

# The Presbyterian Church

BASKING RIDGE, NEW JERSEY

Founded Circa 1717

## A HISTORY

by

DOROTHY LOA McFADDEN  
MILDRED DUNHAM VAN DYKE  
EILEEN LUZ JOHNSTON

## INTRODUCTION

From June 1988 through June 1989 Presbyterians nationwide have been observing the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the meeting of the very first General Assembly of our church in Philadelphia. To Celebrate the Journey, the motto of this anniversary year, the Session of our church appointed a Bicentennial Committee to plan events. It was decided that one such special project would be the updating of our church history, having Dorothy Loa McFadden's history intact as Part I. A second part covering the years 1961 to 1989 was written by Eileen Luz Johnston and Mildred Dunham Van Dyke. Members of the church will receive a copy of the complete history as a gift at the birthday party on May 7.

A HISTORY  
of the  
Presbyterian Church  
In  
Basking Ridge, New Jersey

Part I

1717 – 1961

Dorothy Loa McFadden

Part II

1961 – 1989

Mildred Dunham Van Dyke

and

Eileen Luz Johnston

Printed by  
JOHNSTON LETTER COMPANY, INC.  
1961

Reprinted by  
JOHNSTON LETTER COMPANY, INC.  
1989

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART I

	Page
Forward - By Mr. Felmeth.....	1
Acknowledgments.....	2
Chapter I - Beginnings.....	3
Chapter II - The Ministries .....	5
The Reverend John Cross, 1732-1741 .....	5
The Reverend Charles McKnight, 1742-1744.....	7
The Reverend Joseph Lamb, 1744-1749 .....	7
The Reverend Samuel Kennedy, M.D., 1751-1787.....	8
The Reverend Robert Finley, D.D., 1795-1817.....	10
The Reverend William C. Brownlee, D.D., 1818-1825 .....	13
The Reverend John Coe Van Dervoort, 1826-1834 .....	15
The Reverend John Anderson, 1834-1836 .....	16
The Reverend Oscar Harris, 1838-1851 .....	17
The Reverend John C. Rankin, D.D., 1851-1895 .....	18
The Reverend Edgar C. Mason, 1895-1899 .....	21
The Reverend John T. Reeve, D.D., 1900-1912.....	22
The Reverend Lauren G. Bennett, D.D., 1913-1944 .....	24
The Reverend J. Merion Kadyk, D.D., 1944-1951 .....	25
The Reverend William H. Felmeth, 1951- ?.....	27
Chapter III - Sons of Our Church .....	30
Chapter IV - The Old Graveyard .....	33
Chapter V - The Old Oak Tree .....	34

## PART II

Acknowledgments.....	36
Chapter VI - A Continuation of the Ministry of the Reverend William H. Felmeth, 1961 - 1974.....	37
Chapter VII - An Interim Year - 1974 .....	42
Chapter VIII - The Present Ministry and Our Church Today - The Reverend J. Calvin K. Jackson, 1975 - ?.....	42

## FORWARD

A handsome old clock strikes its silvery note in my office as I write these words. It once stood in the study of my predecessor, Dr. Robert Finley, during the years 1795 to 1817. Now vividly its chiming brings to mind the saying, “The centuries speak to the hours”, and illustrates the intent of this booklet to have the past give its message to the present.

Nothing better symbolizes the centuries for us than the great oak near which our congregation has worshipped since our beginning over two hundred and forty years ago. Already sturdy and long-lived then, this noble tree has continued to draw its vitality from its many roots deep in the earth and its great branches outstretched to sun and sky. It still bears its acorns and from them seedlings are flourishing, holding promise for the future. So too, this church has been nourished in its worship of God and service of men through the devotion of its members and the blessing of its Lord, Jesus Christ. Its past has been fruitful and significant; its days to come are full of good expectations.

Because we know that a people which does not rightly honor its past does not deserve a future, we publish this history that “children may hear the mighty deeds which God performed of old, which in our younger years we saw, and which our fathers told.” We are most grateful for the heritage here given to us by our fathers in the faith and for the many blessings of God upon this congregation in every generation. Now our prayer would be the words from I Kings cut in stone above the east doorway of the church over a century ago, “The Lord our God be with us as He was with our fathers: let Him not leave us nor forsake us: that He may incline our hearts unto Him, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments.” Under His hand we seek to be as fruitful and sturdy as the oak, and “Unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

William H. Felmeth

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This history of our church was really written by many people. If we had not been able to refer to Dr. Rankin's "Historical Discourses" of 1872 and 1892, the "Addenda" by Dr. Bennett in 1920 and the further additions by Dr. Oscar M. Voorhees in 1939, we could not have even attempted to compile the information brought together here.

Such books as the "History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties"; the "Historical Booklet of Bernards Township" by Fred W. Kampmier, Jr.; "Education in Bernards Township 1760-1960" by Louise M. Flint; "Basking Ridge in Revolutionary Days" published by the Somerset County Historical Society – these and many, many more books and pamphlets were invaluable.

