

Bits of History at Urbandale United Church of Christ

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Acknowledgements

This collection of vignettes was written with the intention of documenting some of the events associated with the history of Urbandale United Church of Christ. It is in no way complete. Many individuals, families, organizations contributed to this journey and too few records remain.

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I am indebted to my wife Jane Robinette for her support and valuable creative and editorial skills. This project would have remained a few jumbled boxes of records without her assistance.

Although I have tried to remain faithful to existing documentation, I am confident that there are errors and omissions in the text that follows. Those mistakes and oversights are mine.

Matt McCright, September 1995

Note for the March 2003 printing:

I made one change to the text of this document – replacing the word “Present” with “2003” on the last line of page 6, indicating the tenure of Sue L. Gallagher at Urbandale United Church of Christ.

Matt McCright, March 2003

Note for the March 2006 printing:

I added the names of the last three Pastors to the bottom of page 6.

Matt McCright, August 2006

Note for the November 2006 printing:

I added table of contents, and replaced the word “Present” with “2003” in the title to the last section of this publication on page 66, indicating the tenure of Sue L. Gallagher at Urbandale United Church of Christ.

Matt McCright, November 2006

Pastors at Urbandale United Church of Christ

1919 Olive Green, "Sunday School" organizer, Urbandale School's first Primary Room [1,2,3,&4th] teacher, Ordained Congregational Minister

1920 Chaplain William E. Robb, of Federated Church, Beaverdale Preached at the first Afternoon services held at the two-room Urbandale School building.

1921 Reverend Tilder S. Sloan Assistant Pastor at Federated Church of Beaverdale conducted services at the two-room school until the new church was ready to use in late 1921.

1921-1923 Sherman Kirk - - Professor of Greek at Drake University.

1923 Mr. Dunbar [four months]

1923-1925 Harold Lamb - - Former Congregational Minister, Urbandale Dairy operator.

1925-1927 Sherman Kirk

1927 William [or Wallace] Kent - - Drake Student

1927-1929 Margaret Ross - - Drake Student

1929-1930 Melvin Lundeen - - Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church at 51st and Urbandale Avenue.

1930-1932 R. Frances Hall - - First Time Pastor, Ordained while serving Urbandale Community Church.

1932-1934 Clayton Shepard - -

1934-1938 W.S. Johnson - - Former State Evangelist for the Disciples Church and a Watkins Products Salesman

1939-1942 Waldo H. Reese - - From the Friends Church in Earlham, Iowa.

1942-1944 Omar Flugam

1944-1945 R.J. Cornell

1944-1951 Dr. Frederick Cooper -- Former Pastor-at-Large for the Iowa Conference of the Congregational Christian Church.

1951-1961 Gayle V. Strickler [thru week of April 9 1961]

1954-1955 George Crosby [Assistant]
1961 [April-July] Rev. Richter [Interim]
1961 [May 13th] Rev. Leslie Chapman
1961-1973 Robert W. Hoffman
1973 Earl Nelson [Interim]
1973 Jo Barnes [Interim]
1973-1987 Richard W. Harbart
1986-1988 Fritz Bogar [Interim]
1988-1994 Pat de Jong
1994 Robert Molsbury [Interim]
1994-2003 Sue L. Gallagher
2003-2004 Tom Ingnam [Interim]
2004-Present Rev. S. Michael Pater
2005-Present Rev. Emily Goldthwaite Fries [Assistant]

Bits of History at Urbandale United Church of Christ¹

Part One: The Community Church, 1919-1944

Forty-nine local residents voted in April 1917 at the closest country school to incorporate their community--a town called Urbandale. At that time it consisted of scattered homes and two grocery stores, radiating from the end of the Urbandale street car line at 70th Street and Roseland Road. The population was approximately 350 people, of which somewhat more than sixty were eligible voters. Histories suggest that the primary reason for incorporating was the desire for a centrally-located school building.²

C.C. Olmsted and Jesse Tally, each with a family of six children, as well as Clide [J.C.] Whittmer, Otto Laverrenz, L.L. Talbot, and William Ekey took the most public initiatives in bringing about the business of planning and organizing. Mr. Laverrenz was elected mayor. The community quickly built a two-room school building at the corner of 70th and Monroe Court.³

Mrs. Olive Green was in charge of the Primary room [grades 1, 2, 3, and 4]. She was an ordained Congregational minister. She felt that the children in Urbandale needed a Sunday School. In 1919, she made a formal plea for participation and began Sunday gatherings in the school house. The response was favorable and they were soon meeting regularly.⁴

In the years leading up to 1920, Urbandale families generally attended the most accessible nearby church. Being only a short street car ride to the east, this was the Federated Church at Beaverdale. Federated's pastor, William E. Robb, took a significant interest in the attendees from Urbandale. He learned of Olive Green's Sunday School and discussed the possibilities of also having church services at the school house. The Hartsooks, Wixoms, Holmes, Walkers, Rowens, Olmsteds, and others were interested, and formed the nucleus of the original "congregation." Chaplain Robb agreed to preach for them on Sunday afternoons until other arrangements could be made. He preached at the two-room Urbandale School for a year before a new church was finished.⁵

Founding Members

"On December 5, 1920, a public meeting was called at the Urbandale Schoolhouse to discuss the organization and building of a Federated Church." "Chaplain W.E. Robb called the meeting to order. After a short song service and prayer T.J. Rice was elected chairman of the meeting and O.M. Wixom secretary." The anonymous meeting secretary continued, "after a short discussion Chaplain Robb moved that we organize an Urbandale Federated Church Association, the motion was seconded by O.L. Laverrenz. Motion carried."

Each of the individuals announcing their participation were listed under the heading: "The following persons agreed to support this organization."

Mr. & Mrs. E. Walker

A.R. Hartsook

Mrs. A.J. Lyons
Mrs. J.A. Eby
Mr. & Mrs. John Hopkins
Fred Gehring
Mr. & Mrs. G.A. Rowen
Walter Bechtel
Mr. & Mrs. O.L. Laverrenz
Chaplain Robb
Rev. Sloan
Guy Stradley

F. Kozial
Mr. H.D. Lamb
Mr. & Mrs. A. Holmes
Mr. & Mrs. O.M. Wixom
L.L. Talbott
Mrs. E. Botsford
Mrs. Lewis
F.A. Wilson
T.J. Rice
E. Hopkins

The following officers were elected: Elwyn Walker, Chairman; T.J. Rice, Vice Chairman; Guy Stradley, Secretary; and O.M. Wixom, Treasurer. Five trustees were elected: A.R. Hartsook, Chairman; O.L. Laverrenz; John Hopkins; A.F. Wilson; and L.L. Talbot.

A committee to seek a permanent meeting place and to work with the trustees also were elected: Mrs. A.J. Lyons; Mrs. J.A. Eby; Mrs. M.P. Wickersham; Mrs. G.A. Rowen; Mrs. Elwyn Walker; and Mr. O.L. Laverrenz, Chairman.

The trustees were instructed to look up two or more locations for our church and prices of the same. After further discussion the meeting adjourned.⁶

At the close of services held December 19, 1920, the group's secretary recorded that thirty-one more people "came forward dedicating themselves to the service of Christ as charter members of our church."⁷ During the services held on December 26, 1920, and January 23, 1921, more people came forward as charter members.⁸

New church members were not making an academic pledge to some slippery concept. Nor were they simply agreeing to worship according to some shared beliefs. These pioneers made promises to supply the first \$2,090 toward a new church -- a structure that would be the physical center of community life for decades. Roughly twenty families subscribed for more than one hundred dollars each.

Charter Members - 1920-21

Walter Bechtel	Mrs. Jessie Lamb
George Bernstedt	Mr. O.L. Laverrenz
Mrs. Ed. Botsford	Mrs. O.L. Laverrenz
Mrs. J.A. Eby	Eugene Laverrenz
Mr. J.A. Eby	Marion Laverrenz
Miss Rose Geering	Mrs. L.E. Lewis
Fred J. Gehring	Anna Lewis
Joseph Gehring	Perl Lewis
A.R. Hartsook	Agnes Lewis
Mr. A. Holmes	Charley Lewis
Mrs. A. Holmes	Mrs. A.J. Lyons
E. Hopkins	Bessie Lyons
Mrs. John O. Hopkins	Hugh Lyons
Mr. John O. Hopkins	Ralph W. Pabst
John Hopkins, Jr.	Mrs. L.C. Quaintance
Walter Hutchinson	T.J. Rice
A.R. Hartsook	Virginia Rice
Mrs. A.R. Hartsook	Chaplain Robb
Dorothy Hartsook	Mrs. G.A. Rowen
F. Kozial	Mr. G.A. Rowen
Ray Kozial	Rev. S.J.T. Sloan
Mr. Harold D. Lamb	Henry S. Harold Stewart

Earl Stewart
Guy Stradley
L.L. Talbott
Bertha Talley
Fern Talley
Gertrude Talley
Mr. Elwyn Walker
Mrs. Elwyn Walker
Mrs. M.P. Wickersham

Mrs. A.F. Wilson
Mr. A.F. Wilson
F.A. Wilson
Mrs. J.C. Witmer
Helen Witmer
Florence Wixom
Vera May Wixom
Mr. O.M. Wixom
Mrs. O.M. Wixom

Now that the momentum for building a new church was established, Chaplain Robb withdrew as pastor of the “homeless” congregation. His assistant at Federated Church of Beavertdale, the Reverend [Tilder S.] Sloan conducted services at the two-room school until the new church was ready to use.⁹

The new church officers, trustees, and committee members selected a site that was described on the official plat map of Urbandale as lots number 48 and 49 of the Maryland Addition on the corner of 70th and Oliver Smith Drive. The lots were just a block north of the end of the Urbandale street car line on the west side of the street. The west end of the lot sloped steeply up from the street, which was an asset before 70th Street was paved. They purchased this land for \$1,100.¹⁰

In February 1921, the women of the new church gathered at the Wickersham home at 6814 Roseland Road and formed the Urbandale Community Circle. They defined their mission broadly. The purpose of the group was to be of

whatever help possible in the community and to earn money to pay the interest on required church loans. Their motto was, "United for Christ and the Church."¹¹ Jessie Lamb wrote that they "usually had sewing to do at their meetings, helping busy mothers or quilting, making layettes, etc." To raise cash, they "served dinners at the church, had bake sales and served lunches at farm sales. Dues were a penny a day."¹²

"Urbandale Community Circle"

1921 News Clipping

The women of Urbandale have formed a very strong organization intent on helping the proposed church. The first meeting was held, Feb. 2, at the home of Mrs. M.P. Wickersham. There were 14 present. A brief outline of the work was presented. A second meeting was held at the Lamb home, Feb. 16, 16 present. The day was spent making baby shirts and skirts for the D.M. Clinic. A meeting was held Mch. 2, with Mrs. Elwyn Walker, 21 present. The day was spent quilting. The members come to the meetings in their house dresses, knowing they can accomplish more work and feel they are all alike. A self-serve luncheon at noon is most enjoyable. Immediately following is the business hour. They have pledged a penny a day, payable at each meeting, which is held the first and third Wednesday of the month. All kinds of sewing, comfort and quilt work, also shopping for those that cannot do it for themselves, in fact anything that is a help, they strive to do. A complete list of officers and committees are given: Pres., Mrs. Elwyn Walker; V.Pres., Mrs. A.R. Hartsook; Secy., Mrs. Geo. Mead; Treas., Mrs. J.C. Witmer; Work Com., Mrs. Chas Anderson, Mrs. A.J. Lyons, Mrs. J.C. Witmer; Welfare Com., Mrs. E.F.

Botsford, Mrs. Elwyn Walker, Mrs. O.M. Wixom, Mrs. J.H. Eby; Social Com. Mrs. Jno. Hopkins, Mrs. Jesse Talley, Mrs. Arthur Holmes; Miss. Com., Mrs. A.R. Hartsook, Mrs. H.D. Lamb, Mrs. Jno Mac Rae, Mrs. Otto Laverrenz.”

The Basement Church

The group organized volunteer labor and went about the work of building a community church sanctuary. The grading for the church began in the Spring of 1921. Eleven-year-old Dale Milligan drove a team of horses for a slip while his brother-in-law, Fred Nelson, helped to dig the hole to build the basement church. Chris Nelson, the father of current congregation member Maurice Nelson, also helped dig the basement of the original church with a slip and a team of their mules. By August 1921, the basement walls and floor were finished.¹³

The group also continued to raise money. The church building fund had pledges of \$4,535 and disbursements of \$2,740 by August 1921.¹⁴

Identifying volunteers, keeping them motivated, and raising funds at the same time kept the new church officers busy. As the needs of the new organization were more fully defined, individuals shuffled between and into a more broadly organized collection of offices and boards. By the late summer of 1921 the church directory listed:¹⁵

Trustees – J.O. Hopkins, J.C. Witmer, T.J. Rice
Deacons – L.L. Talbott, Elwyn Walker, A.R. Hartsook,
M.A. Olmsted
Deaconesses – Mrs. J.A. Lyons, Mrs. George S. Lewis,
Mrs. C.A. Anderson
Elders – Rev. Tilder S. Sloan, Rev. H.D. Lamb
Clerk – Fred Gehring
Treasurer – O.M. Wixom
Chorister – George Rowen

Pianist – Margaret Anderson
Moderator of Official Board – Elwyn Walker

**The directory also included the officers of the
Community Circle:**

President – Mrs. A.R. Hartsook
Secretary – Mrs. George Mead
Treasurer – Mrs. J.C. Witmer

Church organizers procured a lot of volunteer help for erecting the new church. They also kept the building budget very lean during the early stages of the project. By August 1921, they had collected \$2,764. During the same period, they incurred expenses of \$2,741. They appear to have paid their way through excavating the site, pouring a cement floor, and building four block and brick walls including a cornerstone. At the same time, they had paid more than \$300 toward the land purchased earlier in the year.

On Sunday morning, August 28, 1921, the community gathered to place the new church cornerstone into position. They sang “America,” and listened to an invocation by Rev. H.D. Lamb. After a quartet sang some hymns, T.J. Rice read the “History of Urbandale Community Church.” Elwyn Walker “presented a box” that was probably placed inside the cornerstone. It would not have been unusual to place relevant documents and a history of the project inside the cornerstone of a “public” structure like the Community Church. Chaplain Robb officiated at the formal act of laying the cornerstone, followed by a prayer led by Rev. William J. Lockhart.¹⁶

Among the donors to the church building project listed in the program were twenty-four families, the Beaver Avenue Federated Church, and Beach Brothers store. Everybody was invited to remain after the cornerstone service for a picnic lunch. Families brought their own food and dishes and the Urbandale Community Circle provided the drinks.¹⁷

Laying the cornerstone was a occasion for celebration for all those involved. They had accomplished a lot and had a large church building project well underway and had significant community support. At the same time, they had a long way to go before finishing the structure and establishing a center for community life.¹⁸

As building continued, the costs mounted. They were able to use more volunteer labor during the early stages of construction, but building expenses began increasing in the Fall and Winter of 1921. The Board and building committee were faced with a cash-flow crisis by the beginning of 1922.

Five months after laying the cornerstone, Trustee H.O. Hopkins opened a special meeting of the Church Board by reading a proposal to raise funds by selling one of the lots originally purchased for the church. Mr. Edwards moved, seconded by Mr. Wixom, that the Board “recommend to the church that they authorize the trustees to sell lot #49 of the Maryland Addition for \$600 as soon as arrangements could be made.” The motion carried, but the Board, although united in support for the sale, may have been concerned about making this move without a formal presentation to the church congregation. After some discussion, they

decided that they would read the proposal to sell part of their land that evening, and the following two Sundays before the congregation. The congregation could vote on the proposed sale on February 12, 1922. They felt strongly enough about ensuring that congregation members knew the details of their decision-making process that they held and recorded a roll-call vote which passed unanimously.¹⁹

The proposal was read at two Sunday services and passed a vote by the congregation. The lot was sold, but this move was not enough to fulfill the church's growing financial obligations. On March 5, another special Board meeting opened at the church or at the school, but apparently, it was either too cold or too crowded and the meeting was immediately recessed to re-convene at the Rowan or the Olmsted home. Once the meeting began, Mr. Walker and Mr. Wixom moved that the "Church Board recommend to the congregation that they authorize the trustees to secure the loan of \$3500 money to be used to pay all outstanding bills for the building." They would use a mortgage on church property as security for the loan. The measure passed another roll-call vote and was read before the congregation at Sunday services and passed a vote of the congregation on March 19. It appears that the sale of the lot and securing a loan allowed the church to satisfy its financial obligations, but little money remained and the level of church operating income often made it difficult for the Board to secure pastors.²⁰

Early Pastors

Reverend Sloan preached as a volunteer while the new church was under construction, but there may have been an understanding that the new congregation would have to find a more permanent pastor by the time the new structure was finished. The Church Board found that Reverend Sherman Kirk, professor of Greek at Drake University, was available and hired him sometime in the Fall or early Winter of 1921. Jessie Lamb wrote that the church membership was ready and eager to work for and with the new pastor, but that their energies had not yet merged into a more-or-less single cohesive congregation. She described the challenge facing the new pastor as well as all the church leadership. The congregation members “were not used to working together, being from a variety of denominations, Methodist, Baptist, Disciples, Friends, Episcopalians, United Brethren, and Congregational, it took a while to develop the feeling of Unity.” “At times the going was rough, but in the long run the Christian Spirit prevailed.” Rev. Kirk remained with the church until some time in 1923 when either the low pay or other obligations forced him to resign.²¹

At about the same time as Rev. Kirk’s leaving, a possible replacement appeared in Urbandale. Jessie Lamb described the episode in her history of the church:

“Our second minister, Dunbar, dropped in unannounced, from somewhere in Oklahoma; he had his family with him. He had heard the church was without a pastor so he called on the Board members recommending himself as just the man needed. He had no other recommendations, but his pious talk won over enough of the Board members to warrant giving him an opportunity to preach for a

while. Meanwhile the Hartsooks gave his family a temporary home with them. The Board listened sympathetically to his plea for financial help and loaned him \$75 on his future salary; also he made appeals to individuals for personal loans which amounted to around \$300; he wrote one bogus check, then excused himself on some out-of-town business and was never seen again. He did send for his family however.”²²

After Mr. Dunbar’s short tenure, the Church Board turned to one of the congregation members for spiritual leadership. Harold D. Lamb had come with his family to Urbandale from Dwight, Illinois, where he had been the minister of a Congregational Church for ten years. The Lambs purchased five acres at 3400 64th Street about the time organized campaigning for a new church in Urbandale began. By the time Mr. Dunbar disappeared, H.D. Lamb and his family ran a small dairy. The Church Board asked him if he would consider accepting a call to preach. They agreed that he had little time for pastoral work and the salary would not permit him to close down the dairy business.

Sometime in mid-1923, Harold D. Lamb accepted the call to be the pastor of Urbandale Community Church and was paid an average of five or six dollars a week. He hired a man to deliver milk for him on Sundays and began his second job. It appears that this arrangement was supposed to be temporary from the start. Running a dairy operation requires constant attention, and in addition to their small farm, Rev. Lamb and his wife Jesse had six children. Furthermore, during the great 1918-1919 flu epidemic, Rev. Lamb was severely attacked by the illness and it left him

with “Parkinsonian” symptoms such as slurred speech, tremors, and sleepiness whenever he was not physically active. The symptoms made the preaching and quiet visits of his ministry very difficult and he moved into other work to support his family. The “temporary” call ended in January 1925, when the Church Board secured another full-time minister.²³

By the end of 1924, the church’s financial situation allowed the Board to make an offer of ten dollars per week to Reverend Sherman Kirk, the Drake professor. He agreed to return to Urbandale Community Church and remained until 1927.

After Rev. Kirk, a Drake student, William [or Wallace] Kent took over the pulpit for a few months. He was followed by another Drake student, Margaret Ross, who stayed with the church until 1929.

During this first decade, the church was the physical as well as spiritual center of the community. Women’s and children’s groups met in the basement sanctuary during the day. Local residents and congregation members shared communal meals and organized ice cream socials in the evenings. The Street Car Motorman Quartets, regulars at these gatherings, often sang. Seasonally, other traveling entertainers would stop in. Carle Hall remembers the Piney Woods School Choir performing more than once in the basement church. Mr. Hall was not only a spectator -- one of his earliest memories is borrowing a bow from Dorothy Burnstadt and singing “O How I Would Like To Fly So High” in front of one of these community gatherings.²⁴

In 1929, Rev. Melvin Lundeen was pastor of Grace Lutheran Church at 51st and Urbandale Avenue. He offered to preach for Urbandale Community Church if the congregation could arrange its schedule so that he could preach at both churches each Sunday morning. The congregation shifted its service and Sunday School an hour later, and Rev. Lundeen accepted the position.

