

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NJ

"In the providence of God there met on the 7th of August, 1816, at the home of John Lambert, Jr., in the little village of Lambertville and Georgetown, a number of men to take into consideration the building of a church to be called the Union Presbyterian Church of Georgetown and Lambertville." (Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are taken from the Historical Sketch of the One Hundred Years of the First Presbyterian Church of Lambertville New Jersey by Rev. Theron Lee, printed in 1920.

### **A POWER FOR GOOD. . .**

A description of the town of Lambertville written in 1920 sounds much like the city that we know today: Our town was then (1816) of not more than 150 inhabitants, 24 houses, with not a mill or factory. The community had not yet completely rid itself of an unenviable name it had borne for years as the center of rioting and dissipation for the surrounding territory, despite the noble citizens it contained. For the betterment of civic conditions and for the honor of the community the project was undoubtedly fostered. True to its birthright, this church has loyally endeavored to be a power for god in the town, and has justified the hopes of its founders in being of untold influence in every possible way, standing for purity, peace, industry, education, patriotism, and the holy influence of the Christian religion in social life.

The cornerstone of the original building was laid on August 18, 1817. The land on which they built, bordering the graveyard on the east, was deeded to the congregation by John Coryell and John Lambert, jr. for \$1 each. A large assembly had gathered, and the Rev. Thomas Dunn from the Solebury Church preached a sermon based on the text of Isaiah 11:9, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The dedication of the church took place on May 24, 1820. A list was drawn up of thirty-two families who agreed to unite into this church. A Board of Trustees was elected and on June 7 they were sworn into office by Ezra Shrap, justice of the peace: Emley Holcombe, president, John Coryell, Wilson Lambert, Jonathan Pidcock, and Joseph Scarborough. The church would not be completed until approximately 1825. That is the date on the original weathervane, missing for many years, but found by Mr. John A. Anderson in the early part of this century. It was then displayed in the vestibule of the church but no record of its whereabouts has been found in recent years.

### **. . .BUILT OF BRICKS, PLASTER AND WOOD**

The church was built of bricks which were burnt on Main Street. The timbers were hewn of oak from the local woods, contributed by the members of the congregation from the country. The entrance doors opened directly into the auditorium, a spacious but simple room with plaster walls and ceiling. On the

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north, east, and south sides of the room stood a high gallery resting on white ionic columns. Its two stairways were at the entrance doors. Four massive pillars extended through the gallery on the west and supported the tower. They had been turned on a gigantic lathe in the apple orchard just east of the church. (It was said that "the novelty and ingenuity of this engine excited great comment during its use.") There were two aisles running directly from the entrance doors to a perpendicular aisle beyond which were two "amen corners". In these corners, the pews faced a low platform between them on which the pulpit stood. The pulpit was built against the west wall and stood very high to give the preacher contact with those even in the gallery. It was supported on two ionic columns and was reached by two curving flights of stairs with doors at the top entering into a circular compartment from where the preaching took place. Two people could fit comfortably in this compartment, three with a little inconvenience. The space below the pulpit, between the columns was used as a storage closet, holding the long-handled collection bags and, later, the Sunday School library. There was a simple table on the platform in front of the pulpit and along the front a low railing. The pews were narrow, high-backed, uncushioned, unpainted, but decorated with round railings painted red. Two stoves were placed near the intersections of the aisles and two more near the doors. It is interesting to note that the choir sang from the west gallery with a green curtain drawn across. The curtain was such that the choir could observe the service while they could not be seen. There was an open stairway from this gallery which led to the belfry. There was no basement so an outside shed was erected to store wood and coal.

A congregational meeting was held on September 30, 1820 at which it was arranged to have the church placed under the Presbytery of New Brunswick, where it remains today. At the Presbytery meeting a list of supplies (interim pastors) was provided for our church. In the following April, Charles Hodge became the sole supply for six months. It is notable that he worked so closely with our church because he is a great Presbyterian theologian and funded the Princeton Theological Seminary.

### ONE PASTOR, TWO CHURCHES

In September of 1821, **Mr. Ogilvie Studdiford** preached in our church for the first time. He was born the son of a minister on January 11, 1799 and early in his life consecrated himself for the ministry. He studied at Rutgers College and graduated at seventeen with the highest honors of his class. He later graduated from Princeton Seminary and was ordained on November 28, 1821.

An agreement was made with the Solebury Church, which was also without a pastor, to request that Mr. Studdiford become stated supply for both churches. A pastoral call was impossible because the two churches were in different Presbyteries. He accepted and began his ministry on December 2, 1821, preaching from the text, Zechariah 4:10. He then preached on alternate Sundays in Lambertville and Solebury.

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Our church was officially organized on September 22, 1822. Emley Holcombe, an elder from the Solebury Church, and Jonathan Pidcock, also a member there, brought letters of dismissal from that church and were appointed to the office of ruling elder in the Lambertville Church. They, with Mr. Studdiford, constituted the first session and their first meeting as such was held on September 24.

In May of 1824, the Solebury Church transferred to the Presbytery of New Brunswick and steps were taken to install Mr. Studdiford as pastor of the two churches. The installation service was held on June 19, 1825.

In 1825, a Baptist church was organized so no longer were we the sole Christian influence in the city. In 1835 a church fair was held with the proceeds going toward repainting of the church, a new pulpit being built and the church bell was purchased. In 1844 the town of Lambertville had a population of 1,000 with eight streets, four parallel and four at right angles to the river.

