday School.

In October, 1977, it was decided to use the Building Fund to pay the mortgage on the Durrance Street property and repair of the A-frame.

The Congregation met on November 20, 1977, to elect Elders George Rittelman, George Trefts, Philip Unthank, and Lewis Williams. Deacons elected were Myrtle Eisile and Thora Grahak. Active membership was 238.

Members of the United Presbyterian Women's Association had been working all year making Chrismons (Christ's Monograms) and placed a large Christmas tree in the sanctuary which was decorated with those symbols. The U.P.W. was to conduct both services Sunday, December 18, 1977, and explain the meaning of the various symbols as they were placed on the tree.

At the Session meeting on January 10, 1978, Elder Arthur Kester suggested that a "Living Cross" be constructed of wood and covered with flowers brought by the members to be used as part of our Easter program. He volunteered to make it. The Choir obtained new robes in January 1978, and had \$70.32 left for music. In May, Session noted Jerry Cleffi had earned and been awarded the Boy Scouts of America God and Country Award.

On May 4, 1978, the Congregation amended the by-laws adding that any officer absent without excuse for the regular meetings within a year is to be dropped from office.

In September, 1978, Session approved paying off the building fund loan, leaving the building fund checking account open to receive memorials. Also considered was the response of the Congregation as

to their willingness to participate in the installation of stained glass windows as memorials. In October, Session approved the stained glass windows, and would notify Mr. Hanover that he had until November 1, to complete the A-frame work.

The Congregation met on November 15, 1978, to elect officers. Elders elected were Wilbur Vincent, Rita Gossweiler, Harry Huggins, Louise Kuser, and George McCrea. Deacons elected were Mrs. G. Edmund Gardner and Mrs. John A. Schuster. The U.P.W. suggested that funds at the end of 1978 be used for the new lighting in the sanctuary and for space for a library. Elders Williams and Kester would try to find a place for a library. In December, Session considered using a former classroom, used for storage, as a library. Building a ramp from the church steps to the street was considered but that would need the City's approval. There were 239 members.

On January, 15, 1979, Session received a report that the A-frame repairs were complete. The Pastor requested to purchase the manse at the cost when built. This request was considered in February, 1979, and Session decided to get two appraisals on the manse.

On March 27, 1979, Session received a report from a special committee that the asking price for the manse be \$43,500. Session voted that the price to be recommended to the Congregation be \$43,000, if they voted to sell. In April, Session sent a letter to the Congregation outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the sale and how the committee arrived at the price.

On April 18, 1979, the Congregation met to consider the sale of the manse. Two questions were to be addressed: 1) Should the manse be sold to Rev. Reese Y. Henderson? 2) If the decision on the above is yes, is the price of \$43,000 acceptable. A motion to sell the manse was voted down. In May, Session heard from a group of members who were critical of the conduct of the Congregational meeting and of some the Elders who spoke in opposition to selling the manse. Later in the month, Session allowed the signers of a letter to address the Session. This matter, along with other things, caused some members to be dissatisfied with the conduct of the Pastor and some Elders. Therefore, on June 12, 1979, Rev. Morgan Roberts, Chair of West Florida Ministerial Relations Committee, was invited to discuss with Session members the problems which existed in the church. Later, in July, Presbytery called a meeting to investigate complaints of dissatisfaction with the minister. Attending were Rev. P. H.

Clemens, Moderator of Presbytery, Elder R. C. McKilvey, Ft. Myers, and Elder Georgina Jones of Cypress Lake. Several more Session meetings were held during the summer months.

Then, on October 21, 1979, the Session, moderated by Rev. John Stump, Ft. Myers, with all members present, defeated a motion calling for the resignation of Rev. Henderson. On October 23, 1979, Session voted to accept the resignation of five Elders.

Session met on November 4, 1979, to suggest amendments to the by-laws relating to the annual business meetings, which were to be in November, with the time and date to be set by the Session, and to be announced at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

The Congregation met on December 2, 1979, moderated by Rev. Robert Thompson, Executive Presbyter of West Florida Presbytery. The amendments to the by-laws were approved and officers elected were Elders Alex Chepeleff, Larry Stephens, Wilbur Vincent, Charles Vosburgh, James McLean, Philip Collmer, Frank Shore, and Roy Smith. Deacons elected were Graham Thompson, Harry Beebe, and Mrs. Frances George. There were 240 members.

In April, 1980, new lights in the sanctuary were obtained for \$1681.12 and new hymn boards were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Shore as a memorial. The dedication of the Memorial Stand and the new sanctuary lights took place on May 4.

Twelve jewel-glass windows depicting key events in the life of Jesus Christ were dedicated as memorials in 1980. The Service of Dedication of these stained glass windows was conducted by Dr. Robert L. Thompson, Executive Presbyter of West Florida Presbytery on Sunday, October 26, 1980.