The arrangement with Rev. Lundeen lasted a year and then Mrs. R. Frances Hall offered her services. Her husband was just leaving a pastorate at Westminster Presbyterian Church on Beaver Avenue. He had led the efforts at Westminster to construct a new sanctuary that was just finished. Mrs. Hall had no experience in preaching, but she was confident that she could serve the congregation well and was anxious to be ordained. The Church Board gave her an opportunity to prove herself in service to the Urbandale Community Church congregation for a year. She worked hard and spent more time in the field than anyone who preceded her. Later in 1930, the congregation organized an ordination service for her with the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Des Moines participating.

Revival Meetings

In the years leading up to this time, congregation members, consisting of only around thirty families in 1930, had joined to serve each other and the wider community. They worked out the differences associated with their varying religious backgrounds and they struggled together to build and maintain their community church. Sometime

after his ordination in 1930, Rev. Hall raised an issue that may have created the first lasting divisions among the church membership -- the issue of holding revival meetings at the church.

Midwestern revival meetings at that time often revolved around presentations by individuals or teams who had been notably unsuccessful or even rebellious in their lives until they were transformed into missionaries by publicly admitting their inherent weaknesses and by re-making their personal lives in one way or another. Congregation members held strong and opposing opinions concerning the value of these types of meetings.²⁵

Rev. Hall, with the support of a “considerable group” from the Urbandale Community Church, organized a series of evening meetings. In Polk County, a group called the Des Moines Business Men’s Team, acted as leaders at revivals, and promoted the value of revival meetings. Mrs. Lamb described members of the Business Men’s Team as “men who had been converted in downtown Mission Houses.” She continued, “some had been drinkers and criminals most of their lives.” Expressing one of the opposing points of view, she wrote that “this sort of leadership did not appeal to many of our members.” She concluded that this incident “was probably the opening wedge that later widened and resulted in the starting of a new church in the community (1940).”²⁶

Shortly after this, another related event occurred that Mrs. Lamb also presents as having a dividing influence on our early congregation. An unemployed preacher, Mr.

Little, arrived in Urbandale with his family shortly before an annual meeting. Mrs. Lamb described what followed:

“He soon found what board members were in his favor and used what influence he could to have newly elected members on his side. He wanted permission to hold a series of revival meetings, with himself as leader. The new Board would be asked to vote on the proposition. When the time came the vote resulted in a tie. The chairman did not want to cast the deciding vote, so they voted a second time – again a tie. The discussion which followed grew warm and some one moved they adjourn. The matter was not brought up again. Little continued to board and lodge with his supporters as long as they would have him. When he finally left the community, they doubtless were relieved.”²⁷

Discussions with current members of this congregation whose membership spans the 1930s reveals that some of them still hold strong feelings concerning this congregation’s association with or involvement in these revival meetings.

This divisive issue did not overshadow the many positive and cohesive facets of the church community’s life. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, church members, through participation in the Urbandale Community Circle, Sunday School, and beginning in the 1930s the Home Builders Club, served each other and the rest of the community generously.

Sunday School met each week, and was led for years by Margaret Byrd and Mrs. Millard Olmsted. The Olmsted children moved up through the Sunday School classes and

then helped as teachers and officers. The Charles Steen family maintained an exemplary participation record -- son Lowell had a perfect Sunday School attendance record for five years.²⁸

Mr. George Rowen was a long-time director of the choir. Among the early pianists were Florence Wixom, Margaret Anderson, Mrs. Charles Steen, Nellie Smith, Margaret Jane Byrd, and Marjorie Steen. Regular Board members between 1920 and the late 1930s included Elwyn Walker, A.R. Hartsook, Millard A. Olmsted, R.G. Miller, A.W. Holmes, and Harold D. Lamb.²⁹

Pastors For The Community Church

During the first fifteen years of the history of the Urbandale Community Church, the church employed a succession of short-term pastors. The result of this high turnover was that the church Board had to regularly locate replacement preachers. They were fortunate to have three local ministers to fill in when no “regular” pastor was employed. Rev. Lamb who lived in the neighborhood served many times when no other pastor could be secured. In the early days of the church, Rev. Blanchard, a retired minister attending the University Church, filled in on many occasions. A little later, retired Methodist minister Rev. Rambo, who lived on Westover Blvd., preached many times between full-time pastorates.³⁰

In January 1932, Clayton Shepard was hired to lead Sunday services. He and his wife were involved in many activities for young people and were well liked.

When the congregation was in need of their next pastor, former State Evangelist for the Disciples Church, Rev. W.S. Johnson, arrived in Urbandale selling Watkins products. He had been in an auto accident that resulted in a several weeks of hospitalization and an extended incapacitation. When he was younger he had been a church minister as well as a lecturer for the Chautauqua Circuit. Elizabeth Hamilton described Rev. Johnson in the following passage:

“W.S. Johnson, a retired Christian (Disciples) Minister was earning a living as a door-to-door salesman for Watkins Products. Our cupboards were stocked with Watkins vanilla and other flavorings, spices and salves and drink mixes. They even had products for our dairy cows.”

”Mother got well acquainted with him and he became interested in our church. It was looking for a minister, as usual, and he applied and was hired, and served several years. He was satisfactory as a minister. He wore false teeth which didn’t fit properly and they rattled when he talked. Some of the children made fun of him. One Sunday they put a thumb tack on his pulpit chair and waited expectantly for him to sit down. He sat and didn’t make any reaction and they were disappointed.”³¹

In August 1939, the seventy-five-year-old Rev. Johnson resigned and counseled the congregation to hire a younger man.

Elizabeth Hamilton was closely associated with locating the Community Church's next full-time minister. She wrote that:

“In 1938 I graduated from Iowa State College and started teaching Home Economics at Webb, Iowa - near Spencer. I rented a room for \$8. a month with an elderly couple who rented their upstairs rooms. The other room was occupied by Mildred Reece, who was a bank employee. I got acquainted with her family. Her younger brother was Maynard Reece, now a well-known painter of nature. Her father, Waldo Reece was pastor of the Friends Church in Earlham, Iowa. I told him about our church, which was the Community Church then. He was interested in ecumenicity and the Community Church idea appealed to him. He was wanting to move on, so he came to Urbandale to talk to the Board members and was hired. For a few years he lived at the church, using the kitchen to cook his meals, another room for a bedroom and another for his office and study.”

“He was artistic, also, and created miniature Biblical characters and scenery to illustrate Bible stories.”³²

The end of Rev. Reece's tenure may also mark the end of the raw, democratic, and free-form community church phase for this congregation. As a result of its problems finding and keeping ministers, as well as members' desires for a larger and more ornate sanctuary, the congregation began to explore the option of joining an established denomination.

Urbandale Community Circle

Even while beginning the search for a denomination, the congregation retained two of their established community-oriented organizations: the Urbandale Community Circle, and the Home Builders Club.

As mentioned above, the Urbandale Community Circle was organized in February 1921 by local women “to promote fellowship and Christian development.” Their motto was “United for Christ and the Church.”³³

By 1930, the group was divided into six committees: devotional, program, membership, social, welfare, and work. They met twice each month. Most meetings included religious songs, prayers, or discussions; an administrative component; a review of community members’ needs; a review of the Community Church's needs; and a work period when members made aprons, quilts, etc.

The Community Circle provided for the Community Church in a variety of ways: They supported their church, periodically cleaned the church, donated coffee for church meetings,³⁴ and donated money to the Community Church. For example, in 1930 they gave \$40, and in 1931 they gave another \$40.³⁵ They collected a penny-per-year birthday donation at each meeting.³⁶ They decided to begin refitting the church kitchen in 1931 and again in 1941.³⁷

They sponsored "jitney suppers" and sold doughnuts in the 1930s and 1940s. In February 1942, they sold what must have been a record 71 dozen doughnuts in a single day. They organized father-son and mother-daughter banquets. They made doughnuts for community events,

which were often held at the church. They sponsored rummage sales and ice cream socials. When it was too hot to hold scheduled events in the church, they went out onto the school lawn a block north on 70th Street. They invited groups for lunch at the church, and also served lunches for teachers and students from the nearby school.³⁸

The “Circle” members also served the community on a more immediate and personal level. They collected a piece of fruit from each member in order to make a basket for Mr. Anderson who had been ill for a while. They delivered a fern to Mrs. Nauman. They did some sewing for Mrs. Towers because she was very busy with sick children. They made a quilt for Mrs. Miller. They delivered flowers to Mrs. Leach and a potted plant to Miss Swanson. They also sent hundreds of cards and letters, and organized and prepared scores of meals for grieving families as well as for the congregation.³⁹

In their shared sewing or quilting period at many meetings, they made tea towels and wash cloths, and they sewed rags for rugs during afternoons throughout the 1940s.⁴⁰

They sometimes called off meetings during the summer months. The longest period without meeting may have been from the end of April to the end of August 1930.

While maintaining a strong focus on the needs of their immediate community and their church, members also used this group as a means to investigate issues and needs far beyond their neighborhood. Mrs. Lamfort gave a talk on Christmas in foreign lands.⁴¹ Mrs. Lamb read an article

about an old Mexican church.⁴² Mrs. Lamb and Mrs. Thompson, who attended the Women's Missionary Interdenominational Council held at the Highland Park Presbyterian Church, spoke about Mrs. Breclinridge, head of the nursing service in Kentucky.⁴³ Mrs. Lamb gave a program reviewing what she recently learned about Haitian history, culture, and religious practices. Missionary Helen Yost, who had spent time in Africa and Haiti, was the featured speaker at the Interdenominational Council of Women meeting, at which Mrs. Lamb represented Urbandale Community Church.⁴⁴ Mrs. Lamb, Mrs. Cox, and Mrs. Thompson reported on the "Missionary Conference" that they recently attended. One of the highlights was a review of Miss Scudder's work in India.⁴⁵ Mrs. Lamb gave a report of the Missionary Council on the "People of China."⁴⁶ The "Circle" donated to the Leper Missions.⁴⁷ The "Circle" decided to assemble and quilt a comforter for the Greek Relief Fund.⁴⁸ Mrs. Whitten gave the "Thoughts of the Day" on the "race problems."⁴⁹

A Bit of History of the Urbandale U.C.C. (Congregational)

By Julia Lamb Lake

The Harold Lamb family came to Urbandale in 1920 from Dwight, Illinois, where Harold Lamb had been minister of the Congregational Church. The family had been victims of the great flu epidemic in 1919. The illness became encephalitis for Harold. This resulted in Parkinsonian symptoms, such as slurred speech, tremors, and sleepiness whenever he was not physically active. He could not continue in the ministry.

Our family settled on the five acres at 3400 64th Street. I consider our parents, Harold and Jessie Lamb, were heroes in being able to raise their six children on those five acres to be educated and responsible citizens. There was no church in Urbandale at that time, and we joined Plymouth Congregational Church, which was then at 8th and Pleasant streets in Des Moines.

Several families began to realize the need for a church in Urbandale. The Olmsteds, the Lambs, the Rowans (parents of Margaret Avaux, Hopkins, Milligans, Byrds, Battinas are some of the names I remember. They formed a community church, because they were of various denominations. They built the basement of this church for worship. At times Harold Lamb filled the pulpit when they were without a regular minister. After some rather disappointing experiences, such as one so-called minister who borrowed all he could from everyone he could and then skipped out of town, the members realized that they needed to belong to one denomination. After much

searching they decided to join the Congregational Church,
now the United Church of Christ Congregational.

With that denomination's help they added the
sanctuary which is now replaced by this more adequate
and beautiful worship center.

We owe much to those families who struggled to build
the first church in Urbandale.

Julia Lamb Luke

The children of Harold and Jessie Lamb

Julia Lamb Luke

Robert Durley Lamb

Elizabeth Lamb Hamilton

Dorothy Lamb Baxter

William Winfield Lamb

Mary Lamb Brown.

Part Two: Congregational Church, 1944-1957

The Urbandale Community Church operated without formal association with any religious denomination for 23 years. Reverend Omar Flugam led the congregation into a vote to join the Iowa Conference of Congregational Churches. The name of the church was changed to “Urbandale Community Church (Congregational).”⁵⁰

One outcome of this new association was the arrival of Dr. Frederick Cooper, former pastor-at-large for the Iowa conference of the Congregational Christian Church. Reverend Cooper joined the Urbandale congregation in 1946 and immediately began playing a leadership role in the planning for a new sanctuary. By June of that year, plans for the new structure were revealed in the Des Moines Register. The new “Gothic design” church would seat three hundred people and be completed at a cost of \$30,000.⁵¹

Our congregation may have quietly begun the fund-raising for a new sanctuary with an unsolicited ten dollar donation. Although there could have been earlier informal planning and discussions concerning a building project, the initial recorded formal contribution for the first wholly above-ground sanctuary was submitted at the February 1946 meeting of the Home Builders Class.⁵²

The Home Builders Class was a group of church couples that met monthly for a Saturday evening potluck meal, cards or other recreation, and general fellowship.⁵³ Members also organized and executed fund-raisers for a variety of church projects. Throughout the 1940s and early

1950s, they also attempted to use their group activities as a tool for drawing non-members into the church.

Seven married couples co-hosted the February 1946 meeting at the Urbandale Legion Hall. The secretary, Amanda Johnson, listed them as Mr. Clifton & Mrs. Charlotte McNabb, Mr. Newton & Mrs. Ruth Dunn, Dr. & Mrs. Reynolds, Mr. Eldon & Mrs. Ruth Clements, Mr. E.W. & Mrs. Marie Gates, Mr. Robert & Mrs. Sue Groves, and Mr. Melvin & Mrs. Sharon Johnson.⁵⁴ President McNabb led a short business meeting where Joe Roper⁵⁵ donated ten dollars to seed the Home Builders' Building Fund. Mr. Roper planted his money in the group's building fund in the hope that it would spawn additional dollars to help fund the new sanctuary above the existing basement church. As a condition for accepting his donation, he asked that the group find ways to add to the money.

The executive committee -- Dr. Frederick Cooper, Clifton McNabb, Ed De Young, Bernard VanderMullen, Ruth Clements, Sue Graves, and E.W. Gates -- accepted the contribution and assumed the responsibility for making plans. Newton Dunn moved that Mr. Roper attend the executive committee meeting and the motion appears to have passed. The executive committee met at the McNabb home on March 5. The executives had a long agenda, and spent considerable time discussing doing away with the collection held at each regular meeting. They seemed to agree on discontinuing the practice but could not agree on a way to make up for the lost revenue. They talked about pulling the name of a "donor" out of a hat each meeting, selling box suppers, and Mr. Gates suggested a Birthday Bank. As a result of their lengthy debates, they did not get

around to a formal discussion concerning the multiplication of Mr. Roper's gift. In a manner similar to most good executive bodies, they delegated the job of coming up with a plan for the Building Fund's first gift. Mr. Gates was asked to come up with a strategy to increase the ten dollars Mr. Roper gave to the Building Fund.

At the regular March Home Builders meeting, the group spent most of the business meeting arguing about whether to take a collection at each meeting. Until this time, the monthly collection usually went into the group's general fund, but was sometimes allocated to special projects. After a long discussion, the group voted 18 to 13 to "leave a box on the tables and anyone that wishes to contribute may do so."⁵⁶ Again, there was no time to deal with Joe Roper's Building Fund donation.

Near the end of the regular April Home Builders meeting, President McNabb asked for suggestions concerning the Roper donation. Dr. Cooper suggested that the group purchase "a pig or two and have some one on a farm raise them out." (Dr. Cooper may not have kept up on livestock prices.) The group agreed, and Mr. Gilchrist placed a dollar in a basket and passed it around the room. When it returned, it contained \$14.00. With a total now of \$24.00, they expected that they would be able to purchase one healthy young animal. If their estimate was off and they were a little short, they could take from the general fund to make up the difference. E.W. Gates volunteered to take care of an acre of ground for feed if someone else would plant it.⁵⁷

At the next meeting, Mr. Gates turned in a receipt for \$7.00 and reported that he had planted a little more than an acre of popcorn. Apparently, the group had decided against raising pork, and had chosen instead to raise popcorn. They established a fund to pay for seed, and intended to expand the program next season. By September 1946, the Popcorn Fund for 1947 contained \$5.00.⁵⁸ With this uneven start, one of the church's most successful long term public relations campaigns began -- "God's Acre."

God's Acre Project

In the Fall of 1948 and in early 1949, Dr. Cooper and his congregation planned an expansion of the 1946 popcorn planting as a fund-raiser as well as a means of attracting attention to Urbandale Church. Dr. Cooper called the expanded planting the "God's Acre Project."⁵⁹

Dr. Cooper told a Des Moines Register reporter in May 1949 that there was a three-fold purpose to the God's Acre project. He said that it was a fund-raiser, a soil reclamation project, and an example of rural-urban cooperation. While he said that he hoped the building fund would make a net profit of \$3,000 on the venture, he made a point of emphasizing that "the great thing in my mind about this is getting the town folks and the rural people out here and working together."⁶⁰

This type of project was nothing new for Dr. Cooper. "For four years, 1942 to 1946, he was pastor-at-large for the Iowa conference of the Congregational Christian Church. During that period, he supervised several "God's Acre"

projects in which produce was grown for the benefit of churches. "⁶¹

The project was an ambitious one. Congregation members made cash donations to pay the \$700 dollar rent on eighty acres of farmland owned by the Fort Dodge Realty Company. The land was described at the time as being "on Douglas Avenue, just west of the Urbandale community." Some current congregation members offer that the seventy acres were part of what is now called Karen Acres.⁶²

The acreage included a winding waterway and an undulating hill. Dr. Cooper arranged for three soil conservation experts to lay out the planting in order to minimize erosion and make most effective use of seed, rain, and fertilizer. The project may have been used by the soil conservationists as a demonstration plot and training exercise for area farmers. The experts included Clay Barnett, district conservation officer; Lloyd Harrison, Polk County agricultural office; and Lou Morris, contour layout specialist.⁶³

Under the direction of congregation member Hugh Smith, the work of preparing the land for planting began on Wednesday, May 11, 1949. Mr. Smith organized a party of sixteen farmers in and around Urbandale who donated their time and labor. The farmers included Roy Avaux, Gilbert Collins, Melvin Irving, Everett Irving, Lee Olmsted, Leonard Phelps, Roy Strain, John Valerius, Jr., Carl Mott, Jesse Ward, Olaf Westby, Ray Stewart, Alfred Winters, John Little, and Leo McCabe.⁶⁴ In addition, dealers in six Iowa cities and towns donated equipment and operators, as well as seed corn and fertilizer.⁶⁵

By Saturday, the plowing, harrowing, and fertilizing must have been nearly finished. Six tons of fertilizer were used on the seventy acres. The women of the church set up a tent and supplied food and cold drinks for the men in the field. Younger church members helped by moving supplies of seed and the remaining fertilizer into the field. Someone set up a large sign announcing the project. Jesse Ward, Calvin Elings, Leonard Phelps, John Valerius, and Les Hamilton brought their tractors to help. They began working at 9 a.m. and completed the planting by 6 p.m.⁶⁶

At the regular June meeting, the Home Builders Class discussed painting a large "God's Acre" sign. They continued to review the "God's Acre" sign issue until deciding to move at the September 1949 meeting. They voted and resolved to bring the entire project before the Church Board, and if the Board took no action, then they would have the sign painted. By October, the issue of a sign was secondary to harvesting their crops. Mr. Young informed the group that the God's Acre corn-picking was to be on November 4 and 5. He wanted help from the group's "city folks"; experience was not required. Some of the crop was stored in slatted snow fence cribs on Lew Young's land "near the north end of the farm grove" [today near 3911 through 3915 73rd Street].⁶⁷

Between Spring 1949 and December 1950, the church Building Fund raised \$2,184.61 through the "God's Acre" project. Donations did not keep up with the outlays required to plant a crop, however, and the church had to invest more than \$1,400 dollars in land rent and miscellaneous farm expenses during the first two years of

the project. Ultimately, the fund-raiser did not net the \$3,000 as Dr. Cooper had originally hoped. During its final year of operation, the project brought in additional funds. For example, in February 1951, the Home Builders' treasurer reported that they earned \$52.88 after selling some of the God's Acre Project corn as feed. Available records do not indicate the total income that the effort generated.⁶⁸

The Home Builders' Fund-Raising for a New Sanctuary

The Home Builders sponsored or participated in a number of events and activities that realized more immediate and greater success in bringing in required funds for an ambitious construction project. The Home Builders made pies, cakes, and ice cream for sale at the Urbandale Spring Festival and served meals to community organizations once in a while. They worked with the Women's Circle and the Sunday School Classes on a May rummage sale at Arlington Hall and on a variety of entertainment and concessions at the Fall Carnival. They sold Christmas cards and wrapping paper. For their efforts, they added more than \$250 to their accounts.