Of greatest assistance were the voluminous card files, folders and scrapbooks which our church historian, Miss Nettie Allen, has so painstakingly and lovingly gathered together throughout much of her ninety years. Without her help and amazing memory the picture puzzle problem of filling in all the missing facts and dates could never have been accomplished.

We are also greatly indebted to Mr. Van Tuyl Boughton and Mrs. C. Oliver Hall, Jr., for their preliminary notes looking towards a church history; to Mr. and Mrs. Arch Carswell for help on research and the selection of pictures; to Mr. Harry Clay, Jr. and Mr. William M. Jayne, Jr. for pictures of the church property today; to Mr. Lester E. Fagans for assistance on art and layout; to Mrs. Edward B. Knobloch, Mrs. Hartzell R. Mandigo, Mrs. Fulton R. McArthur, Mrs. Alex Mastrobattista, Mr. David M. Meeker, Mr. Sidney M. Newcomb, and Mrs. H. A. Phillips for much assistance and information; and to the Department of History of The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.; and Dr. Kenneth S. Gapp, Librarian of Princeton Theological Seminary, for valuable data on our ministers.

Much information was gathered from the old records kept by our church (would that they had been more complete!) and from the excellent annual reports beginning in Dr. Kadyk's ministry.

We also want to thank especially the Deacons' committee headed by Mr. Richard E. Howe, which has given so much time and effort to getting this book into print.

Finally we are most grateful to our pastor, Mr. Felmeth, who has taken the time to carefully read every word of a most untidy original manuscript and to add his corrections and valuable suggestions. Without his constant encouragement this book might never have been completed.

The original manuscript, annotated with more than 200 footnotes giving the exact source of each piece of information, has been placed in the church safe for reference use by future historians or anyone questioning the data printed here. We have tried to check and recheck every point, but hope we may be forgiven if there are still some errors.

Dorothy Loa McFadden

---

Mrs. McFadden, with characteristic modesty, refrained from mentioning the many hours she herself devoted to research and writing this history. This fine effort will be appreciated by members and friends of this church for many years to come. The Board of Deacons would like here to express their appreciation of her diligent efforts and the effective use of her time and talents in this work.

The Board of Deacons

## CHAPTER I

### BEGINNINGS

“Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase ...” Job 8:7

The old oak in our churchyard was already some 200-300 years old when white men first settled in what is now Basking Ridge, New Jersey. According to old documents owned by the New Jersey Historical Society, “Basking Ridge was early settled by Scotch Presbyterians and a log church erected about the year 1700.” Actually this meeting house, as nearly as we can determine, was erected about 1717.

### THE EARLY SETTLERS

Why did these first settlers come, at peril of their lives, such a great distance from Scotland to the wilderness of these practically unexplored shores? Many were attracted by reports published in Britain of the climate, the rich soil and vegetation, the possibilities for farming and making a fortune – far away from the burdens of taxes and governmental restrictions – in a land which offered plenty of room for all.

But many more were driven out of their beloved homes and country by the religious persecutions which Presbyterians suffered at that time, and came because freedom of worship and conscience had been promised to them in America. For in 1712 the British Parliament – in which the Scottish representatives were a minority – restored “patronage” to the Scottish church. This was a system under which the wealthy landowners, or those whose ancestors had originally founded the local churches, could select the ministers for them without reference to the wishes of the congregation. To many Scotch Presbyterians this was the final blow to their independence of religion. For opposing this ruling and especially the reinstatement of bishops, the historian Jacob Magill tells us that men were “hanged by scores by the roadside, and women were tied to stakes and drowned ... they were marched ... two and two chained together, and one hundred thrust into a vault under ground, with one window which opened to the sea; there, ankle deep in mire, with nothing on which to sit or lie, they were pent up through the summer ...”

It was such a group of 200 families which, finally liberated on condition of banishment, on September 5, 1685, under the guidance of George Scot of Pittochie set sail from Scotland for America to settle there among earlier comers in what is now Somerset County. It was thus that one Walter Ker came the same year, about whom the New Jersey minister, Rev. William Tennent wrote later on that “it appears that the devil and his instruments lost their aim in sending him from home, where it is unlikely he could ever have been so serviceable to Christ’s kingdom as he has been here!”

The great faith and hopes of these exiled people must have been sorely tried on the voyage here, for “provisions began to putrefy; a malignant fever broke out and carried off twenty of the ship’s crew ... among them Scot, the leader, and his wife ... These people reached New Jersey about the middle of December after a voyage of fifteen weeks...”

Thus from about 1700 on, this area was settled by men and women of great

courage and strong religious faith. As Magill said, “people coming under such circumstances could hardly fail to carry with them a religion which they held more precious than their lives.” Among them were the ancestors of many citizens of Basking Ridge today, and many of their descendants lie buried in our old graveyard.