In 1847 it was decided that the common collection, after deducting expenses, should go to the poor. The practice can be traced throughout our history and is currently administered and distributed by the Deacons. In 1848 the pastoral relationship with the Solebury Church was dissolved and Dr. Studdiford began fulltime ministry in Lambertville.

### **REPAIR OR REBUILD?**

The original church building, completed in 1825, soon began showing signs of wear, and the following resolution was passed in 1851: "Whereas, it is evident to all that the dilapidated condition of the church edifice - the roof being decayed and leaky, the ceiling cracked and likely to fall, the window frames rotted out, the paint worn off, etc., etc., rendering it an unsafe, uncomfortable, and unbecoming place of worship, evidently operating against the interests and impairing the usefulness of the Church to a very great degree - therefore, Resolved, the congregation ought to repair or rebuild.

In 1853 it was definitely decided to rebuild. The church would be 54 X 70, nine feet to the sidewalk, with the basement four feet under the ground level and five feet above. The auditorium would have 120 pews and a gallery seating 150, a capacity in total of 600 persons. The building would be of brick, stuccoed, with a tower and would cost \$7,500, using old materials and \$500 more for additional ground. Subscriptions were sought and the members met all of the financial obligations of rebuilding so there was no need for a mortgage.

In order to build the new church it was necessary to build over part of ancient burying ground to the west of the church. An act of the State Legislature was needed to authorize the building, pending permission of the descendants of those buried.

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April 25, 1853 was the last Sunday in the old church, with demolition beginning on April 26. During the rebuilding, the congregation worshipped in Union Hall in the building on the northwest corner of Coryell and Union Streets. The cornerstone was laid on June 8, 1853. In it was placed copies of the Bible, the Confession of Faith, the collection of psalms and hymns then in use, the last number of the American and foreign Christian Union, the current Presbyterian Almanac, the town paper (the Diarist), the Presbyterian, the names of 275 communicants, and a listing of the officers of the church. The population of Lambertville was noted at 2,100 and of New Hope about 1,100.

### A NEW BUILDING AND A NEW NAME

In December of 1854, the church was finished enough that services could be held in the basement. On January 11, 1855 the church was dedicated. It was said that "the weather was inclement, with snow, but the church was filled." On March 15, 1855 it was approved to change the name of the church from "Union Presbyterian Church" to "The First Presbyterian Church of Lambertville." In 1856 a harmonium was installed in the gallery. Until this time all church singing was done a cappella. In 1853 a bass viol and flute had been introduced but "such a furor of discussion was aroused, even in the town paper that the innovation had to be dropped." In 1863 it was decided to abolish the custom of sending out pew rent collectors to all the members. Instead, the church bell was rung on four afternoons during the year to call the people to the church to meet with the Trustees and pay the pew rents.

In April of 1866, Dr. Studdiford was granted a three month leave of absence because of his declining health. He died on June 5, 1866. He was buried on June 8 with a service held first at his house, then proceeding to the church in a procession including the elders of Lambertville and Solebury and 30 clergymen. The church was filled to overflowing with almost 1000 people outside who could not enter. At the funeral his life-long friend Dr. Charles Hodge, said, "Your church has increased. . .but the greatest blessing God has given you. . .is Peter O. Studdiford. . .Generations yet unborn will have reason to bless his name." During his ministry in the Solebury Church he received 154 on confession and 292 by letter and at the time of his death there were approximately 300 members in Lambertville.

One of the greatest legacies of Dr. Studdiford's ministry was the Sabbath School. In accordance with the educational methods of that day the study consisted entirely of memorization. Each Sunday eight verses of Scripture were expected to be learned ("but it was fine to have more"). When a chapter had been completed it was recited; when an entire book was finally learned, one recited that. Hymns were also memorized -- for every fifty learned a gift book was presented. It was noted that one member learned 300 hymns "but that was exceptional". The Shorter Catechism was learned by the older students. With changes in theories of childhood education came changes in Sabbath School

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methods as well. A more thoughtful consideration of Scriptures, question and answer lesson books, and now our graded system with specialized instruction for each age have all reflected the importance we have placed on educating the children of our church.

Upon the death of Dr. Studdiford, the congregation unanimously called his son, Peter Augustus Studdiford, to be his successor. He was born in Lambertville on April 2, 1828 and graduated with distinction from Princeton Seminary. On September 4, 1855 he married Miss Margaret A. Stryker, daughter of James D. Stryker of Lambertville. He was installed as pastor on August 22, 1866 and continued in his ministry at Lambertville until his death. During his 20 years as pastor, almost 700 new members were received into the church.

### **"A REMARKABLE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT"**

In 1867 an important society of our church was formed, a Dorcas Society. Established "to supply clothing to needy persons, especially to children who might be enabled thus to come to Sunday School" it also packed boxes to be sent to Home Missionary Fields. In 1868 this society merged with another group of ladies to form the Union Home Missionary Society and Mrs. Studdiford was elected president and held that post for 30 years.

In 1868 the church was enlarged eighteen feet to the rear, providing room for forty additional pews and a recess was added four and a half feet deep for the pulpit. In this year a motion was made to declare all pews free and abolish the pew rent system, but it was later withdrawn. 1868 also saw the creation of the Board of Deacons. Four men were installed to that original board: T. Quick Phillips, Augustus C. Barber, Hugh B. Ely, and Levi Brown.