At the first meeting in 1947, the Home Builders Class elected Art Garner President; Robert Groves Vice President; Clyde Collins, Secretary; and Edith Cox, Treasurer.⁶⁹ They began the year with a discussion of potential money-making activities, but the membership must have been busy with other events and did not get around to their first fund-raiser until June 7, when they held a bake sale at Bargers

Grocery. They prepared and served a meal for the Urbandale Lions Club, and operated a booth at the Carnival in August.⁷⁰

The 1948 Home Builders Class officers included Robert Groves, President; Ed De Young, Vice President; Virginia Ball, Secretary; and Ernie Vermazen, Treasurer. They sponsored a rummage sale in April, a smorgasbord in October, and a dinner and bazaar in December. In addition, they sold cards and wrapping paper again. One of their own members offered them an interesting new opportunity. Eldon Clements owned a skating rink in Urbandale. He offered to make the rink available on November 8, for a Sunday School class party. The membership thought this was a good idea and appointed Robert Ball and Harold Foote to organize the event. More than eighty people participated in the party and the Home Builders made another \$47.71 for the Building Fund.⁷¹

The 1949 Home Builders Class elected Ralph Whitten, Robert Lamb, Lawanna McPherson, and Ernie Vermazen as President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The group agreed to sponsor an ice cream social, a smorgasbord, and a rummage sale, as well as sell cards and wrapping paper again to raise money during the year. In May 1949, the owner of the Urban Theater gave the receipts for two nights as an early donation to the church building fund.⁷²

In 1950, the Class elected Jom Freshner, President; Clyde Collins, Vice President; Louise Lamb, Secretary; and Nona McFall, Treasurer. In July, Betty Barton and Joe Roper moved that the church's young people could have the greeting and Christmas cards remaining from previous

years. They wanted to sell them and direct the profits to the organ memorial fund.

Also in July 1950, Ed De Young reported on the progress of the church building. He optimistically predicted that they would be able to move back into the church on September 1. Mr. De Young also reminded them that the Home Builders treasury, nearly \$1,600, was supposed to be used for furnishing the new sanctuary. The Home Builders Class had committed themselves to paying for the new sanctuary's pews. At a "special" August meeting the members of the Home Builders Class voted that they transfer \$1,000 from their Building Fund to help pay for the pews. The Church Board had ordered pews and expected them to arrive by October 1. The Class also decided to use \$200 of their funds to purchase some Buckham & Company cabinets for the church kitchen.⁷³

Public Fund-Raising, or The Formal Marketing of the New Sanctuary

Planners for a new sanctuary revealed their designs in June 1946 and immediately conducted a canvass for funds. Under the direction of Charles Chew, Chair of the Building Committee, and Clay Rusk, Chair of the Finance Committee, fund raisers visited 128 people and collected pledges for \$20,730. The “Gothic” style sanctuary they hoped to erect was supposed to cost \$30,000. Sometime between this initial canvass and the last stages of pre-construction fund-raising, the proposed sanctuary was re-designed to conform with the realities of rising construction costs and their budget. The final design was somewhat smaller and more conservative than the original. Gone were the stained glass windows, high vaulted ceiling, and heavy stone-work. Even as the structure was re-designed, the arguments behind the urge to expand church facilities remained.⁷⁴

Why build a new sanctuary? A building project of this scale consumes a vast amount of a congregation's or a small community's time, energy, and funds. Did people have less to do and more money available for the church? Probably not. Church leaders believed that the congregation and the broader community would help pay for the new sanctuary and for upgrading the existing basement. They knew, though, that they would have to convince individuals and families to give enough to fully fund the project. To this end, the Building Committee, and possibly Dr. Cooper, put together campaign brochures that outlined a two-part rationale.

First, fund raisers argued that our church "places the child at the center of its efforts":

"From the day of birth, with a child's enrollment in the Cradle Roll, he becomes a concern of our Church. With a program of parental instruction for the earliest years, followed by a graded program of worship, instruction and service activities, an attempt is made to develop Christian character in each individual. Your child is in the hands of consecrated Christian persons during his earliest social contacts and for his subsequent religious training."

"The Christian education program of our church has as its purpose the development of Christian character in each child who comes under its influence. We feel that Christian character can never be bought or developed by inferior methods, materials or equipment. If character is to grow, people of a community must invest in the kind of institution that has accepted the nurture of character as its supreme obligation. This is one of the principal aims of our church as 'Together We Build for the Future.'"⁷⁵

The existing devotion to the congregation's children was at odds with the church's facilities. The writers estimated that the church was operating at half the floor space required to fulfill this mission. Along with poor layout, this situation resulted in: "confusion, overcrowding, nerve strain for children and dismay for teachers."⁷⁶

The brochures also discussed more utilitarian concerns such as an enhanced kitchen and parlor, a storage room, and a workroom for the custodian. Readers were also reminded that "building a temple of worship is a chance of a lifetime."

At the same time, the congregation was faced with the development of another congregation in the community. The Open Bible Church [later the Victory Christian Center] was built in 1948. Could the opening of another church in Urbandale, then a community of roughly 1,700 residents, have provided additional motivation to expand the facilities at Urbandale Church?

At the time of this writing, no documentation concerning the act of constructing the new "upstairs" sanctuary was available. Bob Ingham was the primary contractor, but the actual building included a lot of volunteer labor [Charles Chew played a construction leadership role for the congregation.] The structure was "relatively complete" by the Fall of 1950. The congregation continued to meet in the "basement church" throughout much of the construction, but met at the Legion Hall for at least two Sundays.⁷⁷

The sanctuary was dedicated at the 11:00 service on October 15, 1950. Rev. R.J. Cornell gave the invocation and Mrs. Judsen E. Fiebiger gave greetings from the Board of Home Missions, U.S. The Rev. Judsen E. Fiebiger, State Superintendent of Congregational and Christian churches gave what was described as an "inspiring sermon" to the filled sanctuary. The title of Rev. Fiebiger's sermon was "Anchors and Sails." He explained that an anchor was

something to hold on to and rely upon, but not to be tied to. The sail, he proposed, was a mission to set Christians forth. He advised the congregation to “catch the vision of your forefathers -- let your ancestors be your guidepost, and not a hitching post.”⁷⁸

During the service, Ed De Young, Chair of the Board of Trustees, presented the keys to the sanctuary to Dr. Cooper.⁷⁹

A number of new fixtures were installed in the upstairs sanctuary. The Dossal Cloth was donated in memory of Charles Gilchrist; the Altar, in memory of Dick Kennedy; and the Altar Service, in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Cooper's son, Ensign Frederick Cooper, Jr., purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Fred McClure of North Manchester, Indiana.⁸⁰

Laura Ward helped organize the funding for a new organ. She wrote:

“In 1950 one of our young people was killed in an automobile accident the week before he was to graduate from High School [Charles Dixon Smith 1932-1950]. The group decided to buy the electric organ for the church in his memory. Our new sanctuary was just finished at that time. Mrs. Olson of the piano company offered to take a very small down payment and installed the new organ. He accepted our small payments which we earned from ice cream socials - bake sales - car washes and donations made by parents and other church members. We were charged no interest and had our debt paid in about two years. It was a wonderful experience for all of us.”⁸¹

The Church Bell, 1950

In 1876, Webster Township residents north of Des Moines worked together to build a simple neighborhood church at what is now the intersection of 70th Street and Meredith Drive. The church was named for the McDivitt family, pioneer settlers in the area. The congregation remodeled the church in 1898,⁸² adding a narthex and bell tower with a large bell. The church was owned and maintained by a board of directors and served the rural community through the early 1920s. Apparently, as time passed, some community members began attending other area churches while others were caught up in the deep rural economic downturn of the 1920s. In 1926, the church board deeded the church and a small cemetery on its grounds to the township.

By the late 1930s, the church appears to have been essentially unused. In the late 1940s, Webster Township trustees began to discuss the idea of demolishing the deteriorating structure. The unused church building was the subject of considerable controversy in the community. When the trustees announced that the church would be sold at public auction, eighty area residents signed a petition against the sale. Persons protesting the sale argued that the old church had great sentimental value.

William Keyte, chair of the Webster Township board of trustees in 1950 also believed that the church ought to be memorialized in the community saying, "My dad helped install [the] bell in 1898. We thought it would be a nice

gesture to keep it in the community.” The board talked with the protesters and agreed that the old structure would be sold, but its bell would remain in the community.

McDivitt Grove Church was sold at auction to E.E. Clements, Urbandale business owner and member of the Urbandale Church, for \$660. The money would be used to “fix up” and maintain McDivitt Grove Cemetery. It is not clear how the church bell was transferred to Urbandale Church. A 1950 newspaper article implies that the Webster Township trustees gave the bell to the church, selling only the remaining structure to Mr. Clements, but current congregation members remember the sequence of events differently. They remember that E.E. Clements purchased the church including its bell, and then donated the bell to be re-installed in the new bell tower then being added to Urbandale Church. In either case, the bell was used to announce the opening of Sunday services in its second home for more than forty years. It remains in the tower on the northeast corner of the Urbandale United Church of Christ.⁸³

"New Church 'Had to Open Aug. 9': Pastor's Golden Wedding Date"

by Lillian McLaughlin

(Des Moines Tribune, Aug. 9, 1950)

At 8 p.m. Wednesday approximately 300 persons--men, women, teen-agers and youngsters--will crowd into the new \$70,000 Congregational Community church at Seventieth street and Oliver Smith drive.

Though the interior is still unfinished, for the Urbandale congregation an opening on any other date but Aug. 9 was unthinkable.

Could there be a happier occasion than the golden wedding anniversary of Dr. and Mrs. Frederick Cooper?

In the six years Dr. Cooper has been associated with the church--the last four as pastor--its congregation has grown from 70 to 250, its expense budget from \$2,600 to \$6,641.

\$4,000 from Crops.

Under his leadership, members rented 70 acres of land--within sight of the new church--laid in crops and gathered last year a \$4,000 harvest to swell the building fund.

In a sense, the trim, sturdy new structure is a symbol of the flowering of Dr. Cooper's 51-year career as a minister, of the Coopers' 50-year team-work.

The story of that career, and its obligato of a happy marriage, is the American bypath story, but pleasant, in these troublesome times, to review:

Poverty, a large family, a poor backwoods farm--these elements of Fred Cooper's early life kept him from an education in boyhood.

Pastors "Called."

"In that background there was a strong belief that ministers were 'called' to the church," said 73-year-old Cooper. "My concept of that has changed, now. I didn't have the inclination for it at first, and thought my lack of education would rule me out."

"But then I told myself, 'what better reason for getting

an education?"

Cooper, working as a farm hand--any job he could get--finished "common school" after he was 19.

In 1897, as a student-minister in Kansas, he preached his first sermon, doubling as a farm hand or ranch foreman when he had to.

In 1900 he was married in the parlor of a farm home near Lafontaine, Kan., to a girl he had first seen as a youngster "pushing around a little doll cab."

His wife, Dr. Cooper declares, has been "a mighty good second."

"We'd go out and work together on paper-hanging jobs!" recalls Mrs. Cooper.

Graduates.

In 1906, Cooper was graduated from Kansas Christian College in Lincoln, in 1914 he received an M.A. degree from Defiance college, Defiance, Ohio.

He worked as a supply minister at Lincoln, was superintendent of a school at Sylvan Grove, served as president of a small church school in Weaubleau, Mo., and dean of another in Albany.

In 1917, he became a pastor-evangelist, and in the early 30's, joint superintendent of the Indiana conference.

In 1942 to 1946 he was pastor at large for the Iowa Conference of Congregational Christian churches.

"We've had a serious life," said Cooper, "but we've had time for fun, too."

"Still do!" quipped his wife.

"But the big thing you get from such a life," added her husband, "is the knowledge of lives you have influenced. I've always been evangelistic in my work, but not spectacular or sensational. I've tried to appeal to men's

reason and sense.

"That way I hope it will last. It makes me happy that men have told me it does," he said.

Three Children

The Coopers reared and educated three children. Mrs. Harry Englund of Orange City was graduated from Simpson college, and teaches dramatics now at Northwestern Junior college in her home town.

Mrs. Wendell Reed of Winterset went through business college.

The Coopers' only son, Frederick, jr., was graduated from a small Indiana college, and coached and taught at Elkhart and Orange City before he went into the navy in World War II.

"We lost our son at Iwo Jima," Mrs. Cooper said.

"Mr. Forrestall said eight small ships went in before the landings. It was an underwater demolition job. I don't understand just what," said Dr. Cooper.

"A mine blew up the ship, right under where our son was standing. There was nothing..."

In Dramatization.

Their son's 9-year-old daughter, Rebecca, and their four other grandchildren will enact a dramatization of the couple's life at the celebration Wednesday night. The play was written for the occasion by Mrs. Englund.

Built 3 Churches.

In his career, Dr. Cooper has built three churches, served nine regular pastorates, devoting his years to

"teaching and preaching," he says.

He knows that retirement may be not too far away now.

"But I'll stay here to see this church through," he said. "Then maybe some little village church... The need is too great now for a man to retire." ⁸⁴

By many measures, Dr. Cooper had a successful tenure at Urbandale Church. The year 1950 stood out as particularly special because the church had received more than fifty new members, in addition to "completing" the construction of a new sanctuary. ⁸⁵

Funding for the building project was problematic. The church had borrowed \$20,000 from the Congregational Home Mission Board and another \$3,000 from the Congregational Conference of Iowa. They had also received \$5,000 in grants from the same two groups. The minimum loan repayment was supposed to be \$2,000 plus three percent interest annually, due on December 1 each year. The congregation was unable to make its first payment at the end of 1950 because of a serious cash flow problem. Building expenses above and beyond the original construction contract continued throughout 1950. Heating and wiring added another \$5,700; architect's fees of \$1,676 [in addition to a \$500 donation]; pews and other furnishings cost \$4,700; landscaping, parking, painting, floor finishing, insurance, legal, and additional expenses combined for another \$570. After paying these expenses, the church Building Fund had only \$40.27 on hand on December 5, 1950. The Board asked for an extension on the first

payment to the Home Mission Board, and was granted a one-year delay. Church records indicate that Building Fund pledges alone would not meet the projected 1951 expenses. The church was headed for a change.⁸⁶

A little more than a month after having to skip payment on the church loan, the church received the following letter:

“January 15, 1951

To the Urbandale Community Congregational Church:”

“Brethren:

Realizing that all human relationships must ultimately end, and feeling that my greatest usefulness to your church has likely passed, I am hereby offering my resignation as your pastor, which resignation is to take effect as soon as through our State Conference office or other means, a new field of service can be worked out for myself and wife.

I feel confident that you will not be in so great a hurry to rid yourselves of us as to force a discontinuance of our work here before we have elsewhere to work.

We shall leave with many regrets of course, and with deep remembrances of friendships that we hope shall never end either in this life or in the life to come.

I shall be glad to co-operate in any way I can in securing a new and younger man to take this field. I came to you in the first place only because I believed you had a future. I have not changed my mind in that respect. I shall always be interested in the progress of this church so long as I shall live.

May our Lord guide you in all your future plans is our sincerest prayer.

Signed Frederick Cooper⁸⁷

After a relatively short search, the congregation called Reverend Gayle Strickler to be their next minister. Reverend Strickler had been preaching at the only Protestant church on the Island of Lanai, Hawaii for six years. On July 1, 1951, he arrived in Urbandale, Iowa, with his wife Elisabeth, and three children, Gayle Jr.(7), Douglas (4), and Stephen (2). He gave his first service in our church on July 4. Rev. Strickler's selection was a little unusual because Article 3 "Calling The Pastor," of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Urbandale Community Church (Congregational) stated that "the candidate for pastor shall be invited to preach at least one sermon before being voted upon." The author has not been able to find any evidence that there was any formal resolution to void the "preaching" requirement, and those involved suggest that because of the expense of a trip from Hawaii to Urbandale, this caveat was ignored.⁸⁸

In August 1951, Rev. Strickler performed his first baptisms, and in October 1951, he received his first new members.⁸⁹

On November 18, 1951, Rev. Strickler published the first "Call." This was generally a single sheet flier mailed to all church members once a month. The Call has been published without interruption since this time.⁹⁰

1954 Easter Pageant

Seven hundred and seven people attended the three Easter services at Urbandale Community Church (Congregational) in 1954. The Board of Elders and Deacons sponsored an Easter pageant for the 6:30 a.m. sunrise service. The pageant was entitled "The Risen Lord," by Walter Russell Bowie. The play included more than twenty congregation members.⁹¹

The list of characters included:

The Reader - Clay Rusk

The Angel - Melvin Roetman

The Disciples

Simon Peter - Carrol Cline

Andrew - Clide Collins

John - Jack Sims

James - Lin Richardson

Phillip - Frank Gibson

Bartholomew - Harold Foote

Matthew - Dean Gamble

James the Younger - Ray Locke

Thaddeus - Henry Frevert

Simon - Henry Frevert

Thomas - Newton Dunn

Judas Iscariot - Forrest Yeater

Two Women

Mary Magdalene - Kay Minnich

Another Mary - Mrs. Richard Jones

Other followers of Jesus

A Sick Man - Robert Rockey

A Lame Beggar - Byron Jamison

The Daughter of Jairus - Carol Dunn

Lazarus - Maynard Peterson
The Roman Centurion - Rodger Powell
Scenery - Ralph Whitten
Lighting - Gene Laverrenz and Frank Gibson.⁹²

The service and pageant were considered great successes.⁹³

New Missions

In 1954, an assistant pastor, George Crosby, joined the church staff. He and his wife, Sarah Crosby, were responsible for the Senior High Program as well as helping with the weekly church duties and the Church School programs. Mr. Crosby had degrees from Arkansas Polytechnic College and University of Arkansas. He had served as a minister in the Tecumseh Christian Church in Tecumseh, Oklahoma, and Christian Churches in Dardanell and Ola, Arkansas. Mrs. Crosby had finished three years of an Elementary Education program in Arkansas and was working on a B.A. degree at Drake University. George Crosby was just entering the Divinity School at Drake University.⁹⁴

On January 13, 1955, at the annual meeting, the congregation voted to allow Rev. Strickler to go to Japan as part of the Special Centenary Mission. The mission began in 1953 under the direction of Lawrence Lacour, then the evangelist for the Iowa Methodist Conference. Under its auspices and with the blessings of the United Church of Christ and the National Christian Council of Japan, ministers and lay people from America invested two months

of concentrated effort to help strengthen and expand the Christian witness in Japan.⁹⁵

Urbandale Church helped raise the \$2,000 required to support Rev. Strickler on this project. George Crosby took over Rev. Strickler's duties while the latter was away.

In June 1955, shortly after arriving in Japan, Rev. Strickler participated in a large mass meeting in Yamato where more than 1,000 people came to share in the mission. In a letter home he described the experience in the following passage:

“It was an outdoor meeting and the moon and stars served as a backdrop.” “‘What a Friend We Have In Jesus’ in Japanese was caught up on the strong even breeze.” “I sat on top of a truck ... used for these meetings and looked down over a sea of faces with a sense of awe wondering if it was me. With these people I shall invest two months of my life. To what end? That I commit to God, praying that something of his love will reach them through me. I am indeed richly blessed in this experience. I shall be eternally grateful to all who have made this experience possible. It will take the rest of my life to express my thanks.” [Rev. Strickler, July 1, 1955]⁹⁶

Rev. Strickler helped establish a church at Yamato and still retains some contact with this congregation. The Urbandale congregation sent \$500 to purchase land for a new church building in Yamato.⁹⁷

In early 1956, under the supervision of Ralph Wallace, President of Men's Fellowship, the men of the congregation

Painted the church. Each man was responsible for purchasing one gallon of paint and applying it to the walls. After the paint was dry, traverse rods were installed and new draperies were hung.⁹⁸

In November 1956, the worn wooden floor of Fellowship Hall was removed, revealing a cement floor and 29 cents. With minor patching, a week later tile was installed.⁹⁹

The Education Wing

Rev. Frederick Cooper began corresponding with the Urbandale city government in 1951 concerning the use of church facilities by the city schools.