On November 2, 1980, the Congregation elected G. Russell Mays, Philip Collmer, Roy Smith, and Frank Shore as Elders. Mrs. Lois Huggins was elected to serve the remainder of her late husband's term. Deacons elected were Mrs. Kathryn Hess and Mrs. Isabel Rielley. The church was to be painted by Christmas for \$2,600 with the Women's Association donating \$500. Other donations were received as memorials and gifts. Members totaled 242.

On March 15, 1981, the Congregation was given an opportunity to contribute to "Jesus the Good Shepherd" memorial stained glass

window to be installed behind the choir loft. The memorial plaque was to read: THIS WINDOW IN MEMORY OF LOVED ONES DONATED BY THE CONGREGATION". A personalized plaque was to be furnished for those giving \$500 or more. The estimated cost of the window was \$5,500. Session was to review an artist drawing before signing a contract with Winebarger Corp. In June, the parking lot was paved with the City paying half the cost.

The Joint New Church Development Committee of Presbytery requested the Pastor and one Elder serve on a Steering Committee to find a Pastor for a new church to begin services in September or October, 1981, at the Alligator Creek Mobile Home Park. Session approved a letter of protest to Associate Executive William. C. Cook.

On June 14, 1981, Session sent a letter to New Church Development expressing surprise at learning of plans well under way for a new church in our immediate area and disappointment that these plans were formulated without our prior knowledge. This church had been led to believe that a new church was four or five years in the future and that the location would be at least eight to ten miles away. Session believed this situation posed a direct threat to the membership and future growth of this church since this is the same area from which this church draws its membership.

At the Presbytery meeting on June 25, 1981, Presbytery approved starting a new church development project along Burnt Store Road in South Punta Gorda. Mr. Cook hoped to continue to work with this Session in the development of a Mission Design.

On August 8, 1981, Session approved a pictorial directory of members and friends. Some members wanted to retain part of the old stained glass window for historical purposes. The installers had allowed \$500 off the price the new window for the old one.

The Good Shepherd Window was dedicated on Sunday November 15, 1981, at both services. It was suggested that red curtains be hung on both sides of the window.

On December 8, 1981, Elders elected by the Congregation were Robert Wood, Samuel Johnson, Gary Maisel, and Lois Allen. Deacons elected were Anita Michael and Stanley Hummer. The reported membership was 277.

The merger of the Westminster and West Florida Presbyteries would take place on January 3, 1982.

On Feb. 8, 1982, Session approved sending a letter to all visitors. Session approved \$50 to help form the Men's Breakfast Club again. Shelves under the pews for Bibles and Hymnals were approved.

The Men's Breakfast Club met on April 21, 1982. S. N. McIntosh offered to make 48 racks under the pews at no cost except materials. Session voted to buy new offering plates, and Mrs. Earl Walker absorbed this expense as a gift to the church.

In May, 1982, A remote microphone was purchased by the Women's Association and a new dishwasher was purchased for the manse. Session voted to have a light installed at the rear parking lot at \$6.50 a month. Elder Vosburgh had a timer installed to play the outside chimes at noon each day. The company making up the church directories was to supply 109 copies, and Session voted to buy 141 additional copies at \$2 each. Then in November, Session set up a Real Estate Equity fund for the Pastor.

On November 28, the Congregation elected Robert Pringle, John Barstow, Willet Hammond, and Albert Thomas as Elders. Deacons elected were Thelma Johnson, Ruth Campbell, and Emily Semple. The church budget was \$24,979 and there were 254 members.

The Annual Family Night Banquet was held on March 11, 1983, with about 140 tickets sold for the event. Rev. Henderson noted that it was the 24th Anniversary of his Pastoral Service to the church.

In April, 1983, the lights for the church stained glass windows were installed. In May, Session voted to buy a new I.B.M. copier costing \$1,700 with trade-in allowance. Session voted to provide the custodian two weeks paid vacation, beginning this year. On November 16, 1983, the Congregation elected James A. Brown, Frank Ellenbaum, Graham Thompson, Doris Woldring, and Gertrude Haage as Elders. Deacons elected were Genevieve Hammond, Norah Thomas, and Rita Gossweiler. The membership on the roll was 263.

In January, 1984, Session voted to install aluminum flashing around the flat roof over the choir loft. Session also accepted Dr. Daniel Fenner as a voluntary Church Director of Christian Education. In February, 1984, it was agreed to hire a part-time secretary.

120 members attended the Annual Banquet held on March 16.

On April 10, 1984, the Moderator, Rev. Reese Henderson read a letter to Session regarding his intention of retiring. He would be 70 on September 25, 1985 and planned to retire at the end of September, 1985. Session appointed a Pastoral Relations Committee to deal with matters pertaining to Rev. and Mrs. Henderson during the final months before retiring.