In 1874 there was a "remarkable outpouring of the Spirit" and 118 new members were received. As a result of this revival a young men's prayer meeting grew in numbers and involvement. It later admitted women as well and became known as the "Young People's Prayer Meeting" and flourished for many years. In that same year, the west Sunday School room (now known as the Patterson Chapel) was refurbished as a memorial to Mrs. Ashbel Welch. In 1877 a pump organ was purchased. In 1882 the partitions were removed from the basement to better meet the needs of the Sunday School. In 1883 the first Foreign Missions group was formed, the "Ogilvie Mission Band". They met monthly to study different foreign countries and continued until 1922.

The auditorium of the church was remodeled in 1884 at a total cost of \$8,700. It was decorated in the "golden oak" style popular at the time. A new oak ceiling and pews were installed, the gallery front was of white ash and memorial stained glass windows were installed. A rededication was held on January 21, 1885.

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On September 5, 1886, Dr. Studdiford preached a sermon commemorating his 20 years as pastor of our church. In less than one month he was suddenly taken ill and died on October 11, 1886. His death cast a gloom over the whole community. At his funeral the church was crowded and over a thousand people stood outside. . . a special train was run from Trenton. In letters of god on a background of black cloth on the wall back of the pulpit was the solemn sentence of comfort to which all hearts turned, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." Many were the tributes paid this distinguished servant of God. As a man he was of fine personal presence, polished and courtly in his manners, dignified, affable, full of humor, never letting his dignity pass into haughtiness nor his humor degenerate into clownishness, free from all pretense of affectation. As a preacher he was noted and in great demand. For broadest learning and highest conceptions of Theology he ranked with the foremost in this country. . . Before his departure sent these words: "To my congregation my dying love; with the earnest prayer that they may all grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

### EMPHASIS ON EVANGELISM AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

On April 11, 1887 the **Rev. William Swan** was unanimously called to be pastor and on May 17 was installed. He was born in New England and was converted at the age of 16. He began to study medicine, but having been dedicated by his mother's prayers to the ministry, came to the conviction that he must preach the gospel. he studied at Princeton Seminary where he became the intellectual leader of his class. he married Miss Emma C. Nassau, daughter of the Rev. William Nassau, D.D., one-time president of Lafayette College.

Rev. Swan's ministry was marked by his evangelistic preaching and an outpouring of the spirit resulted in 73 members being received in 1892-93.

A manse was purchased for the first time in 1888. It stood at 139 N. Union Street and was purchased for \$6,500.

The Sunday School rooms were once again remodeled and the hot water system of heating was installed in the church.

Rev. Swan was also known for his fervent sermons on foreign missions. A Women's' Foreign Missionary Society was formed in 1889 under the leadership of Mrs. Swan. The Young Peoples' Society of Christian Endeavor was organized and was "of untold influence upon the lives of the younger people and of inspiration to the church." Its activities included gospel and prison meetings, generous gifts to many causes, providing flowers for the sick and decorations for the church, forming a chorus choir for the evening services, and provided devotional and social activities for the youth of the church.

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Rev. Swan was an accomplished poet and a collection of his sacred verse was published ( a copy of this book can be found in the church office). Following a period of declining health he resigned as pastor in 1894 and briefly served in churches at Snow Hill and In Stockton, Maryland. Rev. Swan died on August 13, 1898 and buried at the Snow Hill Church.

The **Rev. William Roberts, D. D.** was unanimously called to be Lambertville's next minister and was installed on May 14, 1895. He was born in Scotland and immigrated to America with his parents. After graduating from Princeton Seminary in 1867 he held various pastorates in Coatesville and Darby, Pennsylvania and founded the Lansdowne Church before coming to Lambertville.

The manse was enlarged soon after Dr. Roberts arrived at a cost of \$1,120. Although he had a brief ministry here, of only three years, he was of great influence. Over 130 new members were received into the church during that time. In the year 1897 alone, 74 were received as a result of revival meetings with Dr. A. W. Spooner.

Dr. Roberts resigned in 1898 to become Secretary of the Mercer Home for disabled Ministers at Ambler and died on September 27, 1906.

### AS WE MOVED INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. . .

On December 6, 1898 a unanimous call was extended to the **Rev. Henry A. MacKubbin** and was accepted. His installation service was held on February 7, 1899. He was born in Philadelphia and graduated from both the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton Seminary and served in three other churches before coming to Lambertville. The first year of his pastorate here was shadowed by the grief over the death of his wife, Susie, who passed away after a lingering illness in June of 1899. He, with his two children, remained and continued in the ministry, "endearing himself permanently in the hearts of his people." On January 14, 1902 he married Miss Edith M. Peters, sister of his former wife.

Several groups within the church flourished under the MacKubbins' guidance. The Senior Christian Endeavor Society frequently had 60-100 people in attendance at their meetings and was of special interest to Rev. MacKubbin. An Intermediate Society was formed under the direction of Mrs. George Prall and became the banner society of the state. A chapter of the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip was organized and served as a great influence among the men of our church. Its activities included entertainments, lectures, and devotional meetings. In 1905-06 there was a season of revival and sixty-six new members were received.