In order to make room for future growth, the church purchased the lot just west of the sanctuary for \$4,500 in early 1954. This was the same lot [legal description “lot number 49”] that it had sold for \$600 in 1921.¹⁰⁰

In April 1954, the Church Board established a committee to plan for the expansion and improvement of the church facilities. The original members were Clay Rusk, Charles Chew, Bud Barton, Bob Groves, and Ruth Clements. Ralph H. Klinestiver was soon added to the committee with the title of Acting Chairman. There must have been significant discussions about expanding the church prior to creating the “improvement” committee because within a few weeks they were examining the first drawings of a proposed addition. In early May 1954, Don Utterback, of the Wetherell and Harrison firm, presented

the first set of drawings for “the proposed educational addition.” The committee studied the drawings and reviewed their goals with Mr. Utterback. The firm agreed to return with a second set of drawings by mid-May.¹⁰¹

Turning concept drawings into funded bricks and mortar requires sensitive leadership, hard work, persistence, faith, and appropriate timing [some might add luck]. Originally, the education wing was going to serve the congregation exclusively, and the need appears to have been great. Mr. Klinestiver wrote to the Conference Superintendent in August 1955:

“You are well aware of our inadequate space to handle our present members of our church school --- we are now conducting both church services and church school on a platoon system. As to our church services we have adequate space as we can have multiple services, but for our church school, enrollment 357, we have to crowd them in small rooms or enclose them off in a large room with a screen or drapes. It is becoming more difficult to secure competent teachers to work under the handicaps such as we have.”¹⁰²

The church expansion committee organized and executed building fund campaigns in 1954 and 1955, gathering \$26,260 in cash and pledges. The pledges were originally supposed to expire in three years, but the proposed addition cost more than pledged, the loan to cover project funding was delayed, and projected costs continued to rise. Conference Superintendent Rev. Judson E. Fiebiger originally appears to have considered the project

underfunded and as a result did not initially support the church's application for a \$40,000 to \$50,000 loan.¹⁰³

Rev. Fiebiger had many other fundraising efforts under way including one that Urbandale Church actively supported. Mr. Arlo Hinegardner erected a dam across a stream on his central Iowa property in 1936, creating a new lake. He originally intended to use the lake to supply farmers with fish for small farm ponds. "The beautiful lake and the hills surrounding it soon became popular for fishing, boating, and picnicking. Later a roller skating rink was built on the west shore of the lake to afford added recreation for young people." "Still later several tourists cabins were erected to accommodate those who wished to vacation by the lake." The area was generally known as Sportsman's Park.¹⁰⁴

In the early 1950s, Mr. Hinegardner heard that the Congregational Christian Conference was seeking a site for a church camp, and offered to sell them most of the land surrounding his lake. In March 1955, after a year of creating and marketing plans for the development of the new camp, Superintendent Fiebiger and the Conference Board of Directors purchased 127 acres of Mr. Hinegardner's property and re-named it Pilgrim Heights. Rev. Strickler was on the Conference Board of Directors during this period, and Urbandale Church helped fund this project. It was no small investment: The project was expected to cost \$200,000. This responsibility originally was shared by seventy-three supporting congregations. Rev. Fiebiger's leadership responsibilities and the extensive planning and fund raising associated with this project may have played a significant role in the Conference office's

negative responses to Urbandale Community Church's plea for financial assistance.¹⁰⁵

This situation left the organizers of the church expansion project without a lot of financial momentum. Rather than approach congregation members again in the Fall of 1955 or early 1956, the expansion committee members simply extended the existing pledge period from three to five years, factored in expected membership growth, and projected more than \$40,000 in pledges to the project. The committee anticipated substantial growth. They pointed to the parallels between the expanding congregation and the growth in the number of homes constructed each year in Urbandale. By 1953-54 there were around 50 homes being built per year. In less than twelve months during 1955, more than 100 new homes were constructed within the city boundaries. The committee projected that there would be more than 500 new homes built in the next two years. With growth on this scale, the committee implied, but did not explicitly argue, that little risk was associated with a loan to their congregation.¹⁰⁶

The new pledge numbers and growth projections did not sway the Conference administrators who may have expected the Urbandale congregation to have more cash on hand before supporting the loan. They may have wanted to see if the projected membership growth would appear. The church membership continued to grow. Small-group meetings were organized to formally review the church's financial situation and poll congregation members about their feelings concerning different building options.¹⁰⁷

The church expansion committee produced a small flier entitled “The Urbandale Community Congregational Church, You Be the Judge,” which outlined the situation: the church had twenty education classes each Sunday, spread over two sessions of church school, with more than 200 people participating. This left the primary class, for example, with only 5 square feet per student, compared with the 15 to 20 square feet per student recommended by the National Council of Churches’ Bureau of Church Building. This pushed the facilities to the point, the writers argued, that they “do not meet even minimum standards.” The authors then reviewed the state of church in 1955 or 1956:

“With over 300 pupils enrolled in church school, you will find that you are forced to meet in six class rooms, the church sanctuary, the fellowship hall, the church office, the kitchen, and one of the church parsonages. You must wend your way through a confusion of curtains, chairs, and people to take your place in a dimly-lit, crowded classroom, if you have a classroom, and if not, then you must gather in a place just as much out-of-the-way as possible, and strain to hear what you and your teachers are trying to say above the din of children seeking vainly to find a place to work and play.”¹⁰⁸

By adding an education wing to the church, the pamphlet suggested, you “increased comfort,” supported “modern, effective teaching techniques,” created a foundation for extending “the outreach of your church to the community and the state,” and provided a “place for the youth of this community, a place in which the problem of juvenile delinquency could be combatted.”¹⁰⁹

In August 1955, Ralph H. Klinestiver wrote that "I am concerned that we may have a few persons who may become careless in paying on their building fund pledges if we delay too long on our construction of the religious education building." As the fundraising campaign entered its third year, some church members indicated that they would begin considering their pledges "payable upon letting of the contract for construction" of the new wing.¹¹⁰ Little documentation is available covering the period between the late 1955 campaigns and the start of construction.

The Conference administrators may have been more impressed with the project after the city of Urbandale decided to use the new addition for classrooms during the week to relieve overcrowding in the public schools. In any case, the required loans were acquired and building began in 1957.¹¹¹

Rev. Strickler led a ground-breaking ceremony on Sunday, June 16, 1957. Following the sermon in the sanctuary, the congregation gathered at the site where the educational wing would be built. With appropriate ceremony and using a spade donated by Dave Hartsook, a few shovels-full of earth were turned over to signify the beginning of work on the new structure. Taking part in the ceremony were the Reverend Cyril Hicks, Field Secretary of the Iowa Congregational Christian Conference; Ralph Klinestiver, Chair of the Church Board; Charles Chew, Chair of the Board of Trustees; Laird Jones, Co-Chair of the Expansion and Improvement Committee; Richard McFall, Superintendent of the Church School; Helen Peterson, representative mother and teacher in church school; Sysal

Greene, President of the Senior Pilgrim Fellowship; Gayle Strickler, Jr., representative of the Junior Pilgrim Fellowship; Lois Hamilton and Donald Olmsted, representing the children of the Church School and grandchildren of the church founders (Lois was the granddaughter of Jessie and Harold Lamb, and Donald was the grandson of Olive and Millard Olmsted). The actual start of construction would begin a week later.¹¹²

Leading the Building Committee for several years when the upstairs sanctuary was built was not enough for Charles Chew. As Chair of the Board of Trustees, he helped oversee the fairly complicated construction project involving a lot of volunteer labor from the congregation.¹¹³

The education wing was dedicated on November 24, 1957.

Urbandale Public Schools used the education wing for at least two years. Students came to class every day at the church, and although unrecognized by the school system or the city, Rev. Gayle Strickler became an unofficial principal for many of them.¹¹⁴

Part Three: United Church of Christ, 1958 - 1995.

The Urbandale Community Church operated without formal association with any religious denomination for 23 years. For the next 14 years the Urbandale Community Church (Congregational) was associated with the Iowa Conference of Congregational Churches. Rev. Gayle Strickler helped lead the congregation into making another important denominational decision. In January 1958, the congregation quietly adopted a resolution indicating that they wanted to affiliate with the movement combining the Congregational and the Evangelical Reformed churches. This movement ultimately resulted in the creation of the United Church of Christ.¹¹⁵

Although Rev. Strickler represented Urbandale at meetings concerning the details of the denominational merger, the congregation had little involvement until the 1961 annual meeting. After approving the Board and committee reports and singing two songs, the congregation members read through Article 4, pages 6 and 7, of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ. Members were reminded of the action taken three years before, when they declared that the church intended to be a part of the existing and evolving structure of the United Church of Christ. Rev. Strickler moved that the congregation go on record as approving the Constitution of the United Church of Christ. The motion was seconded by Ben Davis, and carried unanimously.¹¹⁶

At the next state conference, the Articles of Incorporation of the United Church of Christ merger were accepted. When the Articles were recorded with the state,

the Urbandale Community Church officially became a member of the United Church of Christ in Iowa. In May 1963, the state conference outlined the member churches' financial responsibilities to the state and national U.C.C. organizations. Participating representatives adopted a resolution stating that "[a]ll churches of the Conference witness to their fellowship by using the name, 'United Church of Christ' on Sunday bulletins, church stationery, bulletin boards, newspaper notices, roadside signs, and other means of communication." The Church Board discussed changing the name of the church, but could only agree to appointing a committee to study the matter.¹¹⁷

At the September 18, 1963 Board meeting, committee members Margaret Avaux, Roland Ritchard, and Elizabeth Hamilton recommended that the church be called the "Urbandale United Church of Christ." The Board decided to place a note describing the proposed change in the Call. At the 1964 annual meeting, the congregation discussed changing the church name to Urbandale United Church of Christ, but an attempt to have a vote on the measure failed because of a procedural error. Someone convinced the congregation that the Board needed to read the name-change proposal three times before the congregation prior to a vote of this type. At their next meeting, the Board reviewed the church by-laws and discussed delaying the name-change until the next September.¹¹⁸

Bob Lamb raised the name-change idea at the September 16, 1964 Church Board meeting. The Board recommended that they publicize the proposal and make a formal recommendation at the next meeting. At the October meeting, Duane Robinette moved that the church's

articles of incorporation, constitution, and by-laws be changed to reflect a new official legal name of Urbandale United Church of Christ. The Board agreed to publish the motion and then present the idea at the annual meeting in January 1965.¹¹⁹

Marvin Drake opened the 1965 annual meeting, and after a song and passing the budget, he presented the proposed changes in the legal documents required to re-name the church. Dick Boyer moved that the congregation adopt the recommendation as read. Bob Lamb seconded the motion. After a request for discussion, Vern Swanson suggested the name "Community United Church," followed by Karolyn Hatch suggesting the name "Pilgrim United Church of Christ." After some discussion, Darrell Dickinson moved that the original proposal be adopted. Vern Swanson changed his mind and seconded the motion. The congregation voted, but the measure did not pass. Clyde Collins moved that the congregation use "United Church of Christ, Urbandale, Iowa." The motion was seconded by George Sorenson. The congregation voted again, but could not pass the measure. The congregation then voted on the original proposal again, and it passed, authorizing changing the name of the Urbandale Community Church (Congregational) to the Urbandale United Church of Christ. Dick Boyer led the congregation in a song of celebration. The legal requirements finalizing the name change were signed and notarized on March 31, 1965.¹²⁰

Although nearly ten years of building projects, or preparing for adding to the church consumed a large amount of members' time and energy, it was not the only focus of congregational interest and effort. The church

continued to explore opportunities for sharing with the world outside Urbandale. The Women's Fellowship hosted a public presentation by Ted Grove of Goodwill Industries, and then followed up with volunteer work. They also sponsored a talk by Dr. Ernest Nielson, President of Grandview College on "Significant Developments in Education on the International Scene." Members visited with missionary Helen Disney report on activities in Southern Rhodesia, the fifth-grade boys' church school class saved money together and funded "Care" packages "for needy folk in other lands," and the congregation sponsored talks by Edith Galt, a veteran of 11 turbulent years as a nurse and public health advisor in China and Korea, and by Aleyama Thomas of Kerala, India. Urbandale Church also sponsored the World Day of Prayer service for the churches in the Urbandale - Beaverville area. LuAnn Swinton, 1961 Friendly Service Chairperson of Woman's Fellowship organized a collection of good used clothing to be distributed to migrant workers from school-age children through adults. The Benevolence Committee organized a blanket drive for Algeria and with the Stewardship Committee organized the support for the David Desmond family who were missionaries in Ghana.¹²¹

The congregation's contacts with the United Church of Christ in Japan did not end with Rev. Strickler's trip in 1955. In 1960, they helped fund a visit by Rev. Masaichi Honami and his wife of Mito, Japan. Rev. Honami was the minister of a large Kyodan Church [U.C.C. in Japan] just north of Tokyo. Public receptions and meetings were held at Charles & Tordis Chew's home as well as the home of Harold and Marjorie Reynolds. The Junior and Senior

Pilgrim Fellowships also sponsored a public meeting in Fellowship Hall.¹²²

In the late 1950s, Urbandale public school students used the education wing of the church every weekday. Although unrecognized by the school system or the city, Rev. Strickler became an unofficial principal for many of students.¹²³

In 1958, Rev. Strickler established the Family Christmas Workshop. In these popular gatherings, families cleaned, decorated, and otherwise prepared the church for Christmas services and celebrations.¹²⁴

In 1959, the west parking lot was paved and the Senior Pilgrim Fellowship students painted the parking lines as a class project.¹²⁵

In late May 1959, following a sermon entitled “God and the Good Earth,” many families joined in a caravan to Pilgrim Heights for a picnic and an afternoon of relaxation and fellowship.¹²⁶

After being selected as the first Director of Christian Education, Miriam Cline led the development and implementation of a rapidly expanding curriculum. In 1959, 222 children enrolled in the church’s vacation bible school. Mrs. Cline recruited and organized 57 adults to lead and assist classes and recreation time for students ranging in age from pre-kindergarten through Junior High School.¹²⁷

In the summer of 1958, Rev. Strickler wrote a long passage in The Community Church Call relating a high

point of his and his family's vacation in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. He described climbing one side of South Saint Vrain Canyon, near Lyons, before driving down into town for church later in the morning. The combination, he wrote,

“provided enrichment over which we continue to rejoice. The climb was difficult but exhilarating. A cool wind was blowing briskly and when we reached the summit it voiced its own anthem with the aid of the evergreens. From there we looked westward to where snow still lay upon the loftier peaks beyond. These were moments of worship and there on the heights we sang ‘This Is My Father’s World’ to the accompaniment of the rushing wind. A healing power was in those moments. Then we made our descent and drove to Lyons to church. There we were no longer an isolated family voicing alone our praise for the wonder and goodness of life but a part of a fellowship that knows no bounds of time or space or race. It was good to be in the ‘house of God’ where we looked upon the Cross, symbol of an infinite Love, even as it was good to stand on the heights where we felt the infinite power and grandeur of God.”

This vacation, that he said allowed his family to “feel anew the goodness and greatness of life under God who loves us,” may have planted the seeds of a call he would receive roughly two-and-a-half years later.¹²⁸

That call came from the First Congregational Church of Longmont, Colorado. Rev. Strickler presented his

resignation to the Church Board on February 15, 1961. “With sad hearts for (their) own well being and glad hearts for the Stricklers,” the congregation voted to allow Rev. Strickler to leave for Longmont during the week of April 9, a few days short of the 60-day notice required by the church constitution.¹²⁹

Rev. Strickler left the pulpit at Urbandale Community Church after services on April 9, 1961, and left for a new pastorate later that week. With the help of the Conference Office, the Board of Elders and Deacons had made arrangements with seven different ministers to conduct services through June. The Pastoral Committee hired Rev. George M. Richter, living in Grinnell, Iowa, to act as interim pastor beginning in early June until a permanent minister was called.¹³⁰

Rev. Robert W. Hoffman, 1961 - 1973

Never an easy job, the Pastoral Committee began the job of developing “marketing” materials that described our congregation, church, and community; identifying a new minister for the church; and then attracting the selected individual and their family to Urbandale.¹³¹

The committee reviewed materials from thirty ministers. Rev. Robert W. Hoffman of Phillips Congregational Church, Watertown, Massachusetts [established 1851] sent in the required background materials along with the text of a sermon he presented on March 19, 1961. The sermon, entitled “Beneath the Cross,” examined the notion of a just, fair, and forgiving God, whose

love encourages humans to take up the cross of forgiving, unconditional love.¹³²

The Committee members paraphrased Rev. Hoffman's goals as:

“A reexamination of the purpose, nature, and mission of the church to deepen its spiritual life and make it more relevant to daily life. To find ways for the minister and the church to restore more effectively its position in the Community and the world as an effective evangelizer.”

“He believes through small groups of dedicated people working and studying together, the church may cease to be a pleasant, friendly place to congregate and begin more fully to minister to the ‘ill,’ and bring the good news to the ‘imprisoned, blind,’ etc. This is not to develop new techniques, but to recapture the original motivation of the early church.”

“He believes that every organization in the church ‘preaches’ a doctrine and theology in the kind of activity in which it engages; and should study its activity for its relationship to the essential purpose of the church.”¹³³

The Pastoral Committee members were impressed enough with Rev. Hoffman's materials that they requested that he record an audio tape of a sermon or lesson that the Committee could review. Less than a week later, Rev. Hoffman shipped a reel tape of a regular Sunday sermon

and a lesson he led at Perkins School for the Blind. Five days later, Committee Co-Chair, Darrell Dickinson, wrote to Rev. Hoffman requesting that he come out to Iowa for a formal interview, and to perform the sermon at a Sunday service of a nearby church. Five letters and at least two telegrams later, final arrangements were made for Rev. Hoffman's visit.¹³⁴

No matter how well planned and executed, interviewing for any job generally includes a measure of strain and anxiety. Doubtless, Rev. Hoffman's experience in Urbandale included quantities of each. Around noon on Friday, May 26, 1961, Darrell Dickinson drove to the airport to meet the pastor candidate. On their way to Evelyn Shaw's house, Rev. Hoffman checked into a local hotel. Mr. Dickinson went back to work while Mrs. Shaw and Elizabeth Hamilton took Rev. Hoffman on a tour of the community. That evening, the Pastoral Committee members and their families held a potluck supper at the church where everyone could spend some informal time with the potential new minister, as well as to relax for a while in what must have been a very busy Spring. On Saturday morning, Rev. Hoffman spent some time inspecting the church and grounds, before visiting the First Congregational Church in Ankeny where he would be preaching the next day. He met with the Committee from 1:30 until late in the afternoon and then had supper at Al Tinder's home.¹³⁵

Dick McFall drove Rev. Hoffman to Ankeny at 7:30 a.m. on Sunday. Hoffman presented a sermon entitled "The Profound Joy" at the 8:45 and 11:00 a.m. services. Everett Laurance brought Rev. Hoffman to Miriam and Carrol

Cline's home for dinner. After dinner, Darrell Dickinson and Dick McFall drove what must have been a tired Rev. Hoffman back to the Des Moines Airport for the flight home.