On April 8, 1984, at a special meeting, the Congregation elected Victor Domenick to serve as Elder, and Mildred Marshall as Deacon.

On April 29, 1984, a special Session meeting was held to consider appropriate dates for the Pastor's retirement. Rev. Craig Countiss served as Moderator, and gave all members an opportunity to express their opinions. Session approved a motion to vacate the pulpit on or before December 30, 1984, and that the manse be vacated on or before December 31, 1984. Rev. Henderson was to receive the total amount in the Real Estate Equity Fund on the date of his resignation.

The Congregation met on June 10, 1984, to act on the resignation of Rev. Reese Henderson. The Moderator, Rev. Henderson, read the Pastoral Resignation. The Congregation accepted his resignation and joined in his request that Southwest Florida Presbytery dissolve the pastoral relationship on December 31, 1984.

In September, 1984, Session noted that the wooden A-frame in front of the church showed signs of weathering and needed attention. The interior hallway doors had been installed and Session wished to send a letter of appreciation to Bill Luchynsky for this work. Session established a Capital Improvement Fund. Mrs. Phyllis Plough, Church Secretary, broke her elbow in a fall, and her rehabilitation time was indefinite, so Session was to advertise for a part-time Secretary/Financial position.

In October, 1984, Elder Daniel Fenner reported on the progress of starting a Sunday School and plans for cottage groups. Session approved a gift to the Memorial Fund in memory of Judge John T. Rose, Jr. (The name John Thomas Rose appeared in the lists of Infant Baptisms in 1912).

On November 13, 1984, Session received a report from Dr. Fenner that there were five teenage boys, and possibly more, joining the

Sunday School. Session reviewed a list of six candidates for the Interim Pastor position and will request the Ministerial Relations Committee to assign Rev. Homer B. Ogle as Interim Pastor.

On November 18, 1984, the Congregation elected Victor Domenick, Daniel Fenner, Frank Shore, Gladwin Unrau, and Inez Sutton as Elders. Deacons elected were William Luchynsky, Kay Raybuck, and Isabel Rielley.

On December 31, 1984, the membership was 241. During this past year a new entrance door and an acoustic ceiling were installed in Fellowship Hall. In December the Big Brothers Christmas was held in Fellowship Hall with 50 children and 30 adults attending.

On December 30, 1984, Dr. Dan Fenner hosted a farewell party for the Hendersons who served this church for over 25 years. About 100 came to say good-bye and 80 stayed for the program during which their past church life was reviewed and they were given a silver tea set and a money tree. The final amount in the Real Estate Equity Fund was \$21,208.21. Session voted to bestow on Rev. Reese Y. Henderson, with gratitude and affection, the Honorary title of Pastor Emeritus, subject to approval of the Congregation and Presbytery.

On January 20, 1985, the Congregation met to elect a Pastoral Nominating Committee. Results were: Etheleda Humphrey, William Luchynsky, Calvin Moss, Hope Smith, Albert Thomas, James Waters, and Doris Woldring. Frederick Brodt was first alternate, Frank Ellenbaum second alternate, and Genevieve Hammond the third alternate. Due to vacancies on the Session, Roy Smith, Arlina Moss, and John DeJong were elected.

In February, 1985, Session approved leasing the manse with the listing given to Sorrentino Realty, Inc. In March, nine volunteers worked to get the manse ready for leasing. Session approved an approach to the prospective tenant on the basis of \$375 monthly rent for the lease to end December, 1985, and from then on a month-to-month basis. Following the resignation of Calvin Moss, effective Easter Sunday, Session approved Barbara Bogan to direct the choir for the remaining spring season.

In April, 1985, Session noted with appreciation the donation of five original oil paintings by Betty McRae; the designing and building of a lectern to match the pulpit by William Luchynsky; the new wiring



Interim pastor Rev. Ogle presents a Pioneer Member certificate to Mrs. Vasco Peeples during 90th Anniversary of the church. State Rep Vernon Peeples, Lois' son presented framed, historical photographs of the first sanctuary.

of the sanctuary audio system by Arthur and Lucille Kester; and a camera and lettering machine by Mr. and Mrs. Willet Hammond.

In May, 1985, estimates for remodeling the rest rooms and providing an accessible ramp entrance from the parking lot were being prepared. The Women's Association was making new banners and maybe a special one for the 90th anniversary. Session approved \$200 for banner material.

It was discovered there was no record at the State Capital of this Church's incorporation, therefore Session directed that this Church be re-incorporated.

On September 10, 1985, Mr. Henry Farrington wished to give the church his portion of the former alley. The original articles of incorporation of May 25, 1897, were located in Desoto County. Presbytery was to assist with attorney and costs of incorporating.