In June of 1903 the stained glass window that can be seen in the Patterson Chapel was created and installed in honor of Miss Mary M. Welch, a much

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beloved Sunday School teacher. The room had served as the Sunday School room at that time and, as the Activities Center had not been constructed yet, the setting sun could bring out all of the rich colors of the window. Rev. MacKubbin wrote that it was a "most appropriate commemoration of the life and services of Miss Welch, erected in the scene of her activities."

In 1904 individual communion cups were first used, provided by a gift from several members of the congregation. In 1905 a tablet was found bearing the inscription "Union Presbyterian Church. Built A.D. 1817." It had been placed high on the facade of the original church. It is now displayed at the top of the south staircase leading to the sanctuary. In 1909 the church property committee found it advisable to install a lavatory at the north end of the main vestibule on the first floor, where it can be found today. The total cost was \$210. The church also realized the need for a new organ and in 1910 one was commissioned from the C. S. Haskel Co. of Philadelphia at a cost of \$3,000. Through the generosity of the congregation, the cost was completely covered with over \$500 in surplus raised. The year 1911 brought some more changes to the sanctuary. A new pulpit desk was given by Mr. James S. Studdiford. The first rows of pews on the south side of the main aisle was then removed to conform with the north side as well as to enable the new pulpit to be flush with the newly installed organ.

On November 30, 1910 Rev. MacKubbin resigned as pastor of our church to accept a call to the Church of the Redeemer in Germantown, Pennsylvania ending twelve years of service in Lambertville. His daughter, Miss Mary A. MacKubbin, dedicated her life to foreign mission work and had the honor of being the first missionary that our church would support. She was installed and sent to China in 1922.

## TALENT, VIM AND VIGOR

The **Rev. Roy Ewing Vale** received his call to be our pastor while still a senior in Princeton Seminary on February 5, 1912. Upon graduation he was ordained and installed as pastor on May 29, 1912. He was also married in that same year, in October, to Miss Jessie N. Dobson, of his native Tennessee. It was said that "in his short ministry in Lambertville he exerted the influence of a much longer pastorate, due to his ceaseless activity and his remarkably magnetic personality." He was adept at drawing large audiences and was especially successful in his evening services. His youth and enthusiasm marked all that he did. On his first Sunday as pastor, June 2, a bulletin was used for the first time in the morning worship service. Copies of this first bulletin have been preserved in the church office. In May of 1913 an offering envelop system of giving was started and very successful. However, it was not long before such a talented young man would be called elsewhere and on December 1, 1913 he left our church to become pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in Somerville. He later rose to the highest position the Presbyterian Church can confer that of Moderator of the General Assembly.



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On June 2, 1914, a unanimous call was extended to the **Re. Theron Lee** and he was installed on July 9, 1914. He also was married during his first year in Lambertville to Miss Catherine Camerano of Germantown, Philadelphia. Rev. Lee came to our church from the Presbyterian Church in Germantown, Philadelphia where he had served following his ordination. He had graduated with honors from Lafayette College and Princeton Seminary. He had the distinction of being the current pastor when our church celebrated the 100th anniversary of its founding. To commemorate this occasion he compiled a history of the church in Lambertville, a work to which much of this historical sketch is indebted.

Work was begun on installing electric lights in the church in 1914. In 1915 there was a great outpouring of the Spirit even as a great religious revival was sweeping through the country. 116 new members were received and in 1916 an additional 170 joined our church. The evangelist Billy Sunday preached in our church on February 16 of that year and in March we united with the Methodist and the Baptist churches in a series of revival meetings.

The congregation held a special meeting on April 25, 1916 for the purpose of abolishing the system of pew rents which had been in effect since the founding of the church. All sittings were declared free as of May 1. In 1917 hymnals and new racks to hold them were purchased for a total of \$212.95. The church auditorium was also renovated and frescoed, "walls, ceiling, organ, woodwork, and cushions partaking in one beautifully harmonious color scheme of golden brown. . .providing a noble, restful, worship effect that gives pleasure and inspiration to all."

### **RESPONDING TO A WORLD IN TURMOIL**

World War I impacted our church in that 44 of our men were enlisted in service on both land and sea. There was much fervent prayer both before and during the war for God's hand to be on our country. To each serviceman was given a pocket Testament with this inscription on the fly leaf: "Earnest public prayer will be made for you at every service of our church - that you may have peace, courage, and good cheer in your defense of the flag. . .We pray God that He will bring you back to us unharmed in body and soul. Keep right with God and fight hard." The prayers were answered mightily and every single man returned home, only one slightly wounded. During the war there were several efforts for community giving, Y.M.C.A., Red Cross, Food-Saving, and Relief Campaigns and in all of these our members were at the forefront.

Our church was also a driving force behind the movement to abolish the sale of liquor in the city of Lambertville. A large bulletin board stood beside the church and on this the Session posted a series of posters which "were studied by practically the whole population and exerted admittedly a tremendous influence in the successful campaign." The church's sense of community service was also

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made evident when the Session voted to contribute a minimum of \$3,000 toward the salary of a nurse for the city.

During the fall and winter of 1918 an influenza epidemic caused the church to be closed for a time. It is remarkable that despite the war and the following nationwide depression, there was an increase in giving to our church. Gifts to Foreign Missions reached \$1,170 and the total of gifts to all causes was \$9,949. Membership at this time was 739.