## THE FIRST CHURCH

As the little settlement grew it was first served by itinerant pastors who travelled the rounds on horseback and on foot through the trackless wilderness to serve the people in each little group of cabins. When he came, the minister would conduct worship, then baptize the infants, hold funeral rites, perform weddings, and render whatever other services he could during his brief stay. In the interim between such visits, the elders of the little congregations were responsible for leading worship.

The independence of the little congregations was determined by the regulations made by the Duke of York for all settlements in the province of New Jersey: “Every township is obliged to pay their own minister, according to such agreement as they shall make with him; and no man to refuse his own proportion; the minister being elected by the major part of the householders and inhabitants in the town.”

According to old records concerning the Presbyterian Church in Whippany which was organized in 1718, the little log meeting house in which our Basking Ridge congregation first worshipped was erected a year or two earlier – which places the date at about 1717.

The land on which it stood next to the old oak was part of a tract of 3000 acres which had been bought by John Harrison from the Indian chief Nowenoik for \$50 on June 24, 1717. The original deed and map can be seen at the New Jersey Historical Society’s office in Newark.

This tract was gradually subdivided and sold to various families, and on February 8, 1731 John Ayers – one of the very early settlers – conveyed 1 ½ acres of it “on or near the middle of which now stands a house built and intended for the exercising of worship in” to the trustees of the church: Obadiah Ayers (John Ayers’ son), Mordecai McKenne, James Pitney, George Pack, Samuel Rolfe, Daniel Morrice and Thomas Riggs. (A copy of this deed now hangs in the Bennett Room of our present Education Building.)

The earliest use of the name Basking Ridge – originally written Baskinridge – was in records of this little church in 1733. According to legend the name originated with the early settlers who saw wild animals come up from the swamps to “bask on the ridge.”

## EARLY CHURCHES OF THE AREA

Thus the Presbyterian Church in Basking Ridge is one of the oldest churches in New Jersey and the U.S.A. It was originally recognized by the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1729. For many years it was the only church in a large area. In 1720 the nearest houses of worship were in Springfield, West Hanover (now Morristown), and Somerville. There was a Lutheran church for some years in Pluckemin founded in 1724 by German settlers. The church at Roxitus (Mendham) dates from about 1738, that at Lamington from 1740. The Reformed Church at Bedminster was erected in 1758 by Dutch speaking settlers.



Later on our church at Basking Ridge became the mother church of Presbyterian congregations now located in Liberty Corner, Stirling and Bernardsville. So the influence of these early religious settlers grew and spread. In the words of the book of Job which we quoted at the heading of this chapter: “Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.”

## CHAPTER II

### THE MINISTRIES

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations ...” Deuteronomy 32:7

As we read of the men who were our pastors during the 200 years of recorded history of our church, we realize that we have been unusually blessed in the leadership by having men of such strong character and faith, such devotion of their congregations, and often of such outstanding scholarship and achievement for the church as a whole and for the nation. We have a history of which we may well be proud – and a high standard set by the past which should prove a challenge to us for the future.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND JOHN CROSS, 1732-1741

The first minister of the gospel of whom we have record as serving our church was John Cross, who preached here more or less regularly for nine years. We know that his wife’s name was Deborah, and that they had two sons, Robert and William, and two daughters, and perhaps another son.

According to Dr. Rankin – one of his successors in the ministry of this church – he seems to have been a rather self-willed man who followed his own course without much regard for ecclesiastical law and order. On the day after his reception as a member of the Philadelphia Synod in 1732, he withdrew from the meeting without permission and was censured for his conduct. Three years later he was accused of absenting himself from the Synod’s meeting and moving from one congregation to another without the concurrence of New Brunswick Presbytery. (Our church when first organized was part of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the Mother Presbytery of this country. New Brunswick Presbytery was formed in 1738 to further the great revival, and Mr. Cross was its first moderator.)

In spite of these bouts with high church officials, Mr. Cross was said to have accomplished “a wonderful work of grace”, deeply stirring as many as 300 persons through one of his sermons.

He apparently took steps to bring his flock into what was called “The Great Awakening”, which was spreading throughout the country at that time, for he brought the Rev. James Davenport of Long Island to preach in Basking Ridge to some 3000 people. Then on Nov. 5, 1740, the famous English evangelist, George Whitfield, stayed at Mr. Cross’s home and preached to a similar tremendous throng – perhaps under the old oak –

and again all night long in Mr. Cross's barn. Whitfield wrote afterwards that "I had not discoursed long, but in every part of the congregation somebody or other began to cry out, and almost all were melted to tears ... One cried out, 'He is come! He is come!' and could scarce sustain the discovery that Jesus made of himself to his soul. Others were so earnest for a like favor, that their eager cries compelled me to stop. Most of the people spent the remainder of the night in prayer and praise. Oh, it was a night much to be remembered!"

The Rev. George Whitfield was minister of the Tabernacle Church of London. It was to that pulpit that he invited the Rev. Nathaniel Whitaker, a son of the Basking Ridge church, to preach in 1766 – perhaps as a result of meeting him first here during this revival.