The month of October, 1985, was dedicated to our Church's 90th Anniversary Celebration. At each Sunday service a member gave a brief talk concerning some aspect of the history of our church. The main celebration was on Sunday, October 13, at 10:30 a.m. with prayers, anthems, and the skirl of bagpipes. The choir presented a special anthem, "For Many Years, O God of Grace," arranged by Mr. William King, Choir Director, from an old Scottish hymn of 1599. Session members hosted the 90th Anniversary Fellowship dinner.

On November 10, 1985, the Congregation elected as Elders Nathalia Conner, Etheleda Humphrey, Emily Semple, and Lindsey Williams. Deacons elected were Arthur Kester and Gorton McLean.

THE TENTH DECADE 1986-1995

On January 14, 1986, Session reported to Presbytery a membership of 172 and 32 affiliate members. Cost estimates for the renovation of the rest rooms and new entrance were about \$14,000.

In February, 1986, Presbytery asked Session to provide volunteers to canvass the area for prospective members for Murdock on March 2.

On February 23, 1986, Rev. James Nelson Latta, the Pastor Nominating Committee's nominee as Pastor, gave the sermon, which was followed by a Congregational meeting. The Congregation received the Pastoral Nominating Committee report, after which the election by was taken. The result was an unanimous vote to elect the proposed candidate to fill the pulpit of this church. The Moderator read the call which stated that "The First Presbyterian Church of Punta Gorda, calls James Nelson Latta to undertake the office of Pastor, beginning April 15, 1986." Elected to sign the call, present and prosecute the call before Presbytery on February 27, 1986, were Etheleda Humphrey, Albert Thomas, Hope Smith, James Waters, Doris Woldring, Frank Ellenbaum, and William Luchynsky.

In May, 1986, Session received the resignation of William King, effective August 31, 1986, in order to accept another offer as choir director. Session approved construction of a concrete slab with a

screen enclosure at the manse. Presbytery informed Session of their opposition to the proposed Florida State Lottery and Casino gambling.

In August, 1986, Session discussed the position of choir director with Joseph Zopp, including his musical background. After considering it for several days, he accepted and began in September.

Session met on August 17, 1986, to approve a program for Church School classes proposed by the Christian Education Committee. Four classes proposed were two adult classes, Elementary grades 1-6, and pre-school. The classes were advertised in the local papers.

The Congregation met Nov. 16, 1986, to elect Thomas Anderson, Robert Kiskaddon, Lois Peeples, James Waters, and Robert Brown as Elders. Deacons elected were Helen Ducick, Patricia Schwartz, and Walter Hazlett (one year). Membership roll was 176.

On Dec. 6, 1986, the Men's Club put on a "Centennial" steak dinner scheduled to coincide with the City of Punta Gorda Centennial. It was well attended and provided \$306 for the Club.

On January 14, 1987, the sign committee recommended a modified "A" shaped, lighted sign be installed at the corner of Harvey and Marion. The Memorial Fund would be used to cover the cost of \$1,815 and Ad-Sign Company would make and install it. The City offered some palm trees to help landscape the corner. Session discussed a proposed name change for the church and approved requiring 80% approval by the congregation for the change to ensure as near as possible a unanimous vote for the official name change.

At the Congregational meeting on January 18, 1987, the Moderator introduced the Session's recommendation proposing the name of the church be changed to First Presbyterian Kirk O' The Sea. The procedures for changing the name of the church and the name of the corporation were outlined, including approval by the Congregation, writing new Articles of Incorporation (requires an attorney), re-writing the By-Laws and filing these with the State, etc. After some discussion the Congregation voted by ballot to have the Church name remain as originally incorporated.

On January 28, 1987, the new church pictorial directory arrived. A total of 245 copies were available to all who had a photograph taken and to new members who joined since the photo sessions.

The Congregation, on May 3, 1987, elected Kevin Grace and Mrs. Thelma Johnson as Deacons to fill vacancies.

On August 9, 1987, Session approved a bid by Masterbuilders to replace dry rotted parts on the horizontal beam and the cross on the front of the church. There were about 15 items to be done for a total cost of \$2,480 for labor, materials, and scaffolding. Session noted that the new church sign at the corner of Harvey and Marion was installed, including landscaping with palms, shrubs, and grass sod.

On Nov. 15, 1987, the Congregation approved the Corporate By-Laws, concluding the re-incorporation process, and elected Robert Brown, Ruth Shore, Hope Smith, and Robert Wood as Elders. Deacons elected were Eunice Gahley, Jean Pensmith, Helen Land, and Harold Freeburn. The new By-laws of the Corporation were approved by a unanimous vote. There were 184 members on the roll.

In February, 1988, Session approved the contract for the "Outdoor Chapel" and a concrete riser at the entrance of Fellowship Hall.