May 23-30, 1920 were the dates set aside to celebrate the first 100 years of the Presbyterian Church in Lambertville. A program was published with special services held every evening of the week and a reception at the manse on Saturday afternoon. Of the two former pastors who were living only Rev. Henry A. MacKubbin (1899-1910) was able to participate. Rev. Roy E. Vale was recovering from a serious illness and was unable to attend.

In 1921 there was a series of special church school meetings on Home Missions. In conjunction with this, the Session agreed to have Chief Manitowag, a converted Indian give a gospel message in a Sunday morning service. Another notable event was presented by Rev. Lee s a stereoptican lecture ("God's Great World Outdoors") -- perhaps our first slide show! We accepted the by-laws and joined the Inter Church Federation of Lambertville. A Ladies' Aid Society was formed and flourished for many years. It was noted that as our church continued to grow there was a need for another building for youth activities, meetings, etc. However, it would be several years before this need could be met.

Another series of revival meetings were held in March, 1922. During the twelve days of meetings with Rev. Olin McKendree Jones a total of 4,300 attended (the population of Lambertville at that time was 4,600). Over 1,000 people attended the special prayer services. As a result of this, 73 new members were added to our church.

1924 was a significant year because that was the first time that our church broadcast its service on the radio. It is unknown how long these broadcasts continued, but in 1948 a temporary arrangement was made with Radio WJZ and ABC to air vespers every Sunday afternoon for four months. Nothing further was done about radio broadcasts until 1991 when we were approached by WDVR, a local radio station. Services have been broadcast every Sunday morning since that time. Recently, new recording equipment has been purchased to improve the quality of the recordings.

There is an interesting note in the Session minutes of 1924 that the Ku Klux Klan requested the use of our church on Sunday afternoons for their meetings. The Session deemed that it was "not expedient at this time to grant their request."

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A Sunday School orchestra was organized in the same year under the leadership of Miss Mary Brown and was enjoyed until she had to move away in 1933. A Comment was made that one of the most requested songs at that time was "There is Sunshine in My Soul Today."

### THE WOMEN GOT BUSY

1925 brought the resignation of Rev. Lee as pastor of our church as he accepted a ministry in a Presbyterian Church in Zanesville, Ohio. It was not until the next year that a call was extended and accepted by **Rev. Victor Manley Patterson**. He was installed on February 22, 1927. He was born in 1881 and attended Wheaton College and the seminary at Yale. Following his ordination on October 4, 1916 Rev. Patterson served churches in South Dakota, Utica, New York, and Worcester, Massachusetts before coming to Lambertville.

The church began in 1926 the project of replacing the twelve memorial stained glass windows in the sanctuary. Two smaller windows in the pulpit area were to be replaced at a later time. The Ladies' Auxiliary was asked to devote their efforts to the liquidation of the debt that was incurred. The type of fundraising that they employed is not mentioned but within one year the entire amount (\$1,990) had been paid.

The Mary Beth Club, was organized in 1928. Named for two missionaries in China, Mary McKubbin and Elizabeth Goerzen, it served as an alternative women's society for fellowship and service. A few interesting facts from the same year: the annual budget was \$7,218.75; Rev. Patterson's salary was \$3,000; total membership was 610.

In 1929 we accepted the responsibility of a second missionary. Mrs. Donald C. Gordon was sent as our representative to South America.

The bronze tablet that can be seen today on the facade of the church was placed there in 1930 as a gift from Mrs. L. T. Salmon. It was asked that the tablet be unadorned except with the name of the church. That same year a group of young ladies of the church formed the Westminster Guild. While in existence, they sometimes performed dramatic plays in the Patterson Room (now a present day Sunday School room) as a fund-raising project.

Dr. Patterson had a successful ministry in Lambertville for 15 years. The only drawback that he found here was that he had recurring throat problems which seemed to be aggravated by living next to the Delaware River. Periodically he would have to forego preaching because of this. He looked into the possibility at one time of even leaving Lambertville because of his health problems but felt compelled and led by God to remain and did so until his death on April 16, 1942. His wife, Dorothy, had received a doctorate degree in her own right and went on to become very respected in the leadership of the Presbyterian Church.

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### WESTMINSTER HOUSE PURCHASED

The next pastor of our church was a native of California. He was born in 1914 and sensed God's call in his life even as a young child and later studied at and graduated from Princeton Seminary. **Rev. Frank Cunningham Hughes** was ordained in 1939 and served at East Liberty Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania before coming to Lambertville in 1943. An installation service was held on April 12.

World War II called 96 men from our congregation to its battlefields. Rev. Hughes was in close communication with the men while they were overseas and in 1944 an honor roll was created listing all of their names. There were seven known deaths in families associated with our church. A few years later, in 1948, the surviving veterans installed the lights on the spire and dedicated them as a memorial to those who had lost their lives.

1946 was a significant year because that was the date of the purchase of the Westminster House. The purchase was made possible through a bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Taylor. The house was formerly the A. L. Pierson home at 31 N. Union Street and was acquired along with the store beside it at 33 N. Union Street for \$9,500. These two buildings were connected as a rowhouse. The dividing wall was removed and the two were united into one building. Originally, on the first floor was the church parlor, a large meeting room, three Sunday School rooms and a kitchen. The second floor housed six Sunday School rooms and the church office. There have been numerous renovations since that time. Presently, the church office, the pastor's study, a meeting room, a Sunday School room and a kitchen are all on the first floor. Sunday School rooms occupy the rest of the building.