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Rev. Hoffman followed up after the interview with a letter to Mr. McFall. He related that he was "encouraged by virtually everything" that he had seen. It appears from the letter, that the Committee was impressed by Rev. Hoffman's visit. They had already inquired about his summer schedule as well as his ability to return on July 9 if selected by the Committee.¹³⁷

On June 26, as Rev. Hoffman celebrated his 45th birthday, the Pastoral Committee voted unanimously to present Rev. Hoffman to the congregation for consideration. The next morning, the Committee chairs sent Rev. Hoffman a letter formally notifying him of their wishes. Because cash was short at the church, they invited him and his family to drive or ride the train out to Urbandale for the presentation and vote. The Committee also made arrangements for an individual to visit the Hoffmans' home in Watertown to estimate moving expenses.¹³⁸

The Committee chairs mailed an announcement of the event to all congregation members a week later. The letter expressed Rev. Hoffman's stated belief that "it is more helpful to think of the minister as a being called to assist the lay members with their responsibility, since they are the church, than for the laymen to pledge to help the minister with his." Each generation, he advised, and each individual needed to formulate their own creed, using all the guidance available. He wrote that "a church without a creed is a ship

without a sail, but it must be its own, not imposed or inherited.” To that end, he added,

“that for the minister and people to adventure together in Christian understanding and spiritual growth is our first task and greatest need, and out of this impetus comes evangelism and stewardship and Christian Education. No amount of efficient organization can compensate for a lack of spiritual ground. A church is unique because its fortress is its God, its power is its Lord’s, and its purposes its Master’s.”¹³⁹

Rev. Hoffman and his family were able to be in Urbandale on July 9, 1961, and the congregation voted to call him to be the next pastor of Urbandale Community Church. They moved to Iowa two months later and he started his new position running. During his second week on the job, the Urbandale Community Church acted as host for the Fall meeting of The Des Moines Association of Congregational Christian Churches and Ministers. His formal Service of Installation was held on February 25, 1962, and the Women’s Fellowship served a supper in the church basement. The church received some extra publicity for the event when its Sunday service was featured on KRNT-TV Channel 8’s “Central Iowa Church of the Air” program on January 21, 1962.¹⁴⁰

Planning for the Future

At the end of 1961, the Trustees reported to the Church Board that they had signed a contract [or retainer,

both were used] with architects Wetherall & Harrison to help with “future building plans.” The minutes of the previous ten Church Board meetings show no previous discussion of building, and no other documentation is available to fill in the story of how the church got to the point of hiring an architect. The idea appears to have broadened in scope over time. A month later, the Board floated the idea that a committee of two or three should be formed to “look to the plans of the church.” The Board took the idea “under advisement” and moved on to reviewing the annual reports. The idea must have taken root, because at the March Church Board meeting, Darrell Dickinson reported on the work of a sub-committee which was considering the creation of a “Long-Range Planning Committee for the Church.” Sub-committee members included Rev. Hoffman, Roger Harrison, Larry Hindert, Ruth Dougherty, and Les Proctor. The planning committee, they proposed, would consist of the Pastor, the Director of Christian Education, one representative from each of the other four Boards, plus four members at large. The new committee would serve indefinitely. The scope of their responsibilities included “visualizing the future service, growth, and needs of the church as a whole, and to make such plans and recommendations as are necessary to maximize the church’s service to our Christian community.” After a motion by Mr. Dickinson, the Board voted the new committee into existence.¹⁴¹

The new Long-Range Planning Committee sponsored Mr. Ritenour “to help plan in a long-range way, the future of the church.” All congregation members were invited to participate. By the Spring of 1963, the Committee included fourteen members. They had classified their problems into

seven categories and then assigned two people to work in each. They hoped to use the results of their work to create a questionnaire that would be mailed to a cross-section of the congregation.¹⁴²

By early fall of 1963, the Committee had distributed the questionnaires. They met to review the survey results and generate some recommendations. As a result, they reported that “most of the congregation wished to stay in our present location and expand as necessary.” The Trustees responded by organizing a \$5,000 remodeling of the sanctuary.¹⁴³

Although documented by oblique references in remaining documents, the focus of long-range planning in 1964 and much of 1965 apparently to have tended to revolve around discussions concerning the mission of the church. In the Fall 1965, a new committee was established “to discuss the future needs of the building program.”¹⁴⁴

The Physical Plant

In the winter of 1962-63, the Trustees remodeled Fellowship Hall. They spent around \$2,000 installing new fluorescent light fixtures, new registers, and new paneling. The project also included putting a new header in the center of the Fellowship Hall ceiling. They put in the header so that at some later date a folding door might be installed. They figured a good one would cost \$900, or a “non-sound-proof” one would cost half that price. Having finished the Fellowship Hall renovation, the Board went on record as officially sanctioning square dancing in the church basement.¹⁴⁵

In 1962, the Music Committee worked on balancing the sound in the sanctuary. Some congregation members complained that music during Sunday services was too loud for those sitting near the front of the sanctuary. The Committee considered installing a speaker in the back of the sanctuary.¹⁴⁶

The Trustees remained busy upgrading the parking lot, installing new sewer lines, remodeling the women's restroom, painting and repairing the parsonage and rental properties, regularly tangling with a leak in the parsonage roof, creating divider doors for Fellowship Hall, and purchasing and disposing of properties.¹⁴⁷

The Olmsted family funded an electronic bell and broadcast system in memory of Millard and Olive Olmsted. The sound system included speakers installed on the crown of the sanctuary roof and in the sanctuary area. There was also an electro-mechanical carillon that controlled the sound and timing of automatic tolling of the hour. The Valerius family donated a set of brass candelabra in memory of John Valerius. The Robert Shaw and Alta Hampton families donated two sets of new paraments [altar hangings].¹⁴⁸

In May 1965, the Trustees purchased an upright piano recommended by the Music Committee.¹⁴⁹

After years of struggling with the maintenance of a parsonage for the church pastor, the congregation voted to sell it on May 9, 1965.¹⁵⁰

The Board first recorded a discussion encouraging the idea of using livestock in the church's Christmas nativity scene in 1965, and the Trustees helped organize the construction of the display.¹⁵¹

The congregation purchased the "Gamble property" at 3502 70th Street in 1966.¹⁵²

Social Action

Around the time Rev. Hoffman arrived in Urbandale, references to the Social Action Committee began to appear in church records. The Committee was given "the go-ahead" by the Board to attempt to organize an Urbandale "all-church night." Committee member Don Duvick suggested establishing a Community Council as a vehicle for implementing the idea.¹⁵³

It appears that the Committee offered a "resolution to ask schools to teach a course in Communism" at the 1962 State Conference. The resolution was voted down, and after Bud and Betty Barton, Margaret Avaux, Bob Hoffman, and Miriam Cline returned from the meeting, they referred the resolution back to the Committee. Although it may have been politically unattractive, this type of resolution makes sense given international events of the period. To many in the U.S. and Western Europe, war seemed chillingly close in 1961 and 1962. In 1961, the East German government walled off East Berlin to dam the river of refugees flowing to the West. President Kennedy reacted with strong assurances to West Berlin and sent additional troops. Closer to home, Cuban exiles, trained and armed by the

U.S., attempted an unsuccessful invasion of Cuba. This followed a year when the activities of Cuban leader Fidel Casto became increasingly dictatorial as he moved the country from a newly independent revolutionary democracy to an isolated communist “island” with close ties to the Soviet Union and Red China.¹⁵⁴

As property-seizures and firing squads became more commonplace in Cuba, wave after wave of Cuban refugees arrived in Florida seeking exile. Social Action Committee Chair, Les Hamilton reported on the “Cuban Refugee problem” at the June 1961 Church Board meeting. He reviewed the case history of one of the approximately 90,000 refugees then in the U.S. The Board was in favor of having the Committee investigate options for Urbandale Community Church involvement in supporting the Cuban exiles. At the next Board meeting, Mr. Hamilton reported that the Committee had reviewed a second set of case histories and requested additional information about an elementary school teacher and her 18-year-old daughter. In August, the Board loaned the Social Action Committee \$350 against future donations in order to begin funding the “Cuban Refugee Project.” In September 1961, the Committee announced to the Board that the Cuban family, Juan and Gladys Labandara, had arrived.¹⁵⁵

By October, Les Hamilton reported that “Juan still can hardly believe he is here.” The congregation had donated \$190 as well as a large amount of food and clothing to aid the refugees. A number of individuals provided the couple with transportation as needed. The Social Action Committee spent \$170 by this time. Several families, Courtney and Dilma Allen, Jack and Alma Sims, and Les

and Elizabeth Hamilton, received special mention for their enthusiastic efforts and support of the Labandaras. Because by this time more than 100,000 Cuban refugees were in Miami “being supported by the federal government,” the Board suggested that the Social Action Committee investigate the possibility of sponsoring another family. The Committee attempted to get another church involved in a joint sponsorship of another refugee family but had little luck that year.¹⁵⁶

This setback did not reduce the Committee’s efforts. This was also a time when American blacks, with a new militancy and determination, attempted to translate the emancipation of the 1860s into a reality of the 1960s. In both highly public as well as very subtle ways, some whites carried out classic terrorism tactics against blacks, and against whites who sided with blacks, in attempting to secure their rights and their human dignity. Throughout the nation, Americans watched television news coverage of “Freedom Riders” attacked in the South. The Social Action Committee responded by helping to organize congregation members’ visits to the homes of “negro families” in the area. Race was a divisive issue even within the congregation, and members hotly debated the extent to which the church ought to be involved.¹⁵⁷

The Social Action Committee sponsored two meetings considering “the Racial question.” Committee Chair Jim Dougherty explained that they were not acting as promoters, “but that we might be informed, and that we, as a church, might take a stand.” The Committee presented a statement, recommending that it be accepted by the Board. The statement read:

“Whereas, the Urbandale Community Congregational Church officially recognizes the need for fair housing, employment and membership practices within our community, therefore Community Church welcomes members of all races to its membership and participation in its affairs and seeks to encourage its members in their vocations and civic responsibilities to enter into all relationships with others solely on the basis of their personal merit.”

The Committee also pressed for a congregational vote on the resolution. A lengthy discussion followed. They read resolutions from the National Council of Churches and from the Des Moines Ministerial Association. The Committee hoped “that the whole congregation would face the issue and come to some understanding about it.” Ultimately, the Board voted for a general congregational meeting on July 7, 1963.¹⁵⁸

Mervin Drake opened the special meeting of the congregation following the 9:45 Sunday service on July 7. He read excerpts from the proceedings of the recent Synod Meeting in Denver, and from the National Board of the United Church of Christ. Les Hamilton moved that the congregation accept the resolution as stated in the bulletin. Don Duvick seconded the motion. Congregation members voted by written ballot. Eighty voted in favor of supporting the resolution and six against. Some of those voting against the motion felt very strongly that the church should not get involved in the “Racial problem.” A relatively warm debate followed the vote. Rev. Hoffman and the Board organized

an open meeting on July 17 to follow up on the discussions started at the time of the vote. After some debate, Roland Ritchart moved that the church “drop this Racial problem and leave it where it right where it is.” The motion died for lack of a second.¹⁵⁹

The Social Action Committee continued to pursue a course of awareness-raising and educational activities. Several members, five children, and Rev. Hoffman attended a “Racial Justice” retreat at Pilgrim Heights. When they returned, they approached the Board about “sending out literature using the church’s mailing privileges.” The Board did not act on the request.¹⁶⁰

Although little documentation is available, the group also addressed issues related to “Church and State,” “Gambling,” and “Birth Control.” They supported young people’s trips to a South Dakota Indian Reservation.¹⁶¹

In September 1965, the Deacons, the Social Action Committee, and the Board of Christian Education organized a social hour after church once each month. They were scheduled and supervised by the Deaconesses.¹⁶²

In 1965, the Social Action Committee began investigating “the Viet Nam situation.” They intended to “bring together all the available information and ... to advise people in our church what position that we might take.” In addition, they held meetings to investigate the possibility of joining the Urbandale Anti-Poverty Program.¹⁶³

Eramus Ortega, Jr., a Cuban exile, visited the Courtney and Dilma Allen home in 1965 and was

introduced to a number of church members. Expanding upon and sharing the work begun by the Social Action Committee, Elizabeth Hamilton organized church support for helping Ortega's parent's efforts to leave Cuba and make their home in Iowa. The Church Board voted unanimously to provide assistance for their efforts. An Ortega Family Fund was established. Individuals, as well as the Junior High Youth Fellowship, helped support the Ortegas after their arrival.¹⁶⁴

Boy Scouts

Since at least the 1930s, the Community Church had provided space for Boy Scout meetings. In early 1960, a new troop was formed specifically for the members of the congregation. Vernon Tiffany, Director of Scout training for the Walnut Creek District, led basic training sessions at the church and had three members complete all three sessions. Those attending were: Richard McFall, the Institutional Representative; Carrol Cline, Committee Chair; Darrell Dickinson, Co-chair; Paul Harvey; Capt. Joseph Seale; and George Bray. The first Scoutmaster for the troop was Phil Dhainin, Jr., formerly assistant Scoutmaster with Urbandale Troop #3. After an orientation meeting for boys and their parents, the Troop meet each Thursday evening from 7 to 9 p.m.¹⁶⁵

Education

Participation in education programming remained high and enthusiastic. In mid-1961 the idea of changing the name of the "Religious Education Committee" to the "Board of Christian Education" appeared in the Church Board

minutes for the first time. The idea was not formally recorded in Board minutes until a note that on December 10, 1961, a congregational meeting was held after the 10:45 service for the purpose of voting on transforming the Religious Education Committee into the Board of Christian Education. Printed ballots were ready, but Leon Reinig moved that the change be accepted unanimously. The measure passed on a voice vote.¹⁶⁶

In the Summer of 1962, the church's property on Maryland Drive was again in poor condition and without a renter. The previous tenant had "left without notice, taking the key with them, and owing considerable rent money." Les and Elizabeth Hamilton spent a number of weeks cleaning and repairing the structure. The Board then unanimously voted to retain the home for use in Christian Education activities. By November, the Trustees had installed a sidewalk from the church parking lot to the new education facility.¹⁶⁷

In 1965, the Deaconesses were responsible for scheduling acolytes each Sunday, preparing the communion elements, distributing the altar flowers, and sending cards to congregation members appropriate to given occasions. Rev. Hoffman asked them to begin "providing services to families when someone is in need of baby sitting, help with ironing, or [when] a dish of food may be taken in." In response, they canvassed each of the other church groups and acted as a "clearing house to locate those who are willing to assist." They called the volunteers for these new duties "Hoffman's Happy Helpers."¹⁶⁸

Difficult Change

By the end of 1966, Rev. Hoffman began to identify a “leadership squeeze” at the church. He reasoned that:

“With the increased emphasis upon leisure and upon families with two-three-four incomes, this will continue to be a problem. We must in every case ask ourselves as leaders whether what we are asking people to do is important and essential. Then busy people must budget a bit more of their time this year, or next, or the next, to take their share of the load.”¹⁶⁹

In 1967, he expressed a concern about the congregation’s sense of “oneness, of fellowship in the Church.” He continued,

“The Church cannot operate without some personal acquaintance, understanding, and appreciation for one another, with commonly understood purposes. Possibly half, or more, of our membership have no contact with others; and 1/3 have no significant pattern of church attendance.”¹⁷⁰

The church was not represented at the state conference in 1967. Rev. Hoffman added his view that it also “did not contribute any leadership to the Des Moines or Iowa Councils of Churches.” He also stated his belief that “the social action emphasis of the Church has been weak this year.” Although the tone of some of his communications was almost grim, the situation was not easily defined. Statistics showed that attendance at services was not decreasing and that the church’s financial

situation appeared strong. By this time, Rev. Hoffman had developed a reputation for posing questions to the congregation. In an effort to generate discussion about what he viewed as increasing problems and hopefully to help people begin to generate ideas and actions to overcome them, he asked three questions.¹⁷¹

1. In trying not to overemphasize the Church in its institutional sense, nor to promote superficial activities for their own sake, have we sacrificed some of our sense of community?

2. In assuming that the Christian needs to be a Christian in the world, not simply in the church, have we somewhat impoverished our church's 'home base' leadership?

3. In our busy world and community, are we to assume that people do not have time for study and meaningful sharing? Should we write off programs that involve large expenditures of leadership time for very small numbers of people?¹⁷²

In a similar vein, Director of Religious Education Miriam Cline wrote that the "leadership squeeze" made it increasingly difficult to adequately staff the educational programs. Her impression was probably enhanced when the Sunday School Superintendent resigned. Dick McFall, who was leaving Urbandale, had held the position for fifteen years and was sorely missed. Rev. Hoffman and Mrs. Cline agreed that as a result "our church school program is hurting." In the annual report, Mrs. Cline outlined a full spectrum of educational programming for the year and then reviewed three areas of her concerns. First was the

increasing difficulty of “securing adequate staff for our church school.” Second, she lamented the perception that some members feel that the educational opportunities of the church were not important enough to become actively and honestly “involved” in. Finally, partly as a result of the first two problems, she noted the “low morale of the staff and Board of Christian Education members as we try to cope with our responsibilities.” For each of these problems, Mrs. Cline outlined possible causes and solutions. During 1967, Frank Kroll, Iowa Conference Associate Minister, helped the members of the Board of Christian Education evaluate their programming, think about their purposes, and to set a direction for their efforts in the future.¹⁷³

The Church Board responded to this shared sense of unease about the state of the congregation by expanding the work of the Long-Term Planning Committee [that had been active since 1961] into a more narrowly focused Development Program. The Development Program was supposed to identify the status and needs of the church in all areas of its missions, activities, and facilities. The program started out with the establishment of seven sub-committees: Survey, Worship, Christian Education and Fellowship, Administration and Facilities, Furnishings and Equipment, Publicity, and Finance. Each of these groups were to perform their duties and communicate their findings back to the “Executive Development Committee” by late 1968. The Executive Committee would then create recommendations for presentation to the full congregation. The most visible result of the project was expected to be a new sanctuary.¹⁷⁴

This kind of self-examination and team-building, required in a large-scale development project, can bring a church congregation together and draw in new members. With a very effective organization, strong leadership, and support from many in the congregation, it resulted in a thorough review of the congregation's needs and desires and the state of the church's physical plant. In the end, however, the congregation was not prepared to support a large-scale building project.

Rev. Hoffman discussed in his annual report the controversy between different segments of the congregation that "came to a head" in 1968. This conflict was generally associated with strong differences in opinion concerning four separate issues: (1) the role of Bible study in the church school curriculum; (2) the "church's insistence that the racial crisis in America is not one the church of Christ can ignore"; (3) the public "involvement of the denomination, the National Council of Churches, and our local church in social issues"; and (4) resistance to "change in the church as [it] tries to make itself relevant to the needs of the 20 ½ [sic] century and to the young people who are our future." Rev. Hoffman reported that the minister and the church leadership is caught between a "vocal protest against change, and a less vocal protest from others against religion which is no longer important to the way of life they have chosen for themselves." He hoped that dialogue would continue, and that the congregation "would confront these differences in love and respect," while not letting its "desire for comfort to blunt the issues."¹⁷⁵

At the request of Board Chair Courtney Allen, some of the members of the defunct Social Action Committee helped

to form the Human Relations Committee in 1968. Under the leadership of Co-Chairs Francis Miller and Les Hamilton, they attempted to establish lasting channels of communication with the “disadvantaged in local society.” They raised funds to help pay for redecorating the Des Moines CME Church. As supplies were required, workers picked up materials at Johnston Lumber Yard and then Committee funds were used to pay the bill. The Committee arranged to make monthly payments to a black student attending Grandview College. Committee members and others from the congregation visited “Negro churches on the East Side” and several members of the Des Moines CME congregation attended Urbandale United Church of Christ services and a “friendly exchange” in Fellowship Hall. The Women’s Fellowship organized a rummage sale at the CME church. Co-Chair Les Hamilton concluded after the first year of activities that “there is considerable evidence of need and opportunities for better understanding of people other than typical suburbanites, and it is toward this personal growth that the Human Relations Committee is dedicated.”¹⁷⁶

Not everyone agreed that the “evidence of need” was so clear. Some members felt “that the church was either too active or headed in an expensive and improper direction.” The Church Board “paused” the activities of the Human Relations Committee. They had already been working on an analysis of the state of the church and a statement of church goals as a part of the overall Development Program. The Board called a congregational meeting where they held a symposium to address both issues. The seminar was called “The Church of Tomorrow.” Board members discussed the functional church, as well as its program and

outreach. One outgrowth of this meeting was the creation of the Building Committee.¹⁷⁷

In an attempt to provide tools and forums for congregation members to address their differences, 11th graders through adults participated in a number of seven-week seminars. Al Tinder led a course examining “The Report of the President’s Commission on Civil Disorders.” Les Hamilton led a workshop on “Opportunities for Personal Growth.” Selma Duvick led a Bible study group. Courtney Allen led a discussion of “School and Social Concerns.” Between 30 and 40 people participated in the seminars. Later in the year, a new Sunday School curriculum was introduced, modified using feedback from the first two weeks, and continued for another thirteen weeks in an attempt to “bridge the generation gap and stimulate interest in church school.” The Board of Christian Education sponsored two curriculum workshops, and combined efforts with Women’s Fellowship for two six-week Bible study groups that met in members’ homes.¹⁷⁸

In 1969, the Human Relations Committee was re-activated. They continued supporting a Grandview student with \$15 each month. They provided \$800 realized from a special drive to a summer program for “central city disadvantaged youngsters.” They organized a trip and started a study of the need for low-cost housing for the Urbandale elderly. They also polled the congregation in an attempt to identify options for Committee actions addressing the war in Vietnam.¹⁷⁹

The sub-committees working on parts of the Development Program finished their research and reports

in 1969. The Building Committee synthesized the sub-committee output, and then with architect Richard McMullen, decided that remodeling the existing sanctuary would not help advance the new church goals. Sketches for a new sanctuary were completed and the Committee prepared several options. They asked for a recommendation by the Church Board concerning where they should direct their efforts. Noting that the 1969 stewardship drive fell roughly \$6,000 short of meeting the budget, the Board officially decided to suspend the work of the Building Committee and not to decide on short- or long-range building plans.¹⁸⁰

Rev. Hoffman wrote that “1969 has been an eventful year.” “It has not been a comfortable year. Maybe that is not necessary, but one also feels that some of the momentum has been lost.” In January 1970, he concluded that it was still “to early for us to know whether it had been the birth of a new era or the death of the old.” He expressed gratitude that the church was formally establishing goals for itself so that the events of the year could “be judged on the basis on whether they contributed to these goals.” The Goals Committee presented its final list to the congregation at a meeting in May 1970. The congregation voted to support them. Rev. Hoffman pointed to this accomplishment as one of the most significant of 1970, but changed the tone of his annual report only slightly.¹⁸¹