Concerning this tremendous religious revival which spread at this time from Massachusetts to Georgia, there was a great difference of opinion and much argument, especially among the clergy. Some people were apparently much offended by the "harsh, uncharitable spirit with which they were denounced and misrepresented by the preachers." Some felt that the meetings tended to arouse too much emotional excitement rather than a spiritual awakening. But Dr. Alexander in his book, "The Log College", wrote that at this period "the Presbyterian church in America was in a most deplorable state of deadness and formality; and that the necessity of a change of heart was very little inculcated from the pulpit, or understood by the people." In Brown's Memoirs of Dr. Finley we read of Whitfield that "the Divine Spirit seemed happily to accompany him, and to prosper his fervent and unwearied labours. Thousands traced their first religious impressions and their eternal hopes to his powerful and awakening sermons." Certainly our church in Basking Ridge was a part of this renewing of the spirit, through the preachers whom Mr. Cross invited here.

Mr. Cross, however, was suspended a year after he left our congregation, due to various serious charges made against him. Among other things he was accused of being a counsellor to those settlers of his church and community who were resisting the efforts of the Proprietors – and those who had purchased land from the Proprietors – to take their land away. These earlier pioneers felt that they already owned the land they had cleared and tilled, and resented having to purchase it from the new holders of the king's grant. So we see that even 200 years ago, the ministers of our church were taking a vigorous stand on the issues of the day as they saw them.

We have not found the grave of John Cross in our churchyard, though he is probably buried there. A copy of his will still exists, however, in which he disposed of his "White Servant if yet Bound, and the negroes ..." and took thought for a boy John Minthorn who lived with him, should he want to go away, "that my wife give him a decent Suit of Cloths at his going and three months board in the winter if he sees Caws to go to school ... and as to my Plantation, near Baskingridge Meeting House I do Design it to the Congregation for a Parsonage ..." Signed and witnessed as of October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1748.

So apparently he was still on good terms with our congregation at that time, seven years after he left our church! It is possible that this "Plantation" of which he speaks was the "parsonage farm of one hundred acres" which was given to our church in 1737 by John Budd, an elder of the Presbyterian church of Philadelphia – though there are no clear records on this. This farm was located where the railroad now runs, the original parsonage having been about 150 yards northwest of the present station.

Thirty-five descendants of John Cross lie buried in our churchyard, and there are many more now in the community and in our church today.

Cross Road in Basking Ridge commemorates this first minister whose name we have on record.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND CHARLES MCKNIGHT, 1742-1744

It is believed that Charles McKnight came to this country in 1740 from Ireland, where his father was a Presbyterian minister. He was taken under the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick in June, 1741, and ordained in October of the following year.

In 1742 Basking Ridge and Staten Island both asked for his ministerial services, and he divided his time between the two.

When he left our church in 1744 he went to Cranbury, to the same church where our present pastor, Mr. Felmeth, served some 200 years later!

He then preached at Middletown Point, Shark River, and at Shrewsbury, where his sympathy with the struggle for independence of the colonies caused him to be seized during the Revolution and imprisoned by the British.

For twenty years he was a trustee of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton).

He died on January 1, 1778, soon after his release by the British, and is buried in Trinity churchyard in New York City.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND JOSEPH LAMB, 1744-1749

The Rev. Joseph Lamb, who next came to our church, was one of the five graduates of Yale College in 1717, all of whom became ministers.

Mr. Lamb's ordination was the first official act of the Presbytery of Long Island at Mattituck, December 6, 1717. This Presbytery included all of New York City at that time.

In the same year he married Patience, daughter of Captain Jonathan Horton. She died in 1729. They had a son, Joseph, who died in 1739, and a daughter Lydia, later Mrs. Clark.

He served the church in Long Island for 27 years before being called to Basking Ridge in 1744.

The community and congregation here had grown steadily, so by 1749 it was found necessary to replace the first small log meeting house with a new frame church building. That both of these were on the same site where our present sanctuary now stands is proven by the inscription on the slab over the west door today, which reads: "This church was rebuilt A.D. 1839, on the site of the former one reared A.D. 1749 where stood the Ancient Log Church erected near the beginning of the last century."

The new frame church was about 55 feet long by 35 feet wide, running east and west, with the pulpit on the north. It had 52 pews on the floor and 26 in the gallery. Negro slaves, who were admitted to church membership from the earliest days, were seated downstairs.

Tradition has it that Mr. Lamb died on the very day when the frame of this

building was erected, which, according to the headstone in our graveyard, was July 28, 1749. His epitaph reads:

The terrors dire from Sinai's Mount,  
Thy mouth did once proclaim,  
As well as messages of grace  
In thy great Master's name.  
But with pure ethereal fires,  
With Seraphim above;  
We hope and trust thou now does sing  
The wonders of His love.

MINISTRY OF  
THE REVEREND SAMUEL KENNEDY, M.D., 1751-1787

The Rev. Samuel Kennedy, M.D., who became our next minister, was born in Scotland in 1720 and educated at the University of Edinburgh. His theological studies were pursued in this country under the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, by which he was licensed to preach in 1748 and ordained in 1750.