Rev. Frank Hughes felt the call to leave Lambertville in 1946 and went on to become assistant secretary of the Presbyterian Ministers Fund. Today, he is retired and lives in Tustin, California.

### A STRONG ADVOCATE FOR EDUCATION

A unanimous vote was taken to call **Rev. Joseph E. McCabe**. October 22, 1946 was his installation service. Rev. McCabe was born in western Pennsylvania, attended Muskingum College in Ohio and then graduated from Princeton Seminary with honors. He was ordained in 1943 and married Miss Margaret Welch in April of 1944. He immediately went into the United States Navy as a chaplain and served, among other places, on an aircraft carrier in the south Pacific theater (USS Shipley Bay).

In 1948 and 1949 brought much renovation to our church. The two large Sunday School rooms were converted: a partition in the north room provided a robbing room for the choir and the south room was made into a modern kitchen. The

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Patterson room as renovated and dedicated to the memory of Dr. Victor Patterson, pastor from 1927 to 1942. May 30, 1948 was the date of the dedication of the lights on the church spire as well as a lighted bulletin board on the front of the church, also in memory of Dr. Patterson. December 12 was the dedication of the Westminster House and the Patterson Room.

In 1949 the terrazzo flooring in the downstairs hallway was laid. New plumbing and oil burners were installed. The men of the church undertook the job of landscaping the gardens behind the Westminster House. A stone wall was restored, a brick patio was installed to accommodate outdoor meetings, and plantings were chosen. The final effect was such that the Westminster Gardens were renowned as "one of the beauty spots of the Delaware Valley."

Rev. McCabe took an eight-month leave of absence during 1949-50 to study in Edinburgh, Scotland. It was there that he earned a Doctorate of Philosophy. Rev. John Bodo acted as interim pastor in his absence.

1951 brought yet more renovation. This time the sanctuary was remodeled to its present state. The renovation was partly out of necessity because a new organ was purchased that was much larger than the previous one. Therefore, the chancel was divided to accommodate it. While the organ was being built, the memorial chimes from the old organ were incorporated into it. They were given in memory of Captain Douglas P. Stout who was killed in World War II. The chimes were then amplified through the church spire for the first time and this amplification was dedicated in memory of Dr. Victor Patterson, pastor from 1927 - 1942. The cross in the front of the sanctuary was covered with gold leaf and six brass offering plates were given by Earl Van Horn, II.

The main emphasis of Dr. McCabe's ministry in Lambertville was the education of the church. He instituted membership classes, baptismal classes for new parents, pre-marital classes, and had a strong belief in educating the Sunday School teachers. It is no surprise, then, that the Sunday School flourished. There was a very real problem of finding adequate quarters to house all the classes. They had full classes from three-year-olds through adults and they met everywhere--even the church office and the hallways of the Westminster House. Plans were then developed to create more rooms on the third floor of the Westminster House. A study for the pastor was also created on the second floor. Church membership reached a high that year of 670.

As education was the mark of Dr. McCabe's ministry here in Lambertville, so it was on the rest of his life. He resigned as pastor in 1953 and served as pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill in Philadelphia and then went on to become president of Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Now retired, he still lives in Cedar Rapids.

## **MUSIC AND BIBLE STUDIES FLOURISH**

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NJ**

**Dr. J. Clyde Henry** was called to be the next pastor of our church and was installed on December 17, 1953. Dr. Henry, a native of Philadelphia, studied at Wheaton College and at Princeton Seminary and received a doctorate from Waynesburg College. Before coming to Lambertville he served at the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When he first came to Lambertville the church was without a manse and he had to commute between Lambertville and his parents' home in Philadelphia. The original manse at 139 N. Union Street was in the process of being sold and so could not be occupied (it was eventually sold for \$8,500). Mrs. Ashbel W. Bryan gave her home to the church in that year but it was not ready for occupancy for a couple of months. This home at 111 N. Union Street is still used as a manse for our pastor and his family.

Dr. Henry was reportedly a fine musician and with his support a large choir program was developed with adult, intermediate and junior choirs all regularly participating in the services. These choirs, as well as the rest of the music program, were under the direction of Mrs. Phyllis Herring who served in that capacity for 37 years.

Small group Bible studies flourished under Dr. Henry. Family church nights became a regular feature of our church life. One interesting mention was made that, in the interest of safety, fire drills were conducted during the Sunday School hour in the Westminster House.

In 1955 the three boards of the church, the Session, the Trustees, and the Deacons, met jointly for the first time to improve communication between them. It was also decided that because of an increasing number of visitors each Sunday, three or four young men would be appointed as ushers. A new communion service was given to the church by Miss Vesta Thomas in memory of Charles H. Henry. The front cover of the bulletin was converted to a picture of our church that was sketched by one of our elders, Alfred Boell. With only minor changes to that sketch, the picture that is found on our bulletins today was inaugurated the following Spring.

The ushers of 1955 were upgraded to Junior Deacons in 1956. The new title brought new duties such as offering collection and various other things in conjunction with the Deacons.

### **ACTIVITIES CENTER AND STUDDIFORD APARTMENTS**

For some time the need was felt for increased facilities for recreation as well as expanded room for Sunday School and fellowship. Preliminary plans were approved for the Activities Center. This would be a rather large undertaking as plans called for a large extension at the rear of the church. The extension of the church necessitated building yet again over the graveyard behind the church. An appeal was made to the Coryell family for their consent and was granted so

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NJ**

construction began in the spring of 1957. The Activities Center was completed first and the gymnasium was in use by Christmas of that year.