“It is a time of transition. Without abandoning the traditional patterns we are in a serious effort to find new ways to speak to our times. I am hopeful but find no ways adequate to evaluate ‘How we are doing.’ We can meet the challenges if

we have the will, because we are on God's side in the earnest and serious efforts we make. Whether we have the will can be determined in retrospect. 1970 was a good year. Was it good enough?"¹⁸²

From the tone of later annual reports and the Board minutes, the tension and strident tone that had sometimes appeared before significantly reduced. Rev. Hoffman's gave his overview of 1971 by stating, "It is my impression and opinion that the church had a better year than last, with evidence of improving morale." More of the Board reports document their successes and their hopes than in the years immediately preceding it. The year 1971 was also the year in which Dale and Berneda Milligan led the Golden Anniversary Committee that organized a very successful celebration for the 50-year-old church.¹⁸³

The Organ Committee purchased a new Allen Organ for the church in 1970. A new Baldwin Piano was presented to the church in memory of Fred Swinton in 1971.¹⁸⁴

The Trustees installed a new 125,000 BTU furnace in Fellowship Hall and a four-ton air conditioner in the Education Wing in 1972.¹⁸⁵

Racial Justice Task Force

Throughout at least the preceding decade, Miriam Cline had directed a portion of her energies as Director of Christian Education in support of broader urban, state, or national Christian education organizations. It appears that

this investment paid off for the congregation. In 1972, Urbandale UCC was selected as one of four UCC churches in the U.S. to participate in an experimental curriculum and to develop a pilot program on the “thesis of social justice.” Carolyn Goddard, a national staff person in the UCC Department of Christian Education, acted as Urbandale’s consultant on the project.¹⁸⁶

The Church Board formed the Racial Justice Task Force to lead the development of the “holistically styled educational approach to racial justice.” Committee members started from scratch. They kept diaries of injustices that they observed or were involved in. They suggested a variety of ways of implementing the program into the congregation’s total church life. They spent many hours discussing their missions and possible ways of expressing them. They shared ideas with an Interracial Study Group. By the end of 1972, they had generated a list of programs and suggestions for implementation during the first half of 1973. They presented the programming options to the Church Board for their approval and then to the congregation. The program began on January 14, 1973, with an exploration of the “Biblical Background of Social Justice.”¹⁸⁷

Acting on the recommendation of the Racial Justice Task Force, the Church Board re-established the Social Action Committee in November 1973. The ongoing purpose of the committee was to review “the various appeals received by the Church...evaluate them and initiate action in connection with those we feel the Urbandale UCC should be concerned with.” In 1974, the Committee launched a five-week session of worship and concentrated study

addressing the past and present situation of “the American Indian’s plight.” They also hoped to organize members of the congregation to participate in the Community Blood Bank Program. They raised \$10,000 for the Church Achievement Fund, and along with St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church they organized support for sponsoring the Pham and Nuygen Vietnamese families in 1975 and 1976.¹⁸⁸

Cradle Roll, Nursery School, and Youth

In June 1970, another sign of change in the congregation appeared, or disappeared. Declining membership contributed to the decision to discontinue the Cradle Roll Mothers. Cradle Roll Mothers had been meeting for more than a decade. All mothers of children younger than three years old were members if they wanted to join. Originally, they got together each week to share time and experiences; by 1970, they met only once each month. They also cleaned the church nursery, and provided toys and equipment for young attendees of the church.¹⁸⁹

The Urbandale Community Nursery was organized at the church late in 1964 by Arlene Hoffman, Margaret Frizzell and Hazel Reinig. The Nursery School had at least twelve registrations for its official opening in September 1965. In December, the Nursery was “officially” sponsored by the church and the legal work was carried out to ensure its tax-exempt status. In addition, the pre-school was licensed by the state Department of Social Welfare. In September 1966, the Nursery opened its second year with twenty four-year-olds and three teachers. Mrs. Hoffman

was the Director through 1972, when Elsie Hoy took over the Director's position and taught one of the sessions.¹⁹⁰

With the help of part-time Christian Education staff member and full-time seminary student Barbara Pratt, the church established a "coffee house" in Fellowship Hall for Senior High students in 1966. This had evolved into what Senior Fellowship President Kelly Bast described in 1969 as a "drop-in type center." By 1971, the drop-in center had migrated to the church's "cottage" on Maryland, but it was closed in 1972 because of a lack of interest.¹⁹¹

In November of 1972, Rev. Hoffman resigned effective Valentines Day 1973 to accept a call in Davenport, Iowa. The Church Board appointed a Pulpit Committee and the search for a new pastor began. The Pulpit Committee worked through May 1973 before selecting Rev. Richard Harbart to be presented to the congregation for a vote. On June 10, 1973, the congregation voted unanimously in favor of extending a call to Rev. Harbart. He accepted the call and arrived in Urbandale in September.¹⁹²

Rev. Richard Harbart, 1973 - 1985

Rev. Harbart opened his pastorate by echoing a theme that appeared early in Rev. Hoffman's term:

"I hope that we might reaffirm the concept of 'Ministers All' as a way of seeing our task as Christ's church. That will mean, of course, the willingness of us to commit ourselves to it and accept the responsibilities that come from it."¹⁹³

In an attempt to help the congregation further define its actions and responsibilities, Rev. Harbart pushed each of the Boards to develop formal goals at the beginning of 1974. Throughout the year they measured their progress toward those goals. By the end of the year, many goals remained challenges, but the exercise appears to have been well received.¹⁹⁴

During 1974, Miriam Cline took a six-month sabbatical from her position as Director of Christian Education. Later in the year, she retired after seventeen years of religious education ministry.

The Church Board made a number of significant changes in the operations of the church. They eliminated the early service and held only a single mid-morning service. The service was followed by a short period of informal fellowship in the church basement before starting various discussion groups. The Board appointed a special committee to review and make staffing recommendations for 1975. The Board accepted the committee's recommendation that the church staff be limited to the pastor and church secretary.¹⁹⁵

In the mid-1970s, the Board of Deacons introduced a "friendship time" in Sunday services. They hoped that this time would be used to "say good morning to friends and introduce ourselves to, and make welcome, visitors in the congregation."¹⁹⁶

In an attempt to increase overall congregational involvement in church activities, Rev. Harbart started a

tradition of having a Planning Day early each year. Each of the church boards came together to finalize and present their plans and goals for the coming year.¹⁹⁷

The idea of stating goals and then measuring achievement against them caught on at the church. The tone of Board minutes and annual reports in 1974 and 1975 was positive as board chairpersons recalled goals and then described plans or actions carried out to address them. Church Board Chair Madeline Kaloides described it as a “prevailing feeling of accomplishment.”¹⁹⁸

Deaconesses

A number of current congregation members remember the tone of Chris Baker’s reaction around 1973 after being asked to join the Deaconesses. They report that the general theme of her response was that she would not participate in an organization that was so evidently considered “below” the Boards of Elders and Deacons. It appears that instead her mother, Juanita Baker, was asked to remain on the Deaconesses for another term. Ms. Baker’s comments were not forgotten, and at the 1974 Church Board Planning Day meeting, the Deaconesses stated their dream:

“That our role would be considered more important by the rest of the church – that we would not be considered solely as ‘Kitchen People’ who fill communion glasses, wash dishes, etc., and that we would be more concerned with the spiritual growth of our church.”¹⁹⁹

By the end of 1974, Deaconess Chair Ruth Dougherty reported that “to some degree we have probably realized a part of this dream.” During the year, the Deaconesses began taking tapes of the minister’s sermons to shut-ins. They also began “adopting” one shut-in each in order to develop a closer rapport and more effective spiritual bond with that individual. One Sunday, two Deaconesses helped serve communion as a step in promoting their “new image.” They also assumed the responsibility of preparing and serving coffee and cookies for the new post-service Sunday fellowship gatherings.²⁰⁰

At the 1975 Church Board Planning Meeting, the boards of Elders and Deacons and Deaconesses voted to join forces and become one board.²⁰¹

Other Changes

In 1974, the Women's Fellowship started an evening group for those who could not attend their usual daytime meetings. Attendance was high and they considered the new innovation a success. They also continued supporting a number of projects that they had been assisting in the past. They raised almost \$500 and contributed it to a broad spectrum of charities. They held sewing days once a month to make clothing for orphans in Viet Nam. They also held two six-week study sessions. In addition, they celebrated Miriam Cline's installation as President of Church Women United of Des Moines in January of 1975, and Elizabeth Hamilton's installation for the same post in 1980.²⁰²

Another innovation related to calling Rev. Harbart to the church was the creation of the Interpretive Choir. Roselyn Harbart organized thirteen Junior and Senior High School students into a performing troupe who presented dance and other interpretive performances at the Good Friday and Christmas services. They also performed at St. John's Lutheran Church and in Alleman. In the Fall, they hosted a workshop in interpretive dance led by Rev. Weida of Fairfield.²⁰³

The Interpretive Choir danced for the Church Women United of Des Moines on the evening that Miriam Cline became that organization's president. They participated in the 1975 Maundy Thursday, Easter Sunday, and Thanksgiving Sunday services. They also interpreted a theme concerning Naboth's Vineyard [1 Kings 21] in a performance at the 1975 Annual Meeting of the Iowa Conference of the United Church of Christ.²⁰⁴

The Trustees

In 1974, the home at the corner of 70th and Maryland was torn down.²⁰⁵

In 1975, the Trustees painted and added insulation to the Education Wing, as well as added more insulation to the sanctuary. They also arranged for installation of new carpet in the narthex and the main aisle of the sanctuary, as well as on the stairs from Fellowship Hall to the narthex.²⁰⁶

In 1975, in response to a challenge by Sally Harrison, a member who had had polio years before, the Trustees began formally researching and struggling with the possibilities of installing an elevator, chair lift, or other device to make the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall more accessible to everyone. They agreed that an elevator would be the best alternative, but it was expected to cost \$15,000 to \$18,000 before construction and installation costs were added. The Church Board rejected this idea and the Trustees began a search for affordable alternatives. This project was not an isolated undertaking, as making churches more accessible was one of the national priorities of the United Church of Christ. Three years later, Rev. Harbart reported that “a million ideas were considered” for making the church more accessible to handicapped and elderly persons before a pair of lifts were chosen. They considered plans that covered the spectrum from building ramps all the way to remodeling the entire church. In the end, the Trustees oversaw the installation of two lifts capable of carrying two adults or a wheelchair-bound person from the sanctuary to the street

level and on to the basement and back. The new equipment was functioning and dedicated on November 26, 1978.²⁰⁷

In 1977, the Trustees installed a mercury vapor light at the southwest corner of the church building. In 1978, they finished a multi-year remodeling of the church kitchen and installed steel doors, donated by Carle Hall, on the south side of the Education Wing. In 1979, new carpet and windows were installed in the choir room.²⁰⁸

Education and Community Concerns

In 1977, after several years without a Director of Christian Education, the Board approved filling the position again. The Board of Christian Education hired Roselyn Harbart as the Sunday School Superintendent. She and the Deacons introduced an organized recreation time for children up through third grade after the children's sermon to the end of the worship service.²⁰⁹ Also in 1977, Rev. Gayle Strickler, Director of Senior Citizens of Urandale, began using space in the Education Wing as an office.²¹⁰

The Community Concerns Board was officially organized in January of 1978. Chairperson Steve Baker wrote that the members first action:

“was to give the committee a more meaningful name, one that would describe the action of the committee and help define their purpose. Though it officially couldn't be changed because of the By-Laws, we kept to the practice of alliteration by renaming the committee the 'Mission Mobilizers.'”

We feel our purpose is to call the community to responsible action....”²¹¹

Community Concerns participated in the Hunger Hike, sponsored a meal for Drake students, attempted to make the congregation more aware of television programming, and supported the Food Pantry. By 1979, the Board had established Moments of Concern as a monthly component to Sunday services. Their “Moment” on the Coalition for Battered Women resulted in an enthusiastic paper products drive for the Family Violence Center. They invested a lot of effort in helping Zondai Muyengwa, a Central College student, to bring his family to Iowa from Zimbabwe. They also formalized a tradition started by the Social Action Committee of helping a needy Des Moines family at Christmas.²¹²

In 1982, members of the congregation, the Community Concerns Board, and the Church Board selected peace as a theme for the year’s work. In May of that year, the congregation formally and unanimously affirmed peace as a congregational priority. The Board recognized “People Praying for Peace” as an official ministry of our church. Jeanne White designed a logo for the program. The Community Concerns Board sponsored sessions on conflict resolution, created a giant Christmas card that was signed by congregation members and mailed to President Reagan, invited a UCC volunteer to teach origami paper crane making, and appointed Dave Ostendorf as the contact person for proposed peace legislation. The peace prayer written by People Praying for Peace received interdenominational attention across Iowa.²¹³

1982 - 1987

Mary Looney retired as church secretary in 1982, after seventeen years in the position. She was followed by Vicki Bickle, Julie Cloud, Ellen Polly, Barb Zimmermann, and Becky Dhainin, who was hired as secretary on August 8, 1994.²¹⁴

In 1983, the Church Board formed the eight-member Pastor Parish Committee to act as a liaison between the minister and the congregation.²¹⁵

In 1984, the Church Board formed a new evangelism committee. The new committee named itself the Outreach and Nurture Committee, and posed a plan for “contacting prospective and inactive members and getting new members involved in the life of the church.” They began their activities in 1985 by delivering small loaves of Pilgrim bread to newcomers in the Urbandale area along with a card welcoming them to the community and inviting them to visit our church. In 1985, the Committee formalized the system for delivering loaves and following up with visitors to the church. The group was delivering roughly eight loaves each week by 1986. Late in the year the group decided that the program was not very effective when they looked at how many invited persons visited the church. They changed the process so that they delivered bread and information to those who had visited the church.²¹⁶

The Church Board also explored the idea of selecting a new name for the church in 1984. Some of the members wanted a new name that was more descriptive of the church mission rather than just a location. No action was taken.²¹⁷

In March 1986, Rev. Harbart asked for and received a year's leave of absence. The Deacons helped find and hire Rev. Fritz Bogar to fill the interim pastoral leadership position beginning in July.²¹⁸

After working with the congregation for six months, Rev. Bogar described his impression that the church membership had something special to celebrate. He believed that in worshipping together, the congregation was a model -- although one that could no longer be taken for granted. He wrote:

“This is a church that functions like a family. There is a place here for children and adults, married, divorced, widowed, and single people, men and women, younger people and older people. Your unity is threatened neither by diversity nor by disagreement because, like a family, it rests on a prior commitment to one another which is expressed in sensitivity, honesty, caring and support. In addition, there is a rootedness provided by those who were part of this church from the beginning or grew up with it, which lends a sense of family security and belongingness to our efforts.”²¹⁹

Rev. Bogar preached about reclaiming “a sense of stewardship which extends beyond budget matters,” about creating a coherent adult program that addressed what the members believed, why they believed it, and what the consequences of such beliefs were, and about recovering a sense of mission that included personal participation. He

helped create the “first Sunday of each month” communion schedule.²²⁰

In 1986, the Christian Growth Board sponsored an event to welcome the new Conference Minister, Don Gall. In 1987, Rev. Jesse Jackson and Amalia Bell Manzanares spoke at the church, and the congregation began an extended study of South Africa.²²¹

Trustees, 1980s

In 1980, the sanctuary was redecorated. In 1981, new Lennox furnaces were installed to serve the sanctuary. A new sewer line was installed to drain the kitchen. The Board of Trustees also sold the two properties at 7005 and 7007 Maryland Drive.²²²

In 1982, new carpet was installed in the church basement. In 1983, the chancel was remodeled and track and spot lights were installed. The sanctuary was repainted. Bob Lamb and Cecil Looney built and donated a communion table.²²³

In 1984, the furnaces in the Education Wing were replaced.

In 1988, the outside of the church was tuckpointed, new glass doors were installed on the west side of the church, and new carpet was installed in the pastor’s and secretary’s offices.²²⁴

In 1989, the Trustees installed a new intercom, replaced the sanctuary's front doors, and did some rewiring.²²⁵

In April 1987, the Church Board regretfully accepted the resignation of Rev. Harbart. Under the leadership of co-chairs Amy Couch and Kent Peterson, the Search Committee for a new pastor consisted of: John Baker, Marion Chase, Carrol Cline, Dave Dhainin, Elizabeth Hamilton, Wilbur Sargent, Lu Ann Swinton, Sandy Nussbaum, Kyra Ostendorf, and Todd Van Thomme. In 1988, their work resulted in the calling of Rev. Pat de Jong to be the new pastor.²²⁶

Rev. Patricia deJong , 1988 - 1994

In her interviews with the Search Committee, Rev. deJong emphasized four aspects of ministry that she felt were vital for a healthy church. These areas included, “creative worship and strong biblical preaching, developing a vital educational program for children and adults, providing quality pastoral care, and encouraging the call to community mission and social justice.”²²⁷

Rev. deJong arrived in Urbandale in late July 1988. The Deacons and the Stewardship Committee set up a series of dessert meetings with the theme “Dreams and Visions.” These small group meetings were organized to give the church community an opportunity to talk with the

new pastor. The Community Concerns Board responded to feelings expressed at the meetings by scheduling more multi-generational activities in the last half of 1988 and into 1989.²²⁸

At the beginning of 1989, the congregation voted to become a Just Peace Church. Also in 1989, the Pastoral Care Givers group was organized and formal training was carried out. The church also celebrated Rev. Gayle Strickler's 50th year of ordination, and participated in an Iowa Conference-sponsored Community Mission project that served the people of Urbandale, persons with AIDS, and the homeless. The Community Concerns Board began the Amnesty International project where they posted new information each month and helped members write letters on behalf of someone in need. Outreach and Nurture helped to organize the creation of a video documenting the memories of some of the founding members of the church. A significant amount of leadership energy and effort was required to address a lawsuit brought against the church as well as to develop an editorial policy for the Call.

Also in 1989, the Board appointed a Long-Range Planning Committee, which presented its recommendations at a special congregational meeting in May 1990. The congregation unanimously accepted its report and recommendations which covered issues such as the state of the physical plant, Christian Education ministries, pastoral caregiving, outreach and nurture, programmatic expansion and growth, open and affirming study, and Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM).

As part of the church's renewed commitment to strengthening Christian Education ministry, the church hired Julie Lischer in 1989, then Tom Klaus in 1991, to direct the Christian Education program. Tom resigned in 1995 to pursue a new call from his Quaker tradition.

In 1992, the Council approved Rev. de Jong's participation in the Doctor of Ministry program at United Seminary in New Brighton, Minnesota. Her major areas of study were sexuality and spirituality with an emphasis on ethics, and some work on worship and the arts.

In November 1992, Rev. Gayle Strickler was celebrated and granted the status of Pastor Emeritus.

Becoming Open and Affirming

Urbandale UCC's Open and Affirming (ONA) process unofficially began sometime in 1989, when a man with AIDS asked Rev. de Jong if she would help him die. Many in the congregation got to know this man through praying and caring for him. He put a human face on the AIDS issue.

The Long-Range Planning Committee described as one of its recommended goals in its Report issued in early 1990: "We recommend that this church engage in a process of education and dialogue to become an 'Open and Affirming' congregation." In the several months following the congregational vote accepting the Committee's Report, adult education sessions were held on issues including the spectrum of human sexuality, gay/lesbian experience in the

church, and AIDS. The Community Concerns Board supported and helped co-sponsor various programs and conferences in the community relating to gay and lesbian issues.

In the Spring of 1991, ONA activities slowed as several people in the church already thought the church was an open and affirming church. By this time, a few gay and lesbian people had joined or were worshipping at our church regularly.

In early 1992, the Community Concerns Board voted to sponsor a resolution at the Annual Meeting in Grinnell, calling on the Iowa Conference to study becoming ONA for two years, and encouraging local churches to do the same. Following a positive vote at the Annual Meeting in June 1992, the consensus of the Community Concerns Board was to press ahead with the church's own ONA study. In late 1992, questionnaires were sent to all members to gauge congregational support for taking a vote on ONA, to measure support and opposition to becoming ONA, and to review the need for additional educational opportunities. Although the response was very positive, the return rate was somewhat disappointing. The Community Concerns Board formed a task force to plan several adult education sessions for the Spring.

In January 1993, several adult education sessions were planned by the task force and sponsored by the Church Council, including speakers such as Rev. Chuck Briem, Associate Conference Minister; Rev. Don Gall, Conference Minister; Sylvia Thorsen-Smith, a member of the Presbyterian's committee on human sexuality; and

Rev. Rosemary Iha and two laypersons from Faith UCC in Iowa City, the first UCC church in Iowa to formally become ONA.