After supplying a number of pulpits temporarily in the area, he accepted the call to Basking Ridge in 1751 and remained here for 36 years until his death.

He was married to Sarah Allen, and they had seven children – three boys and four girls. One of his sons, Samuel, also became a doctor of medicine. His youngest son, Ebenezer died at the age of five months and is buried under the old oak.

Dr. Kennedy was a man of a most interesting and forceful character. He was very modest and unassuming, but with straightforward manners verging on bluntness. His remarks on all occasions were pithy, well chosen and always full of common sense. In appearance he was quite tall and rather heavy.

He was a person of many talents, for he was not only the minister of our church, but also practiced medicine, and at the same time founded and actively taught in his own classical school.

His home, where he also had his school, was a 300 acre farm along the Passaic about four miles from the "Baskenridge meeting house". One of his newspaper advertisements in the "New York Mercury" of 1764 states that he was having "The Learned Languages and Liberal Arts and Sciences taught under his inspection in a School House now built on his own Plantation; where persons may be fitted to enter any class in College. Any Convenient Lodgings may be had near said School House ..." Since Dr. Kennedy was a highly accomplished scholar and possessed great wisdom and energy as a disciplinarian, his school was extensively patronized. Many of its pupils went on to the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

It is only during Dr. Kennedy's ministry that we begin to have some written church records. Even these are unfortunately incomplete, for it seems that the good doctor used the same book also for his medical accounts, and he occasionally tore out pages for use in wiping his razor!

Nevertheless we have some interesting entries of this period. The first Trustee book which we possess begins with a bequest received in 1764 by the church of 200 pounds from Samuel Brown, the interest from which according to the will was "to be

yearly, every year, from generation to generation forever, paid unto the regular Presbyterian minister of the congregation for his support.” Other entries report that our first recorded missionary donation of three pounds seven shillings was made in 1768 to the American Indians; and that the parish meeting of 1786 “appointed Joseph Roy and Joseph Annin to give out the lines (for the hymns) and John Annin and Jeremiah Sutton, clerks, to sing.” In 1784 this same Jeremiah Sutton was paid three pounds as his yearly salary for taking care of the meeting house. The Congregation of Basking Ridge was incorporated in February, 1786.

There seems to have been quite a bit of financial difficulty in church affairs during Dr. Kennedy’s first years here. In fact, in 1754 the Presbytery of New Brunswick twice threatened to withdraw his services from our church because his salary had not been paid for four years nor vital repairs made on the parsonage! He was actually liberated from his duties to the church, but in November 1755, the Presbytery relented as it found that the church had so nearly caught up on these deficiencies and showed good intentions for the future, so Dr. Kennedy was allowed to remain.

In 1760 Dr. Kennedy himself got into some difficulty in clerical circles. Together with seventeen other Presbyterian ministers (including our former pastor, Charles McKnight) he signed a letter and sent it to the Archbishop of Canterbury championing an episcopal minister in Philadelphia for his fervent evangelism which had made him extremely unpopular with his own congregation. The Archbishop ignored the letter, but it was printed with caustic comments in pamphlet form and circulated in America. This caused much embarrassment to Presbyterian synod members when, walking the streets in Philadelphia, their ears were assailed by the shrill voices of hawkers of small books crying out: “Eighteen Presbyterian ministers for a groat!” (A groat was a coin worth about eight cents at that time.) It was said that “these circumstances afforded a subject for much merriment and severe remark!”

In 1768 Dr. Kennedy joined the New Jersey Medical Society and became an active member. In spite of his practice of medicine and his school, however, he did not by any means neglect the church. That he took his preaching seriously is shown by the following story related by the Rev. Samuel Kennedy Talmadge, D.D., who was named for the doctor by his father, an elder of our church: Dr. Kennedy had spent an entire week in earnest prayer and devout study to prepare a sermon which might arouse the congregation from its “spiritual torpor.” When the Sabbath came, he was sure that he had developed an idea which would move his people, and confidently expected to witness some special sign of the Divine presence.

One can well imagine his consternation therefore when, as the service proceeded, his mind suddenly became a blank and he could not remember his text or even the subject which he had prepared! Hurriedly he gave out an extra hymn to be sung – but still memory failed him. He leafed through his Bible, chose a text, and proceeded to preach extemporaneously what Dr. Talmadge called a “sermon which melted down the whole congregation and was the commencement of a wonderful revival of religion. Dr. Kennedy said he had never in his life before enjoyed so much freedom or exercised so much power in the pulpit. He went home weeping and rejoicing, saying that God had answered his prayer in a manner fitted at once to humble the unworthy instrument and to exalt the riches of his own grace.”

In the “Annals of the Presbyterian Pulpit” we read that after this there were

several extensive revivals of religion under Dr. Kennedy's ministry which led his church to greatly increase in numbers and strength; and that he was "very diligent in the discharge of his pastoral duties, and his labors among his own people and elsewhere were eminently successful ... His influence was by no means confined to his own congregation, but extended to the whole surrounding region."

