

# History of United Methodist Church of Peace

written for 25th Anniversary, January 11, 1981

The Church of Peace began as a mission project of the Minnesota Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church. The Conference Board of Missions under the direction of Dr. Frank Spong began a study of the suburban areas. Learning that the growing edge of Minneapolis was to the southwest, application was made to the Comity Commission of the Department of Planning and Adjustment of the Minneapolis Council of Churches for an allocation in Richfield. In the spring of 1955, following the granting of this allocation, the Board of Missions authorized the purchase of a parsonage for the Richfield Mission. The 100th session of the Minnesota Conference voted to focus their Centennial Missionary efforts on the Richfield project and pledged to this work \$100,000. Rev. Lowell Reinking was assigned to pastor this mission and services began October 9, 1955 in the Sheridan Elementary School at Thomas Avenue and 64th Street.

Seven families, members of the Oakland Avenue Evangelical United Brethren Church, who lived within the vicinity of the new church decided to become a part of Church of Peace. On January 19, 1956, a unique service was held at the Oakland Church. Following a devotional service led by the pastor, Rev. E. Russell Praetorius, the seven families knelt at the altar and Pastor Praetorius in a dedicatory service presented them to their new pastor.

Sunday, January 22, 1956, thirty members signed the Charter Member Roll. Forming the nucleus of the new church were Pastor and Mrs. Reinking, the 14 members who transferred from Oakland Avenue Church, and 14 others who transferred from other churches or who came in by profession of faith. The service was conducted by Pastor Reinking, assisted by Bishop H. R. Heininger. The first congregational meeting for the purpose of organizing was held on February 14th.

In December of 1955 the Richfield Committee of the Board of Missions purchased eight lots at 64th Street between Washburn and Xerxes Avenue South. This was a very desirable location, as it was the heart of a rapidly expanding community and within a few blocks of the Dayton—Donaldson Southdale Shopping Center scheduled to open in the fall of 1956. After much consultation regarding plans for the building, construction finally began. A Groundbreaking Service was held on Sunday May 5th, 1957.

A special service for the Laying of the Cornerstone took place October 20, 1957. On Christmas Eve the congregation gathered for the first time in the church for a fellowship period. The first worship service was held in the new building January 12th, 1958, with Dr. Frank Spong and Rev. Leo Kisrow assisting the pastor in the observance of Holy Communion.

The Church was dedicated on January 26, 1958. Bishop H. R. Heininger, Bishop of the Northwestern Area of the E.U.B. Church spoke at both worship services on that day and assisted the pastor in the dedication. Also assisting were the Conference Superintendents, Dr. Frank Spong, Rev. C. O. Main, and Rev. H. E. Hiller. The Sunday School was a part of Church of Peace from its beginning with classes meeting during the church service. Mrs. Lowell Reinking, assisted by Harriet Miller and Dorothy Kuske organized the Sunday School and taught the classes. As the attendance increased additional classes were added. Each class had two or three associate teachers so that the teachers could alternately teach and attend worship services.

The Women's Society of World Service was organized in March 1957 with 24 members. The purpose of the Women's Society was, as it is today, to provide a time and place to develop friendships, to provide an opportunity for service to the church, and to provide an opportunity for mission outreach.

The Choir has served as an important part of our worship experience. Mr. Otto Jellison served as choir leader for a number of years. He was followed by Gene Foster. The present choir director is Jeff Utecht. We have also been fortunate to have excellent organists. Merna Knight served in this capacity until 1974. Our present organist is Marlene Erickson.

Rev. Lowell Reinking served as pastor at Church of Peace until 1974. He was followed by Rev. Dwight Hendricks who served until 1980. Our present pastor is Rev. Milton Lentz. Rev. Thomas Griffith serves as pastor of evangelism and visitation.

Two young men of our congregation are preparing for the ministry. Jeff Utecht, choir director, is finishing his Seminary training at Bethel Theological Seminary. Jeff was ordained Deacon in 1980. David Brown is in his first year at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky. Lest the women be overlooked, we should note here that six or seven of our daughters serve in that special ministry usually titled "ministers wife".

Several items we should note:

The first baptismal service was held in 1956.

The first class confirmed in 1959.

The first Christmas Eve Candlelight service in 1959.

Hosted World Day of Prayer for the Richfield Area in 1959.

EUB and Methodist Churches merger in 1968.

Added Sunday School rooms in 1969.

Held Lay witness Mission in 1973.

Purchased parsonage on Parnell Avenue in 1974.

Held New World Mission with Rev. J. David Bridge of Cullercoats, England in 1978.

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