Work was then begun on the existing space in the church. The Patterson Room was divided into three parts. The north side was converted to a new, large kitchen, which we use today. The center portion was preserved as the Patterson Memorial Chapel to be used for meditation or smaller gatherings. Finally, choir rooms were constructed on the south side.

The creation of nursery space and additional Sunday School rooms eased the congestion in the Westminster House. The church office and the pastor's study were both enlarged and a more compact kitchen was installed to provide more work rooms. These were essentially the last major renovations to be done to the church facilities so they remain much the same today. There have been some minor changes the nursery rooms have been moved up front, and the front hallway of the church has been redone.

The Activities Center was put to use immediately after it was constructed. From the beginning, the Center has been used by community groups as well as church groups. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, basketball leagues, and Senior Citizen groups continue to meet regularly there. The church has always welcomed the opportunity to share our facilities with the community. Work was finally completed and a dedication service for the new rooms was held on June 14, 1959.

When Mrs. Ashbel W. Bryan donated her house to the church to be used as a manse in 1953, she retained life-time rights to the second-floor apartment. At her death the property would then belong to the church in its entirety. In 1960 the apartment became available for the church's use. It was decided to use the apartment solely as a guest house for missionaries and their families while they were on furlough in the States. So from 1960 until 1983 the occupants of the apartment changed yearly as families traveled through Lambertville. This arrangement was a great blessing to the church not only in that we were helping God's servants, but that it gave us as a church body a closer contact and relationship with those on the mission field.

In 1961 the church acquired what is now known as the Studdiford apartments, adjacent to our property. The house was built by James D. Stryker, an early member of our church. Three generations of the Studdiford family, including our first two pastors, lived there until the 1930's when it was bought by members of the Finkle family of Lambertville. They converted the house into apartments as we know it today. When the church purchased it for \$16,000 in 1961 it was named the Studdiford Apartments in honor of its close historical ties to the church.

## **ADMINISTERING THE CHURCH'S BUSINESS**

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NJ**

It was recognized in 1959 that the three boards of the church were overlapping in their duties. The Trustees were then absorbed into the Session leaving the Deacons and the Session to administer the church's business.

The Deacons gradually expanded their duties during the next few years. It was decided that all the Deacons would participate in communion services by preparing and setting the table and cleaning afterward. They also began counting the attendance each Sundance for study purposes.

New printing equipment was purchased for the church office in 1963. Previously, most of our printing needs had to be met by outside businesses but now we could do most of the work ourselves.

Our church in Lambertville has always been open to the community as we have seen through the Activities Center. Another opportunity arose in 1965. The Lambertville Public Schools developed a problem with overcrowding and requested the use of the two main Sunday School rooms for elementary classrooms. Permission was granted and this arrangement existed for two years.

In 1969 plans were made for the publication of the first photographic church directory. Many of these have been created since that time, the most recent in 1992. The front doors of the sanctuary were also replaced in 1969.

### **CONTROVERSY**

Our church went through a difficult period from 1970 to 1972. The denomination of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America began to be characterized as liberal in their general attitudes and the decisions that were being made. We, as a local church, were very concerned with this apparent departure from our conservative, Biblical roots. A special congregational meeting was held to review our relationship with the Synod and to decide whether it should continue. The concern over this matter reached such a level that Dr. Henry asked the congregation to accept his resignation as pastor of a Presbyterian Church but the church would not accept his decision. The general dissension in our congregation attracted the attention of the Presbytery and made our feelings on the issues clear to them. We would remain a part of the PC USA but would strive to promote our positions on issues as they arose.

In 1971 a letter was sent to the Central Recovery Agency informing them that we would begin sending our mission funds directly to our own missionary interests, rather than to the synod. This occurred because of conflict over where the missionary funds were being dispersed.

1972 brought a lighter tone to our congregation in Lambertville. Dr. Henry, whom many assumed was a confirmed bachelor, announced his impending marriage. It was said that everyone was practically speechless because no one had any idea



## **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NJ**

that there was a lady in his life. Dr. Henry married LeNelle Evans Ballbach on July 29, 1972 and she proved to be a valuable and much beloved member of the church family.

For several years Family Nights were a popular feature of the church fellowship. Through time spent together as families, the need for a full youth program was made apparent and steps were taken to institute one. In 1974 seminarian Daryl Davis was hired as the first full-time youth advisor. This position has continued to be filled with several Godly men until this past year. Our church is in the process of searching for the next youth advisor for that most important segment of the church, or children.

In 1974 the stair-glide was installed on the north stairway leading to the sanctuary. This convenience has allowed many to attend our services that otherwise would not be able to.

A bit of excitement hit our church in 1976 when tornado-like winds tore off major sections of the church roof. There were no injuries but extensive repairs had to be made. There were no injuries but extensive repairs had to be made.