In 1760 Dr. Kennedy received the honorary degree of A.M. from the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

The later years of his ministry were a time of agitation and tumult in Basking Ridge as in all the state and nation, for this was the period of the American Revolution. In 1775 a company of colonial soldiers drilled at the parsonage and at the church. Many members of the congregation went away to fight – 35 of them to be laid to their final rest in the old churchyard at Basking Ridge.

Tradition has it that General George Washington and his soldiers often rested under the old oak in the cemetery when they rode from their headquarters in Morristown to Pluckemin, where some of the Colonial artillery were stationed. During one of his visits he established a smallpox hospital in Basking Ridge. With another hospital in Jockey Hollow where the main army was encamped, the tribulations of our soldiers were ever before the eyes of our congregation, and they were constantly being stirred by the sound of drums and marching feet as the men passed through the village.

As a doctor, minister and teacher, Dr. Kennedy undoubtedly led a very busy and useful life during these fateful times.

He died at Basking Ridge on August 31, 1787 and is buried in our churchyard. Since Dr. Kennedy had been the rightful successor to his brother David, Earl of Cassilis in Scotland, after David's death Dr. Kennedy's son Robert went there to claim the succession. But he was unable to establish his rights against a Captain Archibald Kennedy who insisted that Dr. Kennedy had died without leaving an heir.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND ROBERT FINLEY, D.D., 1795-1817

This period was one of the brightest in the history of our church.

Robert Finley was born at Princeton, N.J. in 1772, son of James Finley of Scotland, who came to New Jersey in 1769 at the invitation of his friend Dr. John Witherspoon, president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

Robert Finley was a precocious student, commencing his study of Latin when he was eight, and entering the College of New Jersey as a freshman in his eleventh year. He graduated in 1787 in his sixteenth year and was then a teacher in the grammar school at Princeton and later at Allentown, N.J. and Charleston, S.C. Returning to Princeton he again taught in the grammar school and then became a tutor at the college. During this time, he had decided to go into the ministry and studied theology under Dr. Witherspoon. On Sept. 16, 1794 when he was still only twenty-two, he was licensed by the New Brunswick Presbytery, and came to Basking Ridge church to preach for a number of Sundays.

Our congregation – which had been without a minister for nearly eight years and had become divided and disorganized – now united in an enthusiastic call for this young minister's permanent services.

On June 17, 1795, he was ordained pastor of our church. Three years later he

married Esther, daughter of Rev. James Caldwell, the most famous patriot among the New Jersey ministers during the Revolution. They had nine children, of whom four were sons – three of them graduating from the College of New Jersey and becoming ministers also. The fourth son died while he was still a seminary student. Dr. Finley's father also moved to Basking Ridge and was an elder of our church and is buried in the old churchyard.

With the beginning of Dr. Finley's ministry our records of the Session meetings also commence. We find that there were some 74 members of the church in 1795.

In 1803 a religious revival swept the country, and 127 new members were brought into the church. At this time also the first Friday evening lectures and prayer meetings were organized. These continued for many years. People in those days brought their lunches with them on Sundays and ate them under the old oak after morning worship, then attended another service afterwards. Such long days of devotion, and the very lengthy prayers and sermons of the time, did not seem to weary these devout Christians at all!

The sanctuary now became so crowded that it had to be enlarged on the north side by twenty feet. Twenty-eight pews were added downstairs and twelve in the gallery (making the total of 118 pews altogether) at a total cost of \$2,619.67. The highest pew rental – for those on the right and left of the pulpit – was \$14.74 a year. In 1809 the front of the meeting house was faced with brick, and poplar trees were set around the churchyard in 1811 “at a cost of one shilling apiece.”

Dr. Finley was a preacher of great earnestness and power. The story is told that when in one sermon he pictured the wrath of God as a boiling gulf toward which sinners were rapidly floating, and he shouted “Stand back! Stand back! Oh, sinners, let me push you away from this fiery deep!” the entire congregation half rose from their seats as if to avoid the danger.

By 1809 Dr. Finley's preaching had won such acclaim that he was asked to deliver the missionary sermon at the General Assembly meeting in Philadelphia. He was appointed also at that time as a delegate to the next meeting of the Assembly in Connecticut.

Together with the Rev. George S. Woodhull of Cranbury, N.J., Dr. Finley was one of the first to introduce Bible class instruction into the church. It was mainly through the influence of these two men that what we think of now as Sunday Schools were endorsed and recommended to all churches first by the Presbytery, then by the Synod of New York and New Jersey and finally by the General Assembly. Up to that time, the religious instruction of children consisted only of a recital of the catechism. It was a new idea to have young people study the actual Bible, the history of the world in its relationship to the church – and to be given practical lessons in the religious conduct of their lives. Dr. Finley tested out these ideas in his own church before presenting the plan for the Presbytery's and then the General Assembly's consideration, where they received enthusiastic approval in 1815.