On May 11, 1988, Session approved holding the first Meeting of "Presbytery B" (later Peace River Presbytery) in this Church next February. The Sidewalk Chapel at Marion and Harvey was now finished and was dedicated on October 12, 1988.

In June, 1988, Session nominated Lois Peeples and James McLean as "Older Lay Leader, Woman and Man, of the Year" to be chosen and honored at the Fall Presbytery meeting. In September, they received a Certificate of Recognition and Appreciation for their contributions to First Presbyterian Church and Southwest Florida Presbytery.

In September, 1988, Session approved repair of the leaking roof above the chancel and the falling plaster in the choir loft.

On November 13, 1988, the Congregation elected Norman Little, Patrick Macaluso, Ruth Morrison, and Elizabeth McCrea as Elders. William Luchynsky was elected to fill a vacancy on Session. Deacons elected were Byrant Conner, Harold Freeburn, and Thelma Doarn to fill a vacancy. There were 182 active members.

In November, a Thanksgiving Dinner was prepared by Chef Bob Wood and helpers for members and friends without a local family. Three turkeys and "trimmings" were put away by 32 hungry people.

On April 12, 1989, Session pledged \$10,000 to support the Presbytery project "Opportunity Grow" which was mainly to support the development of the Joshua Creek and Cederkirk Retreat Centers. Also, the Session arranged with the City for the improvement of the parking lot on Durrance Street. This required the lot to be surveyed. The lot improvement was completed in October.

In April, 1989, Mark Ehman was hired to be the Music Director, and in May Session voted to sponsor Jill Kiburz as youth participant for Presbyterian Youth Triennium at Purdue University.

In August, 1989, Session received a report of a successful Vacation Bible School held jointly with the Burnt Store Presbyterian Church.

The Presbyterian Women held a Sadie Hawkins luncheon and invited the men to the luncheon on October 4, 1989.

New Banners representing all the Confessions of the Church were made by Doris Little and presented to the Church and were displayed in Fellowship Hall.

At the November Fellowship dinner, Jill Kiburz reported on her trip to the Triennium Youth Conference at Purdue University.

On November 19, 1989, the Congregation elected Robert Brandt, Inez Sutton, Isabel Rielley, and Elmer Polhemus as Elders, and Marvin Hayes and Flossie Pfiester as Deacons. Church membership was 185.

The Men's Club put up a nativity scene at the corner of Harvey and Marion and bought a new tape recorder to play Christmas carols.

In December, 1989, Session noted the gift of a new computer for the church office by an anonymous donor, and software to go with it given by another donor.

The Men's Club put on a Sweetheart breakfast on February 14, 1990 inviting all the ladies of the church, and reported a full house.

On February 24, 1990, Peace River Presbytery held its first Stated Meeting at this Church. All church committees worked well to make it successful. The meeting was temporarily interrupted by the noise of a parade passing down Harvey Street. Rev. James Latta was elected to the office of Recording Clerk.

In March, 1990, Session recognized James McLean for his long and dedicated service to the church and voted to have a "thank you" get-together for him after church service. Bob Wood will serve as interim sexton. It was noted that there were 110 pictures taken for the new pictorial directory.

In April, 1990, Presbytery requested two representatives from this church to serve on a task force for New Church Development. Elder Inez Sutton and Rev. Latta agreed to serve.

Session hired James Angell as sexton for the church in June, 1990.

Vacation Bible School was held July 9-13 at Burnt Store Presbyterian Church. The Men's Club donated \$400 for trees to landscape church grounds. New speakers were donated for the choir loft. Brass flower vases, to replace those stolen from the sanctuary, were dedicated on Sunday October 14, 1990, in memory of Lynne Hamilton. The Church held a Thanksgiving dinner again this year.

On November 4, 1990, the Congregation elected Jack Kiburz, Frank Shore, Homer Lichtenwalter, Frances Miller, and Doris Aumend as Elders. Deacons elected were Joyce Kiskaddon and Marjory Waters. There were 181 members on the roll.

On May 5, 1991, the Congregation elected Marjorie Danielson to replace Ruth Morrisson on the Session. Vacation Bible School was held at Burnt Store Presbyterian Church from July 8-12.

On September 22, 1991, Session approved replacing the rot-damaged beam in the front of the church. In October, ceiling fans were installed in Fellowship Hall, paid for by the Presbyterian Women's Association. In November, 20 food baskets and gift certificates were distributed to the needy in our community.

On November 24, 1991, the Congregation elected Pamela Tognarine to replace Isabel Rielley (who was ill) and Claus Meissner, Nancy Clark, Evelyn Stokes, and Marilyn Ress as Elders. Deacons elected were Albert Thomas and Anne Pitts. Active membership was 196.

On January 19, 1992, the Congregation approved broadcasting the Sunday Service on Radio WKII, starting in March 1992.