Dr. Henry celebrated 26 years of ministry in Lambertville in 1978. It was also announced that he would retire on December 5, 1979. Only one other pastor served longer in our church, our first pastor, Dr. P. O. Studdiford. There was a reception held in his honor on October 28, 1979 at which it was said that "he was a faithful shepherd who has guided his flock and done his task well." He was not only loved by his congregation but was a highly respected member of the Lambertville community. The Beacon, the local paper, recognized in an editorial on his retirement that there were "scores of people who gained much from his ministry. . . throughout the community. He was an advocate and a follower of Jesus Christ while at the same time he was a leader and organizer of the Delaware Valley Council of Churches and the narcotics Addicts Rehabilitation Center Organization, the first such group in Hunterdon County to address drug problems in the community. Dr. Henry lived in Pennsylvania until his death on October 30, 1993.

### **WE CALLED A NEW PASTOR**

In July of 1980 Rev. William G. Thompson came to assume the duties of our pastor in Lambertville. His installation service was held on September 14 of that year. Rev. Thompson was born in Ohio and was stationed in Japan with the Air Force before attending Boston University and then graduating from Colgate-Rochester Seminary in Rochester, New York. It was while he was in Japan that he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior and soon felt the call to the ministry through his study with the Navigators. He served in churches in Rochester, and Wyoming, New York before coming to Lambertville. His wife, Dorcas, was a

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NJ**

valuable asset to his ministry in many areas including counseling and teaching adult classes.

It was in 1980 that the General Assembly of the PC USA adopted a mandate to require a Session to be composed of both men and women. Previously they permitted ordination of women as elders but did not require it for all congregations. It would be almost ten years before this issue would affect our congregation but when it did, repercussions were great.

Our church helped to sponsor yet another outreach to the community through the Fisherman's Net Coffee House held in the Activities Center. This program was very popular from 1980 to 1989. The church library was established in 1982 and with recent additions and organization was become a valuable resource for our church families. Over the next few years several improvements were made at the church. Choir robes were purchased through special gifts in 1983. The ceiling fans in the sanctuary were installed in 1984. The congregation was surveyed and it was decided to purchase the New International Version of the Bible for use in the pews. A special donation from a member made it possible to purchase 200 Bibles in 1987. That year we also acquired a new set of handbells replacing a set acquired in 1961 and the first computer for the church office. In 1989 the sanctuary was repainted and the blue carpeting that is in the sanctuary today was purchased. The congregation decided to change the custom of celebrating Communion once quarterly to celebrating it on the first Sunday of each month, as we do today. The church was also given another property at 94 N. Union Street. now known as the Holcombe House Apartments

### **GROWTH AND GOD'S BLESSINGS**

For the first time in our church's' long history, a woman was nominated for the position of elder in 1990. She was not elected in that year but her nomination was enough to get the church members and Rev. Thompson praying and studying about women's role in the church. In 1991 a letter was sent to the congregation explaining the Presbyterian Church's view on ordination of women and, after much study, Rev. Thompson could find no biblical reason to oppose that view. After the next congregational meeting a woman was again nominated and Elder Helen Jane Baker was elected to the position. Unfortunately, a portion of the congregation did not share the views expressed through the vote and as a result several elders and deacons resigned their posts and left our congregation, taking several other families with them as well. God has kept his hand on our church, however, and with new families coming every year we are experiencing growth and God's blessings.

In 1992 the church was able to purchase a van for use in transporting people to church services or for group activities. Major restoration work was done on the piano in the sanctuary in 1994. The baby grand piano was gift from Miss Olevia J. Silvers, one of our former organists, in 1960 and needed to be completely

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NJ

rebuilt to restore it to its original high quality. While the piano was being worked on, it was decided to remove the first row of pews in the middle sections of the sanctuary and then move the heating system back. For quite some time there has been the need for more maneuverability in the front of the church for weddings, funerals, and special services.

In 1995, we celebrated and thanked God for 175 years of His blessings. His hand has preserved our church and we pray that we have fulfilled our founders' hopes of being a beacon for Christ in the city of Lambertville.

To quote from the history of the Lambertville Presbyterian Church written in 1920:

*"It is fitting. . .to pause a moment and reflect upon the noble body of men that have in slow succession been the spiritual leaders of our Church. To pay adequate tribute to them one by one is here clearly impossible; the number of them and the space here at disposal forbid. Some have lived homely lives, others have been noted for achievements in science, construction and commerce. Some of have been rich and some have been poor. But this Presbyterian Church has been blessed by the providence of God in that they as a body and as individuals have been strong men of God, loyal to the church, and faithful in the duties of their ministrations of the gospel, men of whom this church may be proud. Without them and their labors and of that larger body of consecrated men and devoted women who assisted them in the work, the history of the First Church of Lambertville would not be what it is."*

We are united in grateful thanksgiving to Almighty God for His mercies during the past, and in the prayer that He will use us all to His honor and glory and visit ever this dear Church with His gracious blessing. Amen.

### **MINISTERS OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NEW JERSEY**

The Rev. Dr. Peter Ogilvie Studdiford

The Rev. Peter Augustus Studdiford

The Rev. William Swan

The Rev. Dr. William Roberts

The Rev. Henry A. MacKubbin

The Rev. Roy Ewing Vale

The Rev. Theron Lee

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LAMBERTVILLE, NJ

The Rev. Dr. Victor M. Patteson  
The Rev. Frank C. Hughes  
The Rev. Dr. Joseph E. McCabe  
The Rev. Dr. J. Clyde Henry  
The Rev. William G. Thompson  
The Rev. Hugh Annett (Interim)  
The Rev. Daryl R. Wilson  
The Rev. Phil Olson (Interim)  
The Rev. Dr. Peter W. Gregory