He felt so strongly about the need for using the Bible in school that he even used his influence to assure it in the local academy. Apparently even in those days there were people who objected to the reading of Scripture in the classroom. After a long argument with a teacher sharing this viewpoint, Dr. Finley finally threatened to have him dismissed – and the matter was settled.

One of his most outstanding achievements in Basking Ridge was his classical school which succeeded that of Dr. Kennedy. At first only some ten students were taught by him in the parsonage, but as the enrollment grew it was found necessary to erect a building in 1809. This was always spoken of as "The Old Academy Building" and is still standing – now being used as Bernards Township Hall. This fine brick structure – a typical example of Federalist period architecture – was built partly at Dr. Finley's expense but principally with liberal contributions from various New York City benefactors. The pupils came from Virginia, Maryland, New York City and Philadelphia as well as from New Jersey.

Dr. Finley was known as an extremely strict disciplinarian, and it is amusing to note that because of this Basking Ridge was spoken of in those days as "Botany Bay"! One particularly naughty and difficult student was finally expelled and sent by his father to naval school. He later became Commodore Stockton of Mexican War fame.

It is said that Dr. Finley's aspect was naturally stern and commanding and that he could assume a countenance, voice and manner truly terrifying to his pupils. But he laughingly said to a friend at one time: "They will find out after all that I won't quite kill them!"

He believed in making every moment of the day count in his students' education and often invited one or two to accompany him on his rambles about his farm, testing the youngsters meanwhile on their ability in Latin. According to the Rev. Mr. Brown who wrote Dr. Finley's biography, "this kind of treatment was very useful to the scholar and it attached him exceedingly to his teacher!"

Many young men who were graduated from this school were to become famous in the nation – governors, ambassadors, senators, eminent jurists --- among them William L. Dayton, Theodore Frelinghuysen, David Kirkpatrick and Samuel L. Southard. During the religious revival of 1803, the entire graduating class was converted and some nine or ten became preachers of the gospel. The school curriculum included classes in Bible study similar to those given in our church.

Again in 1816 the "Christian Herald" said that "in Baskenridge the spirit of the Lord has been poured out in copious effusions. The good work (of revival) which commenced in the academy was soon extended to the church generally ..."

During this time Dr. Finley preached not only in the church, but from house to house, sometimes traveling in snow or rain for three or four days to reach outlying homes in the mountains beyond his actual parish, driving himself to the point of exhaustion.

Wherever he spoke, all the neighbors assembled in one house. Once, when he felt the crowd would tire too soon standing up to hear him, he reached up with his own hands and took down the loose boards which formed the ceiling, setting them across chairs to make seats for more of his eager listeners. It was during such trips that he organized the Marksboro Presbyterian Church at Hardwick in Sussex County in 1814. In 1817 our church with others of the area became part of a new Presbytery of Newton.

On the national scene Dr. Finley was the prime organizer of the American Colonization Society, which sought to establish colonies of freed American Negro slaves in Africa. Dr. Finley's belief was that as "our fathers brought them here, we are bound if possible to repair the injuries inflicted by our fathers."

Many opposed the scheme or thought it impractical, but Dr. Finley went to Washington and conferred with President Madison, Henry Clay, John Randolph and



other prominent men. His high purpose was well expressed in his presentation of the plan, in which he wrote something which we might well adopt as a national slogan for today: "Happy America, if she shall endeavor not only to rival other nations in arts and arms, but to equal and exceed them in the great cause of humanity, which has begun its never ending course."

Dr. Finley was present at the meeting on December 28, 1816 when the Society was formally organized with Judge Bushrod Washington, a favorite nephew of George Washington, as its first president. Other famous members of the Society were Abraham Lincoln, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Stephen A. Douglass and many others. This colonization of Africa was the beginning of the country now known as Liberia.

All of these activities brought Dr. Finley to such national attention that in 1817 he was asked to become president of the University of Georgia at Athens. It was with great reluctance that our congregation accepted his resignation. While delivering his farewell sermon, Dr. Finley was so moved that he fell upon his knees and remained there until the end.

When accepting his resignation as a trustee of the College of New Jersey – an office he had held for eleven years – the corporation unanimously voted to confer upon him the honorary D.D. degree as an expression of "their high sense of his talents, piety and usefulness."

Would that Dr. Finley had remained in Basking Ridge! His two weeks journey to Georgia was made in a sailing vessel from New York to Savannah, where he and his family and possessions were driven during fifteen days for 200 miles in a carriage – a trip which left them all ill and shaken upon arrival. They found themselves in a tiny village without even a church, with a university which owned thousands of acres of land but had only 28 students and little in the way of buildings or equipment. True to character, Dr. Finley set about immediately organizing the college courses, starting a church, and then traveled throughout Georgia to raise funds. Thoroughly exhausted, he succumbed to typhoid and biliousness and died in November of that same year.