The Men's Club served 65 people at a Valentine's Day Luncheon, and in May prepared a pancake breakfast on Palm Sunday for the benefit of Habitat for Humanity.

In August, 1992, Mark Ehman resigned as Director of Music, and in September Carol Yoder became the new Director.

In September, Session sent a letter of appreciation to the retiring General Presbyter of Peace River Presbytery, Rev. William Clark. In November, Session accepted the resignation of Jane Tallmadge due to illness.

Presbyterian Women held a successful Harvest Fair, taking in \$852.

On November 15, 1992, the Congregation elected Jean Cleffi, Eunice Gahley, George Rittelman, and George Hoffman as Elders. Deacons elected were Doris Henning and O. D. Tomlin. Active membership was 207.

In January, 1993, Session hired Elsie Cyphert as secretary/bookkeeper starting on the 18th of January.

At the February 7, 1993, Congregational meeting, Hope Smith was elected to fill the vacancy on Session of Nancy Clark.

The Men's Club prepared a pancake brunch on April 18 to benefit STOP (Stop Turning Out Prisoners) and Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Charlotte County. In May, Session appointed Lindsey Williams and Gladwin Unrau to the Centennial Celebration Committee.

On August 18, 1993, the Congregation elected Ron Barrett to fill the unexpired term on Session of George Rittelman.

On November 14, 1993, the Congregation elected Robert Brandt, Roy Christen, Robert Kiskaddon, and Lindsey Williams as Elders. Alexander Blair and Anne DeBlauw were elected Deacons. Active membership was 209.

In January, 1994, Session approved starting a class in Christian Caregiving and at the February meeting discussed projects appropriate for the 100th anniversary of this church, including having a new Pictorial Directory made. New choir robes were authorized.

On March 20, 1994, Frank Shore was elected by the Congregation to complete the unexpired term on Session of Ron Barrett.

In April, 1994, Rev. Craig Countiss, Stated Clerk of Peace River Presbytery, came to speak at Fellowship Dinner about the controversial "Re-imagining '93 Conference".

On May 11, 1994, the Centennial Committee presented to Session a proposal of a separate steeple tower and cross, including hallway extensions into the Narthex and Fellowship Hall. Session gave a favorable reply to a first level riser (16'x 5') to the chancel, to removing the pew screen in front of first row of pews, and to proceed with further study of the steeple tower. The tower arcade proposal was sent to all members for review and suggestions and interest in parts of the project as a memorial project. The cover letter also included a kitchen remodeling project.

Forty new royal blue robes were purchased for the choir with funds donated mostly by choir members. The old robes were donated to the Charlotte High School Chorus. A new robe for the Pastor was also ordered. The growing Choir required modification of the choir loft, adding a row of six seats.

Rev. James Latta served as a commissioner to the 206th General Assembly held June 10-17, 1994, in Wichita. Serving on the Committee on General Assembly Council Review, he played an important role in settling the "Re-imagining" issue.

In September, 1994, Session approved separating the kitchen renovation project from the tower arcade project and starting on the kitchen right away. Session approved getting pledges for the centennial project covering three years.

Presbyterian Men wished to recognize men in the church who over many years contributed with their talents, and chose Pat Macaluso and Bill Luchynsky for this award.

On November, 1994, the Congregation elected Alice Barrett, Lloyd Stokes, Inez Sutton, and Marjory Waters as Elders. Frank Shore was elected as Elder to fill a vacancy. Jean Freeburn and Flossie Pfiester were elected Deacons. There were 196 active members.

In December, a Christmas party for the children of the area was held. At the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on January 18, 1995, new Ecclesiastical By-Laws were presented, explained, and adopted unanimously, to go in effect immediately.

In March, 1995, Session received a letter of thanks for the completion of the \$10,000 pledge to Opportunity Grow and for increasing this church's part of the mission of the larger church by \$500 to \$6,500.

On Friday, April 14, 1995, an "Easter Eggstravaganza" was held for the school age children in this community as an outreach event.

On July 23, 1995, the Sunday bulletin noted that the application for the permit for the construction of the steeple tower had been filed with Charlotte County. The Centennial funds stood at \$103,787 pledged, with \$71,450 already paid. A contract for the construction was signed with Old Tyme Builders of Punta Gorda.

A ground breaking ceremony was held on the south church lawn, Sunday, August 27, 1995, at 9:45 a.m. Brief remarks were shared by Pastor Jim, co-chairs of the Centennial Committee Elders Lindsey Williams and Gladwin Unrau, and Elder Claus Meissner, noting with appreciation all those who have been involved in the project. After shovelful of dirt were turned by Pastor Jim, Lindsey Williams, Roy Christen, Claus Meissner, and Howard Fortney, the congregation adjourned to the Fellowship Hall for refreshments.