Following the adult education sessions, the Community Concerns Board recommended to the Council, and the Council voted, to present an ONA resolution to the congregation. The resolution modified the language in the church's existing Mission Statement. The pertinent paragraph as modified read:

"We covenant to be a community that remains open to the challenges of the Christian faith. We welcome into this community of faith, and affirm the participation in all aspects of church life, persons of every age, race, gender, nationality, ability, and sexual orientation. We will continue our efforts toward inclusiveness, and stand against all forms of discrimination. We will empower ourselves, our children, and one another to be fully present in the world, living in Christ's image, and striving for justice and peace."

On May 16, 1993, the congregation voted to become an ONA church by a vote of 101 yes, 2 no, and 2 abstentions. After the vote, the congregation gathered in a circle around the altar and sang "Amazing Grace." Urbandale UCC was the 103rd church to become ONA in our denomination.

Members of Urbandale UCC have continued the dialogue within the church on what it means to be open

and affirming through adult education, "fireside chats" at the pastor's home, and other informal and formal meetings.

In late 1994, Rev. Pat deJong informed the church that she had accepted a call from First Congregational Church of Berkeley, in Berkeley, California – the church in which she was ordained. The church sorrowfully accepted Rev. deJong's resignation, and quickly formed a Search Committee consisting of: Elaine Lundstrom (Chair), Sunny Duvick, Sandy Dixon, Ben Howenstine, Mary Sherer, Joe Wahrer, Dennis Dhainin, Dan Spencer, and Jan Maltby, with Moderator David Sheridan serving ex officio.

On February 2, 1994, the Council voted to call Rev. Robert Molsberry as the interim pastor. He moved to Urbandale with his family from Nicaragua, where he was a missionary and community organizer, to begin as the interim at Urbandale UCC on March 1, 1994. Although he served as interim for only six months, Rev. Molsberry served at a very crucial time in the life of the church. He not only kept the building project and other activities on track, he also quickly gained the affection and respect of the congregation.

**The "New Sanctuary" Building Committee{PRIVATE
}**

The recommendations of the Long-Range Planning Committee and the subsequent Architectural Review Committee led to the formation of a Building Committee.

On September 6, 1991, the first meeting of the newly-formed committee was held at Rev. Pat de Jong's home, with Dick Boyer and Ruth Rasmussen agreeing to be the co-chairs. Those present included: Dick Boyer, LuAnn Swinton, Barb Zimmermann, Dave Ostendorf, Jane Robinette, Joe Wahrer, Mary Looney, Wes Bixby, Rev. Pat de Jong, Ruth Rasmussen, Jeff Couch, Juanita Baker. Other people who attended the early meetings included Darrell Dickinson, Frank Stoerkel, Mark Wierson, and Don Duvick.

Jim Ernhart was selected as a consultant for the initial feasibility study. In November, the Building Committee held informational meetings to which every member of the congregation was invited. In addition, Ernhart conducted confidential interviews with many members about how much they were able to pledge to a building project, and how much debt they were comfortable with the church taking on.

In the booklet provided at the informational meetings, the Building Committee membership was listed as follows: Richard Boyer and Ruth Ann Rasmussen, co-chairs; Wesley Bixby, Jeffrey Couch, Darrell Dickinson, Mary Looney, David Ostendorf, Jane Robinette, Mark Wierson, and Barbara Zimmermann. Ex-officio members were: Juanita Baker, Secretary; Patricia de Jong, Pastor; Donald Duvick; Elaine Gifford; Frank Stoerkel; and LuAnn Swinton.

In March 1992, Church Council minutes indicate dissatisfaction concerning the architect initially chosen,

primarily over the percentage for the architect fee and the vagueness of answers given to questions.

In April 1992, the Architectural Committee recommended hiring Bussard Dikis. On April 26, 1992, the congregation voted to hire Bussard Dikis as the architect, and to authorize the Building Committee to explore financing options.

In July 1992, the architects presented the schematic design and master plan to the congregation. The congregation approved both for an estimated cost of \$764,000; the vote was 76 yes, 16 no, and 1 abstention.

In May 1993, the Church Council voted to reconstitute and reinvigorate the Building Committee for the next phase. In June 1993, Jo Lilley agreed to serve with Dick Boyer as co-chairs of the "new" Building Committee.

On September 26, 1993, the congregation voted to authorize Bussard Dikis (RDG) to proceed with construction documents for the building (\$719,000), to transfer funds from the sale of real property to the building fund, to obtain a loan of \$150,000 at 7% interest from the UCC Board for Homeland Ministries, and to obtain a bank loan not to exceed \$200,000.

On February 20, 1994, Moderator Dave Sheridan sent a letter informing the congregation that the construction bids were all higher than our budget -- the lowest, King Bole Holmes, exceeded the budget by a significant amount of money. Members were asked for special pledges if

possible. Three weeks later, the congregation had pledged an amazing additional \$78,000.

On March 27, 1994, the congregation voted 109 to 4 to enter into a construction contract with King Bole Holmes for \$784,300. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on Easter morning, April 3, 1994.

After asbestos-removal work was completed in late May or early June 1994, the real construction began. Throughout the project, Darrell Dickinson, construction liaison, and Dave Sheridan, 1994 Moderator, put in many long hours on construction and design details. Dave Sheridan stepped in as construction liaison in January 1995. The congregation celebrated Easter Sunday, April 3, 1995, in the new sanctuary.

Rev. Sue L. Gallagher, 1994 - 2003

On July 24, 1994, the congregation voted to call Rev. Dr. Sue Gallagher to be Urbandale UCC's next pastor. Rev. Gallagher had been Minister of Program and acting senior staffperson at Eden United Church of Christ in Hayward, California, prior to beginning her ministry here on October 1, 1994. The congregation celebrated her Service of Installation in March 1995, in the unfinished new sanctuary.

At the end of June 1995, the Strickler Peace Garden was dedicated in honor of the long-time peace ministry of Gayle and Beth Strickler. The garden features flowers and plants, a peace pole, and a meditation bench.

In Rev. Gallagher's first year here, thirty new members have joined the church, and many new programs and activities have been developed in order to meet the needs of long-time and new members. Urbandale UCC continues to grow and change as it attempts to lay a strong foundation to meet the challenges ahead.

¹ The title is an adaptation of Julia Lamb Luke's "A Bit of History of the Urbandale U.C.C. (Congregational)", July 1995, included in full later in this document.

² Names and dates from "Official Publication in the District Court of the State Of Iowa in and for Polk County, March Term, A.D. 1917, In the Matter of the Incorporation [NO. 27110 LAW] of the Town of Urbandale. Report of Commissioners." Printed in The Des Moines Register, April 5, 1917; and the rationale mentioned in "Urbandale Votes To Incorporate." Printed in The Des Moines Register, April 6, 1917.

³ Five of the six men were cited in the "Official Publication..." Printed in The Des Moines Register, April 5, 1917; Jesse Tally and the reference to families from "The History of the Urbandale Community Church," by Jessie and Harold Lamb, 1952. There are at least two versions of the Lambs' history -- an abridged version that appears in a number of church pamphlets, and a longer typed copy that amounts to the first five pages of the 1953 Women's Circle history. The typed version appears to be a verbatim copy of a hand written history of the church by Jessie Lamb [no date]. Only the last ten pages of the hand-written version remain. Unless otherwise noted, citations in this publication refer to the longer typed version of the Lambs' History.

⁴ Most of the available histories of Urbandale UCC include similar versions of this story. The earliest available is: "The History of the Urbandale Community Church," by Jessie Lamb, 1952; see also: "The First Church in Urbandale," by Les Hamilton [no date, xerox with hand-written edits].

⁵ From: "A Brief History Of The Urbandale Community Church [Congregational]" in the "ANNUAL DIRECTORY, Fall 1961, Urbandale Community Congregational Church. In Fellowship with the United Church of Church"; and "The First Church in Urbandale," by Les Hamilton [xerox with hand-written edits].

⁶ Original Hand-Written Minutes on Bankers Life Company stationery. "Agents' Correspondence, William Heinz, Agency Cashier." Dated: Dec. 5, 1920, Urbandale, IA; Dec. 19, 1920, Urbandale, IA.

⁷ Original Hand-Written Minutes on Bankers Life Company stationery. "Agents' Correspondence, William Heinz, Agency Cashier." Dated: Dec. 19, 1920, Urbandale, IA.

⁸ Original Hand-Written Minutes on Bankers Life Company stationery. "Agents' Correspondence, William Heinz, Agency Cashier." The writer described the related sections: "Minutes from the Dec. 26, 1920 meeting" and "Minutes from the Jan. 23, 1921 meeting."

⁹ "History of the Urbandale Community Congregational Church," by Mr. Harold D. and Mrs. Jessie Lamb, page 2.

¹⁰ The site information is detailed in the typed minutes of the Urbandale Community Church Board, January 29, 1922; while the cost of the lots was listed in the "Program at the Laying of the Corner Stone of the Urbandale Community Church," Sunday, August 28, 1921.

¹¹ EDUCATOR Loose Leaf Note Book No. 6. "Constitution and By Laws of the Urbandale Community Circle. Revised March 1st 1929". A reference to the 20th anniversary of the "Circle" on February 12, 1941, would support 1921 as the founding year. There was even a Women's Circle song used to open many of the meetings in the 1940s. Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, May 28, 1941.

¹² "The History of the Urbandale Community Church," by Jessie Lamb, page 1.

¹³ The congregation recorded these stories in the videotape "Sons and Daughters of the Pioneers," and it is also documented by Maurice Nelson and Berneda Milligan on their Urbandale Church History Project Questionnaires, discussions with the author, and in a taped interview by Doris Poindexter. The assumption concerning the walls and floor is based on the "Program at the Laying of the Corner Stone of the Urbandale Community Church," Sunday, August 28, 1921.

¹⁴ "Program ..." Sunday, August 28, 1921, page 3.

¹⁵ "Program ..." Sunday, August 28, 1921, back cover.

¹⁶ The history read at this ceremony is not part of the church collections and was not available as a resource for this project. The cornerstone appears to remain undisturbed in its original location near the north door of the church. "Program ..." Sunday, August 28, 1921.

¹⁷ "Program ..." Sunday, August 28, 1921.

¹⁸ Financial details were outlined in the "Program ..." Sunday, August 28, 1921, page 3.

¹⁹ Minutes of a "Special Meeting," January 29, 1922.

²⁰ Minutes of a "Special Meeting," March 5, 1922.

²¹ "The History of the Urbandale Community Church," by Jessie Lamb, 1952.

²² “The History ...” by Jessie Lamb, 1952.

²³ “The History ...” by Jessie Lamb, 1952; and “A Bit of History of the Urbandale U.C.C. (Congregational),” July 1995, by Julia Lamb Luke.

²⁴ From the author’s discussions with Carle Hall and Maurice Nelson.

²⁵ “The History ...” by Jessie Lamb, 1952.

²⁶ “The History ...” by Jessie Lamb, 1952.

²⁷ “The History ...” by Jessie Lamb, 1952; Urbandale Community Circle meeting minutes place the Little family in the congregation by early January 1932. Mrs. Little was secretary of the group until she resigned on March 23rd. On April 6th the “Circle” minutes recorded Mrs. Olmsted reporting that Mrs. Little was thinking of keeping the secretary’s records. Mrs. Flug took over secretary’s position and the small bound “RECORD” book was returned shortly thereafter.

²⁸ “The History ...” by Jessie Lamb, 1952

²⁹ “The History ...” by Jessie Lamb, 1952.

³⁰ “The History ...” by Jessie Lamb, 1952.

³¹ Passages taken from a letter by Elizabeth Hamilton, 7/29/95.

³² Passages taken from a letter by Elizabeth Hamilton, 7/29/95.

³³ EDUCATOR Loose Leaf Note Book No. 6. "Constitution and By Laws of the Urbandale Community Circle. Revised March 1st 1929." A reference to the 20th anniversary of the "Circle" on Feb. 12, 1941, would support 1921 as the founding year. Sixty-eight attended the celebration at Mrs. Baird's home on Roseland Drive. The ten living charter members were honored with china. Candles were lit for the four who were deceased while Mrs. Casson sang "Will The Circle Be Unbroken." The names of the original fourteen were listed in the meeting minutes. There was even a Women's Circle song used to open many of the meetings in the 1940s. Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, May 28, 1941.

³⁴ Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1930, EDUCATOR Loose Leaf Note Book No. 6., Jan. 8, 1930, p. 3.

³⁵ Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1930, EDUCATOR Loose Leaf Note Book No. 6., Jan. 22, 1930; Feb. 25, 1931; May 6, 1931; May 20, 1931; June 10, 1931; Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, June 10, 1942.

³⁶ Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, Feb. 29, 1941; April 9, 1941.

³⁷ Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1930, EDUCATOR Loose Leaf Note Book No. 6., Aug. 5, 1931. It appears that they did not act on this measure for some time because the treasurer's reports reflect no expenditures for kitchen equipment for the rest of the year. Members began discussing "remodeling" the church kitchen again in February 1941. Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, Feb. 29, 1941.

³⁸ Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1930, EDUCATOR Loose Leaf Note Book No. 6., Jan. 22, 1930 (money made on the Jan. 31st event noted on the bottom of the page, p. 5); Father/Son, Nov. 12, 1930; Jan. 14, 1931; Feb. 11, 1931; March 11, 1931. Doughnut sales grossed \$13.36 during the first two months of 1931; they netted \$14.45 from a May 29 church supper, and made \$12.36 profit on their July 8th, 1931 ice cream social. They moved the August ice cream social to the school lawn, Aug. 5th, 1931. The mother/daughter dinner was discussed on March 26, 1941, scheduled for May 13, 1941; a Girl Scout Jitney supper was held on March 31, 1941, at six p.m.; in addition to the teachers they also had the Polk County Grand Jury in for lunch. Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, Mar. 26, 1941, April 23, 1941.

³⁹ Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1930, EDUCATOR Loose Leaf Note Book No. 6., Jan. 22, 1930, Nov. 12, 1930; Feb. 25, 1931; Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, May 26, 1943.

⁴⁰ Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, for example: October. 22, 1941.

⁴¹ Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604, Dec. 11, 1940.

⁴² Minutes ... June 11, 1941.

⁴³ Minutes ... May 13, 1942.

⁴⁴ This meeting was held at the First Evangelical Church in 1942. Minutes ... June 10, 1942.

⁴⁵ Minutes ... November 11, 1942.

⁴⁶ Minutes ... May 10, 1943.

⁴⁷ They donated two dollars on March 8, 1944. Minutes ...

⁴⁸ Minutes ... March 22, 1944.

⁴⁹ Minutes ... March 22, 1944.

⁵⁰ "The First Church in Urbandale," by Les Hamilton [xerox with hand-written edits].

⁵¹ "Plan Urbandale Church," The Des Moines Register, June 16, 1946; and "Pledge \$20,000 for Urbandale Church," The Des Moines Register, Undated. Records detailing the modifications required for this upgrading are not available, but the church spent \$7,500 upgrading the basement sanctuary in 1947 and 1948. This construction was in preparation for adding the new sanctuary above. The upgrades included at least several rooms to the east end of the basement as well as repairs to the remaining walls. "Urbandale Community Congregational Church Building Fund Report of Cash Receipts and Cash Disbursements June 1, 1946 through December 5, 1950," mimeographed copy of the typed original.

⁵² Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 55; Fundraising pamphlet: "It is Unbelievable...." p. 4, taped into the Women's Fellowship Scrap Book, 1952 - 1979, p. 2.

⁵³ Originally, the Home Builders met the second Saturday evening every month. They began meeting the second Sunday evening of each month in June of 1952. See: Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 55. The earliest documentation of Home Builders activities appears sporadically throughout the Minutes of the Urbandale Community Circle, 1940-1947, NATIONAL bound Note Book No. E33-1604.

⁵⁴ The author inserted first names as they could be identified from Homebuilders Record meeting minutes as well as from documentation in The Pilgrim Church Register, 1950 - 1985.

⁵⁵ Mr. Roper and his wife were energetic members of the Homebuilders Committee as well as participating in other church activities until leaving Urbandale in June 1953. At that time they moved to Humboldt, Iowa. See: Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 59.

⁵⁶ Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 7-9.

⁵⁹ The first time that UCC records mention the God's Acre Project is in the minutes of the April 16, 1949 Home Builders Class meeting. Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 36-41.

⁶⁰ "City, Country Folk Join in 'God's Acres' Project," Des Moines Sunday Register, Section Four, May 15, 1949, p. 2.

⁶¹ "Farm to Help Pay for New Church," Des Moines Sunday Register, April 23, 1949.

⁶² Ten acres of the land were not suitable for row crops and were planted in grass. "Farm to Help Pay for New Church," Des Moines Sunday Register, April 23, 1949; The "City, Country Folk Join in 'God's Acres' Project," Des Moines Sunday Register, Section Four, May 15, 1949, p. 2.

⁶³ "City, Country Folk Join in 'God's Acres' Project," Des Moines Sunday Register, Section Four, May 15, 1949, p. 2.

⁶⁴ "City, Country Folk Join in 'God's Acres' Project," Des Moines Sunday Register, Section Four, May 15, 1949, p. 2.

⁶⁵ "City, Country Folk Join in 'God's Acres' Project," Des Moines Sunday Register, Section Four, May 15, 1949, p. 2.

⁶⁶ The sign appears in a photo accompanying the article. It may have been temporary, though, because of discussions recorded later in the summer about putting up a "God's Acre" sign. "City, Country Folk Join in 'God's Acres' Project," Des Moines Sunday Register, Section Four, May 15, 1949, p. 2; "Urbandale's First Church," by Les Hamilton, The Urbandale News. Clipping, no date.

⁶⁷ Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 36-41; "Urbandale's First Church," by Les Hamilton, The Urbandale News. Clipping, no date.

⁶⁸ "Urbandale Community Congregational Church Building Fund Report of Cash Receipts and Cash Disbursements June 1, 1946 through December 5, 1950," mimeographed copy of the typed original; also, Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 47.

⁶⁹ Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 13.

⁷⁰ Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 17-22.

⁷¹ Isabelle Roper was initially elected treasurer in January 1948, but resigned at the February meeting and was replaced by Ernie Vermazen. Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 23-33.

⁷² Ralph Whitten was initially elected president in January 1949, but resigned and switched places with Vice-President Dunn at the June meeting. Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 34-36.

⁷³ Leonard Phelps was originally elected vice-president in January 1949, but resigned and was replaced by Clyde Collins at the February meeting. Homebuilders Record, 1946 - 1975, p. 43-47.

⁷⁴ "Plan Urbandale Church," The Des Moines Register, June 16, 1946; and "Pledge \$20,000 for Urbandale Church," The Des Moines Register. Undated.

⁷⁵ Fundraising pamphlet: "It is Unbelievable....." p. 2, taped into the Women's Fellowship Scrap Book, 1952 - 1979, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Fundraising pamphlet: "It is Unbelievable....." p. 3, taped into the Women's Fellowship Scrap Book, 1952 - 1979, p. 2.

⁷⁷ A reporter attending the dedication services mentioned the contractor, Mr. Ingham, and commented that the new sanctuary "is not entirely finished." "Dedication at Community Congregational Church Sunday," Beaverdale News, loose clipping, no date; "Urbandale's First Church," by Les Hamilton, The Urbandale News, clipping, no date.

⁷⁸ "Dedication at Community Congregational Church Sunday," Beaverdale News, loose clipping, no date.

⁷⁹ "Dedication at Community Congregational Church Sunday," Beaverdale News, loose clipping, no date.

⁸⁰ "Dedication at Community Congregational Church Sunday," Beaverdale News, loose clipping, no date.

⁸¹ Laura Ward's response to a Church History Questionnaire. Actually, records show it took roughly three years to pay for the new organ and the congregation paid at least \$102.05 in interest. The Community Church Call, October 1, 1953.

⁸² The bell was covered by the tower roof, but the bell was exposed to the elements on all four sides through large openings in the tower's sides for more than half a century. The large bell, nearly a yard across and more than three inches thick near the rim retains very little of its original markings. We know no more than that it was manufactured by Cymyer Morton & Company of Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁸³ Newspaper clipping [Des Moines], marked 1950. "Church Sold, But Bell Will Not Be Silent."

⁸⁴ "New Church 'Had to Open Aug. 9': Pastor's Golden Wedding Date," by Lillian McLaughlin, Des Moines Tribune, August 9, 1950.

⁸⁵ Letter from Judson E. Fiebiger, Superintendent of the Congregational Christian Conference of Iowa, to The Pastor and Members of Urbandale Community Congregational Church, May 24, 1951.

⁸⁶ "Urbandale Community Congregational Church Building Fund Report of Cash Receipts and Cash Disbursements June 1, 1946 through December 5, 1950," mimeographed copy of the typed original.