In September, preparations for the Centennial continued with a church work day on September 12 for cleaning the church and grounds. On September 24, 1995, a congregational meeting was held to act on the request of Rev. Latta to dissolve the pastoral relationship between him and First Presbyterian Church, effective November 1, 1995. At that time Rev. Latta would be going to the Roberts Presbyterian Church in Anderson, South Carolina.

On September 28, 1995 all the permits needed for construction were finally obtained from the City and construction began on October 2.

On Friday, October 13, 1995, a church family potluck dinner was held and Sunday, October 15, 1995, only one worship service was held at 10:30 a.m., which was called the Centennial Worship Service, and was broadcast live on WKII 1070 AM radio.

APPENDIX

THE LIVING CROSS

At a Session meeting on January 10, 1978, Elder Arthur Kester proposed that a "Living Cross" consisting of a wooden cross, covered with flowers brought by the Congregation, be constructed for Easter Sunday. He volunteered to make this cross and it was to be part of the program at Easter.

THE CHRISMON TREE

The Women of First United Presbyterian Church were in charge on December 17, 1978, at both the 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. services. The Christmas Story told by four narrators, takes in the life of Christ from his Birth to his Resurrection. A green tree representing "eternal life" holds the hand-crafted symbols that depict various areas of Christ's life and are made in gold, white, and iridescent or crystal beads. These colors have come to mean: God the Father (gold for King), God the Son (white for Christ's Purity), and iridescent or crystal for God the Spirit. Fashioned into various symbols these colors form the Monograms of Christ, or "Chrismons".

The Chrismons were originally made by the Women's Association, then in 1988 after many years of use they were all re-constructed and decorated by Nathalia Connor and Eunice Gahley.

THE CHIMES

A set of Maas Cathedral Chimes were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Vasco Peeples in memory of their daughter, Lois Zoel Peeples. These chimes were manufactured by Maas-Rowe of Escondito, California. The chimes are played from the organ console and have 21 notes.

Lois Zoel Peeples was thirteen years old when she died of spinal meningitis on June 24, 1952. A member of First Presbyterian Church of Punta Gorda, she was recognized as a leader. She took an active part in the choir, Westminster Fellowship, and all other church and social functions.

TWELVE SCENES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

IN THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Six windows on each side of the Sanctuary were replaced with jewel-glass windows depicting key events in the life of Jesus Christ. The events depicted and its dedication follow.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH --

Given in Memory of Harry G. Huggins with love and affection from his wife Lois and family and many friends.

CHRISTMAS SCENE WITH THE MANGER, BABY JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH AND THE SHEPHERDS -- Given in Loving Memory of my husband Emmett L. Perkins by Ruth E. Perkins and by Elizabeth M. McCrea and George B. McCrea.

FLIGHT OF JOSEPH, MARY AND THE BABY JESUS DOWN TO EGYPT -- Given in Memory of our parents by Claude and Helen Congdon.

JESUS IN THE CARPENTER SHOP OF JOSEPH IN NAZARETH-- Given in Loving Memory of Earl Leon Walker by His Family.

THE TWELVE YEAR OLD BOY JESUS IN THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE -- Given in Memory of Loved Ones by Myrtle Eisele.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT -- Given in Memory of Rev. Dr. Frederick H. Buchholtz, and in Memory of my husband Harold L. George and my sister Mrs. Agnes Eichler by Frances George. (Rev. Buchholtz was Pastor of this church from 12/5/45 to 6/30/47.)

JESUS IS TALKING TO THE WOMAN AT THE WELL IN SAMARIA -- This window given in Memory of The Park and Rielley Families by Isabel Park Rielley; in Memory of Roy E. Stebbing by Ina Stebbing; in Memory of Our Families by Russell and Madelene Mays; in Loving Memory of my husband Leon A. Williams by Belle Williams; in Memory of Loved Ones by Thora M. Grahek; in Memory of Loved Ones by Wilhelmina and Graham Thompson; and in Memory of Edward H. Kinkle with love and affection from his wife Helen and Friends.

JESUS BLESSING THE CHILDREN -- Given in Loving Memory of Warren Eldrett by Sara Eldrett.

THE SAVIOR PRAYS ALONE IN GETHSEMANE WHILE HIS DISCIPLES SLEPT -- Given in Loving Memory of Harold N. Miller, M.D., by Frances C. Miller.

JESUS ON TRIAL BEFORE PILATE -- Given by The United Presbyterian Women's Association.

THE ANGEL AT THE EMPTY TOMB ON EASTER MORNING -- Given in Memory of Loved Ones by Erika and Wilbur Vincent, and in Memory of Loved Ones by Hope and Roy Smith.

CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD GOING BEFORE HIS SHEEP -- Given in Honor of Rev. Reese Y. Henderson, Pastor from March 1, 1950 - and his wife, Virginia by Lois Huggins and Members of the 1980 Session; Elders Alex Chepeleff, Philip Collmer, Frank Shore, Rita Gossweiler, Harry Huggins, George McCrea, James McLean, George Rittelman, Roy Smith, Larry Stephens, Charles Vosburgh, and Wilbur Vincent.