⁸⁷ Carbon copy of Dr. Cooper's 1951 resignation letter.

⁸⁸ "New Congregational Pastor," Des Moines Register, clipping from the week of July 4th, 1951; and Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall; "Reviewed, Amended, and Substituted Articles of Incorporation of the Urbandale Community Church (Congregational), Urbandale, Iowa," dated 1946; also based on discussions with Rev. and Elisabeth Strickler.

⁸⁹ "New Congregational Pastor," Des Moines Register, clipping from the week of July 4th, 1951; and Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

⁹⁰ "New Congregational Pastor," Des Moines Register, clipping from the week of July 4th, 1951; and Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

⁹¹ "Easter Pageant To Be Presented At Urbandale Community Church," The Beaverdale News, April 16, 1954; Untitled article, The Beaverdale News, April 23, 1954.

⁹² "Easter Pageant To Be Presented At Urbandale Community Church," The Beaverdale News, April 16, 1954.

⁹³ Two hundred six people attended the 6:30 a.m. sunrise service, two hundred sixty-five attended the 9:30 a.m. service, and three hundred six attended the 10:45 a.m. service on Easter. "Easter Pageant To Be Presented At Urbandale Community Church," The Beaverdale News, April 16, 1954; Untitled article, The Beaverdale News, April 23, 1954.

⁹⁴ "The Pastor's Call," The Call, September, 1954; Women's Circle Scrap Book 1952-1961.

⁹⁵ "Our Divisions Report: Christian Mission," by Gayle Strickler, clipping [no publication name] 1957; and Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

⁹⁶ "Exotic Names from Tokyo, Rev. Strickler Continues His Report of Oriental Mission," newspaper clipping [no publication name], July 1955; and Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

⁹⁷ Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

⁹⁸ Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

⁹⁹ Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

¹⁰⁰ “Will Buy \$4,500 Property for Expansion,” loose clipping, publication unknown; “Meeting of the Congregation Next Sunday,” The Call, March, 1954; and a letter from D.H. Thomas, Business Manager and Assistant Treasurer of the Congregational Christian Conference of Iowa, to Rev. Gayle Strickler, March 10, 1954; and another letter from Mr. Thomas to Mr. John J. Montgomery [Attorney for the Urbandale Community Church in the 1950s]. The letters from the Conference review the status of a \$4,000 loan that the Conference made to the church for the purchase of “Lot # 49.”

¹⁰¹ “New Building Plans”, The Call, May 1954, clipping found in the Women’s Circle Scrap Book 1952-1961.

¹⁰² Letter from Ralph H. Klinestiver to Rev. Judson E. Fiebiger, August 22, 1955.

¹⁰³ Loose original and carbon copy fundraising materials from 1955 produced by the expansion committee; Letter from Ralph H. Klinestiver to Rev. Judson E. Fiebiger, August 22, 1955.

¹⁰⁴ From “The Dedication of Pilgrim Heights Camp, June 7, 1958, Montour, Iowa.”

¹⁰⁵ From “The Dedication of Pilgrim Heights Camp, June 7, 1958, Montour, Iowa.”

¹⁰⁶ Loose original and carbon copy fundraising materials from 1955 produced by the expansion committee; Letter from Ralph H. Klinestiver to Rev. Judson E. Fiebiger, August 22, 1955.

¹⁰⁷ Loose original hand-written minutes [five pages, one dated March 2, 1955] from two of these small-group meetings, as well a mimeograph copy of the notes that discussion leaders used at these meetings.

¹⁰⁸ Production-quality fundraising pamphlet, "The Urbandale Community Congregational Church, You Be the Judge," undated [1955 or 1956].

¹⁰⁹ Production-quality fundraising pamphlet, "The Urbandale Community Congregational Church, You Be the Judge," undated [1955 or 1956].

¹¹⁰ Letter from Ralph H. Klinestiver to Rev. Judson E. Fiebiger, August 22, 1955; Loose original hand-written letter from the expansion committee to William Kincaid Newman, Secretary, Board of Home Missions of the Congregational and Christian Church, undated, but sometime between January 1957 and May 1957.

¹¹¹ Loose original and carbon copy fundraising materials from 1955 produced by the expansion committee; Letter from Ralph H. Klinestiver to Rev. Judson E. Fiebiger, August 22, 1955.

¹¹² "Ground Breaking Last Sunday," The Call, June, 1957; Women's Circle Scrap Book 1952-1961, Untitled clipping dated June 16, 1957, showing Don Olmsted, Laird Jones, Lois Hamilton, Rev. Strickler, Gayle Strickler, Jr., and Dick McFall; Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall. Facts supported with information from the author's discussions with Carle Hall and Maurice Nelson.

¹¹³ "Ground Breaking Last Sunday," The Call, June, 1957; Women's Circle Scrap Book 1952-1961, Untitled clipping dated June 16, 1957, showing Don Olmsted, Laird Jones, Lois Hamilton, Rev. Strickler, Gayle Strickler Jr., and Dick McFall; Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall. Facts supported with information from the author's discussions with Carle Hall and Maurice Nelson.

114 Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler," held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

115 The author describes this event as a "quiet" one because it was mentioned in none of the primary documents from 1958; "Urbandale's First Church," by Les Hamilton, The Urbandale News, clipping, no date; Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler" held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

116 Urbandale Community Church Clerk Ruth Dunn's Church Board Minutes from the 1961 Annual Meeting.

117 Church Board Minutes, May 16, 1962, May 15, 1963. Representing Urbandale Community Church at this meeting were Bob and Betty Barton, Rev. Bob Hoffman, Margaret Avaux, and Miriam Cline.

118 Church Board Minutes, September 18, 1963; January 15 and 22, 1964.

119 Church Board Minutes, September 16, 1964; October 21, 1964.

120 Church Board Minutes, January 13, 1965; copy of the "Amendment to the Renewed, Amended, and Substituted Articles of Incorporation of the Urbandale Community Church (Congregational), March 31, 1965.

¹²¹ “Ted Grove to Speak at Women’s Meeting,” undated newspaper clipping in the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook,,1958; “Community Church,” newspaper clipping dated 1960 in the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook,, 1960; “Des Moines Association Meeting” and “Fifth Grade Boys Reach out to Share Through ‘Care,’ ” The Community Church Call, April 9, 1958; “The Pastor’s Call,” The Community Church Call, September 9, 1958; “Community Church Summer Schedule,” UrbaNews, June 19, 1959; “World Day of Prayer Service,” UrbaNews, undated clipping in the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook,, 1961; “World Day of Prayer Service,” The Community Church Call, clipping dated 1961 from in the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook,, 1961; “Clothing Box To Be Sent To Migrant Workers,” The Community Church Call, clipping dated 1961 from the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook,, 1961; Church Board Minutes, December 19, 1962; September 18 & October 16, 1963.

¹²² “Visitors From Japan,” The Community Church Call, clipping dated 1960 from in the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook,, 1960.

¹²³ Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler" held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

¹²⁴ Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler" held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

¹²⁵ Tape of a 1961 "This Is Your Life Gayle Strickler" held at Urbandale UCC Fellowship Hall.

¹²⁶ “Community Church,” undated newspaper clipping in the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook, 1959.

¹²⁷ “Community Church,” undated newspaper clipping in the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook, 1959.

¹²⁸ Gayle, Beth, Douglas, and Stephen went on this vacation. Gayle, Jr. was in Cleveland, Ohio. "The Pastor's Call," The Community Church Call, July 23, 1958.

¹²⁹ Minutes of the Church Board, Feb. 15, 1961; "The Pastor's Call," The Community Church Call, Feb. 21, 1961; "Our Pastor's Resignation Accepted," The Community Church Call, undated clipping in the Women's Fellowship Scrapbook, 1961; "Pastor Resigns," UrbaNews, undated newspaper clipping in the Women's Fellowship Scrapbook, 1961.

¹³⁰ From a mimeographed copy of the April 12, 1961, "Information For Prospective New Members," by the Board of Elders and Deacons.

¹³¹ Darrell Dickinson and Dick McFall, co-chairs; committee members included Everett Nicholson, Al Tinder, Evelyn Shaw, Robert Lamb, Miriam Cline, Larry Hindert, Clay Rusk, Elizabeth Hamilton, Carol Proctor, Don Duvick, and Ruth Dunn. Minutes of the Church Board, Feb. 16, 1961.

¹³² The number thirty comes from a letter by Pastoral Committee Co-Chairs, Darrell Dickinson and R.A. McFall, that was mailed to all congregation members on July 5, 1961; the March 19 and April 30, 1961 Sunday Bulletins from the Phillips Congregational Church, Watertown, Massachusetts; a mimeographed copy of Rev. Hoffman's sermon, "Beneath The Cross."

¹³³ Mimeographed letter by Pastoral Committee Co-Chairs Darrell Dickinson and R.A. McFall that was mailed to all congregation members on July 5, 1961.

¹³⁴ Letter from Darrell Dickinson, April 24, 1961; Letters from Rev. Robert W. Hoffman, April, 19^t undated; May 20th, 1961; Telegram from R.W.H. on April 29, 1961; and implied letters/telegrams from Darrell Dickinson on April 14; April 24, 1961.

¹³⁵ “Time-Table for visit of Rev. Robert W. Hoffman,” undated mimeograph with D. Dickinson’s hand-written notes.

¹³⁶ “Time-Table for visit of Rev. Robert W. Hoffman,” undated mimeograph; and a bulletin from the May 28 services at The First Congregational Church of Ankeny.

¹³⁷ Typed letter from Rev. Robert W. Hoffman to Dick McFall, undated, but between May 29 and mid-June, 1961.

¹³⁸ Typed letter from the Pastoral Committee Co-Chairs to Rev. Robert W. Hoffman, June 27, 1961; and a mimeographed letter to the congregation from the Pastoral Committee, June 27, 1961.

¹³⁹ Mimeographed statement from Rev. Robert Hoffman, “I Believe,” mailed with a mimeographed letter to the congregation from the Pastoral Committee, July 5, 1961.

¹⁴⁰ A carbon copy of a typed letter from the church clerk, Ruth Dunn, to Rev. Robert W. Hoffman, July 12, 1961; and a typed letter from Rev. Hoffman to the Urbandale Church congregation, July 17, 1961; two undated hand-written letters from Rev. Hoffman to Richard McFall; an original bulletin from Fall meeting of The Des Moines Association of Congregational Christian Churches and Ministers, Wed. Sept. 13, 1961 [16 churches participating]; a carbon copy of an undated letter from Darrell Dickinson to Judson Fiebiger; a carbon copy of an invitation to the Service of Installation for Rev. Hoffman; and an announcement from the Des Moines Association of Congregational Christian Churches and Ministers describing Rev. Hoffman's examination and installation, January 23, 1962; A newspaper ad for KRNT-TV Channel 8's "Central Iowa Church of the Air," UrbaNews, January 19, 1962; "Urbandale Church Will Install Pastor," Des Moines Register, undated clipping in the Women's Fellowship Scrapbook, 1962; "Rev. Hoffman Assumes Pastorate," UrbaNews, Sept. 22, 1961.

¹⁴¹ Church Board Minutes, December 20, 1961; January 24 & March 21, 1962.

¹⁴² Church Board Minutes, November 21, 1962, April 17, 1963.

¹⁴³ Church Board Minutes, September 18, October 16, December 18, 1963.

¹⁴⁴ Church Board Minutes, September 15, 1965.

¹⁴⁵ Church Board Minutes, January 30, April 17, 1963

¹⁴⁶ Church Board Minutes, December 19, 1962.

¹⁴⁷ Church Annual Reports, 1965, 1966, 1967.

¹⁴⁸ Church Board Minutes, November 21, December 19, 1962, September 15, 1965; also "Urbandale's First Church," by Les Hamilton, UrbaNews, undated clipping.

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- ¹⁴⁹ Church Board Minutes, April 21, 1965.
- ¹⁵⁰ Minutes of a Congregational Meeting held on May 9, 1963.
- ¹⁵¹ Church Board Minutes, September 15, 1965. The 1968 and 1969 Annual Reports state that the Trustees decided to discontinue the practice of providing a parsonage for the minister in 1968. Trustees made arrangements for Rev. Hoffman to receive a housing allowance and helped the Hoffmans move into a new home in 1968. After an attempt at renting the parsonage, it was sold in 1969.
- ¹⁵² Church Annual Report, 1967.
- ¹⁵³ Church Board Minutes, November 15, 1961.
- ¹⁵⁴ Church Board Minutes, May 16, 1962.
- ¹⁵⁵ Church Board Minutes, June 20, August 29, September 19, 1962; also “Urbandale’s First Church,” by Les Hamilton, UrbaNews, undated clipping.
- ¹⁵⁶ Church Board Minutes, October 17, 1962, January 30, 1963; also “Urbandale’s First Church,” by Les Hamilton, UrbaNews, undated clipping.
- ¹⁵⁷ Church Board Minutes, May 15, 1963; as well as the author’s discussions with Carle Hall, Maurice Nelson, and Elizabeth Hamilton.
- ¹⁵⁸ Church Board Minutes, July 7, July 17, 1963.
- ¹⁵⁹ Church Board Minutes, May 15, 1963; as well as the author’s discussions with Carle Hall, Maurice Nelson, and Elizabeth Hamilton.
- ¹⁶⁰ Church Board Minutes, March 18, 1964.

161 The Committee sent letters to newspapers and to state legislators and senators concerning gambling. They wrote articles for the Call and the local newspapers outlining their opinions about birth control. Mimeographed copy of materials used at the 1965 “Planning Conference - Urbandale United Church of Christ,” held May 16, 1965, at Plymouth Place at 42nd & Ingersoll Avenue, Des Moines; Church Board Minutes, June 16, 1965.

162 Church Board Minutes, September 15, 1965.

163 Church Board Minutes, December 15, 1965; Church Annual Report, 1966.

164 Church Board Minutes, December 15, 1965; Church Annual Report, 1966.

165 “New Troop,” UrbaNews, undated clipping in the Women’s Fellowship Scrapbook, 1960.

166 Church Board Minutes, June 21, 1961.

167 Church Board Minutes, July 18, August 29, & November 21, 1962.

168 Church Board Minutes, April 21, May 19, 1965; Church Annual Report, 1966.

169 Church Annual Report, 1966.

170 Church Annual Report, 1966.

171 Church Annual Report, 1967.

172 Church Annual Report, 1967.

173 Church Annual Report, 1966.

174 The Development Committee, later the Building Committee, also reviewed the broader idea of a whole new church. Church Annual Report, 1966, 1967, 1968.

175 Church Annual Report, 1968.

176 Church Annual Report, 1968.

¹⁷⁷ Building Committee members included: Lloyd Wible & Nancy Boyers as co-chairs, Russell Carter, Beverly Roach, Merlene Dickinson, Carle Hall, Stephen Swinton, and Maynard Klosterbuer. Church Annual Report, 1968.

¹⁷⁸ Church Annual Report, 1968.

¹⁷⁹ The committee followed the 1969 summer donation with \$700 for “central city disadvantaged youngsters.” Church Annual Report, 1969, 1970.

¹⁸⁰ In addition to the original Building Committee members, Beverly Funte, Courtney Allen, Kenneth Wright, Bob Hoffman, Cecil Looney, and Al Tinder also served. Flier from the “Symposium on Tomorrow’s Urbandale United Church of Christ.” October 6, 1968; Church Annual Report, 1969.

¹⁸¹ The author was unable to obtain a list of the goals as agreed upon by the congregation. Church Annual Report, 1969, 1970.

¹⁸² Church Annual Report, 1970.

¹⁸³ Church Annual Report, 1971.

¹⁸⁴ The Baldwin piano was used in the church basement. Church Annual Report, 1970, 1971.

¹⁸⁵ Church Annual Report, 1972.

¹⁸⁶ Church Annual Report, 1972, 1973.

¹⁸⁷ Racial Justice Task Force members included: Bob Hoffman, Don Duvick, Gary Hassel, Courtney Allen, Al Tinder, Martha Reinig, Martha Willits, Jeanne White, John Cole, Jack and Alma Sims, Lawanna McPherson, Mary Sherer, Joe Wahrer, Miriam Cline, Elizabeth Hamilton, and Mary Looney. Church Annual Report, 1972, 1973.

¹⁸⁸ The Social Action Committee members included: Chairperson Jeanne White, Les Hamilton, Ruby Coonradt, Carla Hassel, Al Tinder, and Warren Jesse. Church Annual Report, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976.

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- ¹⁸⁹ Church Annual Report, 1970.
- ¹⁹⁰ The Nursery School's organizers figured that they needed twelve children to "function well." Church Board Minutes, June 16, August 17, September 15, December 15, 1965; Church Annual Report 1966.
- ¹⁹¹ Church Annual Report, 1968, 1969, 1971, 1972.
- ¹⁹² The Pulpit Committee included: Juanita Baker, Dennis Briggs, Selma Duvick, Lee Couch, Sally Harrison, Gary Hassel, Phil Jones, Donald Pease, Curt Porter, Jim Robinette, Jack Sims, Al Tinder, Miriam Cline, and Joseph Wahrer. Church Annual Report, 1972.
- ¹⁹³ Church Annual Report, 1973.
- ¹⁹⁴ Church Annual Report, 1974.
- ¹⁹⁵ Church Annual Report, 1974.
- ¹⁹⁶ Church Annual Report, 1976.
- ¹⁹⁷ Church Annual Report, 1974.
- ¹⁹⁸ Church Annual Report, 1975.
- ¹⁹⁹ Church Annual Report, 1973.
- ²⁰⁰ The 1974 Deaconesses included Juanita Baker, Marian Chase Gladys Boals, Ruth Dougherty, Elizabeth Hamilton, Pat Heald, Elsie Hoy, and Ruth Whitney. Church Annual Report, 1974.
- ²⁰¹ Church Annual Report, 1975.
- ²⁰² Church Annual Report, 1974.
- ²⁰³ The Interpretive Choir included: Kathy Baker, Patty Baker, Sally Baker, Kathy Couch, Nancy Derrough, John Dougherty, Gene Foss, Randa Duvick, Linda Pease, Tracy Peterson, Lynda Porter, Jane Robinette, and Terry Sims. Church Annual Report, 1974.
- ²⁰⁴ At the beginning of 1976, Roselyn Harbart discontinued the Interpretive Choir. Church Annual Report, 1975.
- ²⁰⁵ Church Annual Report, 1974.
- ²⁰⁶ Church Annual Report, 1975.

²⁰⁷ “Need a Lift,” UrbaNews, November 23, 1978; “More Churches Made Accessible,” by William Simbro, The Des Moines Tribune, November 25, 1978; Church Annual Report, 1975, 1977, 1978.

²⁰⁸ Church Annual Report, 1978, 1979.

²⁰⁹ Church Annual Report, 1977.

²¹⁰ Church Annual Report, 1977.

²¹¹ Original members of the Community Concerns Board were: Faith Ferre, Les Hamilton, Darlene Harvey, Gayle Strickler, Mary Sherer, Jeanne White, Ruth Dougherty, Steve Baker, and Roselyn Harbart. Church Annual Report, 1977.

²¹² Women’s Fellowship also helped support the Mueyengwas during their stay in Iowa. Church Annual Report, 1977, 1978, 1979.

²¹³ Although not specifically oriented toward peace-making, the Community Concerns Board also promoted the use of inclusive language in worship and printed materials beginning in 1982. In 1983, the committee’s peacemaking efforts were expressed in part by a float they sponsored in the Fourth of July parade entitled, “Urbandale: The Nuclear Freeze City.” Church Annual Report, 1982, 1983.

²¹⁴ Church Annual Report, 1982.

²¹⁵ The Pastor Parish Committee didn’t formally get underway until January of 1984. Church Annual Report, 1983.

²¹⁶ Church Annual Report, 1984, 1985.

²¹⁷ Church Annual Report, 1985.

²¹⁸ Church Annual Report, 1986.

²¹⁹ Church Annual Report, 1986.

²²⁰ Serving communion the first Sunday of each month began at [or returned to] Urbandale UCC in 1987. Church Annual Report, 1986, 1987.

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- 221 Community Concerns organized the programming focusing on South Africa. Church Annual Report, 1987.**
- 222 In 1979, the Board of Trustees enlisted Laurayne Robinette and Carol Looney as Advisory Board members “for direction in paint color selection, draperies, etc.,” for a planned sanctuary redecoration in 1980. Church Annual Report, 1978, 1979.**
- 223 Church Annual Report, 1982.**
- 224 Church Annual Report, 1988.**
- 225 Church Annual Report, 1989.**
- 226 Church Annual Report, 1987, 1988.**
- 227 Church Annual Report, 1988.**
- 228 Church Annual Report, 1988.**