The Service of Dedication of the Stained Glass Windows was conducted by Dr. Robert L. Thompson, Executive Presbyter of West Florida Presbytery.



THE GOOD SHEPHERD WINDOW

The Session in early 1981 decided to replace the original anchor-motif stained glass window in the chancel with one depicting Jesus as the Good Shepherd. A commission of \$5,000 was awarded to Wineberger of Lynchburg, Va. The window was dedicated November 1, 1981, in memory of loved ones. It illustrated the following symbolism:

"The olive tree in the background is a symbol of peace and the providence of God since it yields great quantities of oil. The olive symbolizes faith, healing, and grace of our Lord. Cedars represent immortality. Water is representative of purification, regeneration, and spiritual refreshment that Christ offers us. Rocks remind us that Christ has been referred to as the rock from which flows the four rivers of the gospel. The clouds are the natural veil of the sky and used as a symbol of the unseen God. Lilies denote charity. Laurel from which the ram peers, symbolizes eternity or the eternal life that Christ offers us. Ferns with their grace and delicacy that live in shadowed glens expresses humility. The violet at the center bottom is also a symbol of humility. The cloak of Christ blowing in the wind indicates the protection that is given to us if we open our hearts and accept Christ as our Saviour. The sheep represent a Christian family that is intact. The shepherd caring for his sheep denotes Christ and His love and care for us, His sheep, as he leads us through life."

Roll of Pastors

Rev George Case	1896	Stated Supply
Rev. C. E. Jones	1897-'98	Stated Supply
Rev. A. W. Pierce	1899 Summer	Stated Supply
Rev. Clarence H. Ferran	1899-1903	Stated Supply
Rev. A. W, Pierce	1904 Summer	Stated Supply
Rev. Henry Broad	1905	Stated Supply
Rev. Henry Keigwin	1906	Stated Supply
Rev. A. S. Berger	1907	Stated Supply
Rev. A. W. Pierce	1908 & 1909	Stated Supply
Rev. J. Fraser Cocks	1910	Stated Supply
Rev. K. L. New	1911	Stated Supply
Rev. W. T. Morgan	1912 Summer	Stated Supply
Rev. J. H. Albert, D.D.	Oct. 1912-1917	Stated Supply
Rev. S. M. Wilson	1918	Stated Supply
Rev. S. B. Binkley	1919	Stated Supply
Rev. Howard Billman, D.D.	1920	Stated Supply
Rev. Joseph H. Sutherland	1921	Stated Supply
Rev. Francis A. Kerns	1922-'23	Stated Supply
Rev. N. F. Meirs	Apr.-Nov. 1923	Stated Supply
Rev. Alexander Linn	1924-Apr.'25	Pastor
Rev. Lewis A. Worley	1925 Summer	Stated Supply
Rev. W. S. Bingham, D.D.	1926 -'28	Pastor
Rev. James A. Callen	Mar. 1929-Apr.'32	Stated Supply
Rev. Henry E. Hall, III	Oct. 1932-Nov.'34	Pastor
Rev. A. Claude Clever	Dec. 1934-Apr.'36	Stated Supply
Rev. Arthur P. Vaughn, D.D.	Jun. 1936-Jun.'37	Stated Supply
Rev. D. Jenkins Williams, D.D.	Oct. 1937-1940	Stated Supply
Rev. Carl H. White, D.D.	Sep. 1941-May'43	Stated Supply
Rev. R. L. Offield, D.D.	Mar. 1944-Aug.'45	Stated Supply
Rev. Fred H. Buchholtz, D.D.	Dec. 1945-Jun.'47	Pastor
Rev. Larimore C. Denise, D.D.	Jan. 1948-Nov.'52	Stated Supply
Rev. Alexander Linn	Feb. 1952-Dec.'56	Pastor, Retired
Rev. Earl C. Downey	Jan. 1957-Jul.'58	Pastor
Rev. Reese Y. Henderson	Mar. 1959-Dec.'84	Pastor, Retired
Rev. Homer B. Ogle	Jan. 1985-Apr.'86	Interim Pastor
Rev. James Nelson Latta	Apr. 1986-Nov. '95	Pastor

A total of 33 pastors served this church during the first 100 years.
 Rev. A. W. Pierce and Rev. Alexander Linn served more than once.

This Booklet Has Been Made
Possible By Gifts To

First Presbyterian Church

In Memory Of:

*Audrey Augustine
Mary Elizabeth Bishop
Empress Burkhouse
Fayetta Daley
Joseph Drago
Ralph Ford
Jame D. Tallmadge
Etta Belle Williams*