Basking Ridge will always remember Dr. Robert Finley. His was a grave, dignified yet warm personality. As a preacher he was extraordinary, persuasive and original. In appearance he was tall, erect, with wide shoulders, a commanding brow and keen blue eyes. With his big Roman nose and prominent cheekbones, he looked the typical Scot. He made an indelible impression on our community, and it is very fitting that the street which runs past our church was named in his honor, Finley Avenue.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND WILLIAM C. BROWNLEE, D.D., 1818-1825

Dr. Brownlee, like Dr. Kennedy, came from a famous old Scotch family of the nobility. He was the fourth son of the Laird of Torfoot, and was born in 1783 at the family estate which dated back to the reign of Queen Anne. He grew up in the strict discipline of the faith of the Covenanters.

He graduated from the University of Glasgow and received his Master's degree with honors there also. In 1808 he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Stirling, Scotland.

On coming to America he was at first pastor of the Associated Church in Mount Pleasant, Pa., then in 1813 at the Associated Scotch Church in Philadelphia. In 1816 he

went to New Brunswick, N.J. to take charge of the Academy of Queen's College (now Rutgers).

He began work in our church in April, 1818 and was formally installed as pastor in June of that year. The congregation was now large and strong, drawn from the whole township of Bernards and an almost equally large territory in Morris County. People came to church from great distances on foot, on horseback or in an occasional farm wagon.

Our Trustees' books of the period tell us that Mr. Jonathan Moore was hired as "Chorister" for \$20 a year and a free pew for his family – the first record we have of a paid choir director, though in 1816 we find the church paying Mr. Samuel Dalglish and the same Mr. Jonathan Moore \$5 each per year to be "stated singers", and by 1822 Mr. Moore's salary for singing was raised to \$25 per annum. The fee paid annually to the sexton for caring for the Meeting House – cleaning it, cutting wood and making fires through the winter, was \$22. Another amusing record states that "once more the Trustees and Elders by written notice signed by them request Mr. Riggs not to go in the Pulpit nor stand on the Stairs during Divine Worship."

One of the first tasks which Dr. Brownlee set himself was to make a survey of his parishioners. Over a three month period he listed a total of 260 families, writing down each name and most ages of these 1700 individuals, as well as 117 Negro slaves, many of them members of our church. This was a period in which families were large, the average having from eight to twelve children. Dr. Brownlee and his wife had nine children.

We have a detailed description of the appearance and character of Dr. Brownlee in the "Memorial" pamphlet which was printed at the time of his death. He was short, compact, of a "firm frame made never to bend". He had an open, massive countenance from which his penetrating eyes peered out of heavy gold-rimmed spectacles. His neck was short, entirely concealed in public by a cravat of many folds, and he had "peculiarly adjusted hair." The man who wrote this vivid description had not seen him for 32 years, but said that he made an impression "which is distinct at this hour. Ordinary men make no such impression."

His character was as forceful and impressive as his appearance. "His wit, imagination and irony were notable in his conversation, his discourses and controversies." He was an independent and courageous thinker who spoke and wrote vehemently against the Roman Catholic church and other denominational beliefs, feeling that these were a conspiracy against true religion and the best interests of humanity. His speeches and publications made him such a controversial figure that his friends at one time tried to keep him from preaching even in his own church; but he himself only seemed strengthened in his purpose by the "rows, threats, anathemas and the most ribald abuse" of those who sought to silence him. Yet behind his stern bravery there lurked a "most kind and gentle heart," and he was spoken of as an "unselfish, true, and trusted friend," who held no resentment against his most rabid enemies.

In his relations with his congregation he was unsparing in criticism when he felt it was justified. At each meeting of Session there would be some people put on trial for not having their infants baptized or for other transgressions.

His sermons were "graceful, deliberate, yet engaging in manner ... beautifully imaginative and finished in style," though he always spoke without notes. He gave his

congregation whole courses of lectures against the Roman Catholic church, Universalism and other sects, taking much time to laboriously prepare his arguments.

Whether it was through the interest these sermons aroused or because of the kindness and unselfishness of his services as a minister, the fact is that the congregation grew steadily under his leadership. Each year of his ministry was a year of ingathering, especially so in 1822 when 104 persons became members on confession of faith and 38 were baptized at the time of their reception.

Meanwhile he also served as headmaster of the Academy which Dr. Finley had brought to such success, continuing to educate young men who made names for themselves throughout the nation.

At the same time he was constantly writing and publishing religious tracts, even one novel of fiction, "The Whigs of Scotland", a romance in two volumes. One of his tracts, "The General's Widow", is quite evidently the story of the deathbed conversion of Lady Stirling by Dr. Brownlee and one of elders – though initials are used instead of names. It is interesting to read the theological arguments which he had with this great lady, who was a non-believer in the Bible or the divinity of Christ. Dr. Brownlee also told in this tract of the vain attempts made by his predecessor, Dr. Finley, to convert her husband, Major General William Alexander, known as Lord Stirling, who was in intimate friend of George Washington and a valiant soldier. The scene of another of Dr. Brownlee's tracts, "The Spoiled Child", is also evidently laid in Basking Ridge.

The publication of "Brownlee on Quakerism" aroused so much attention that the University of Glasgow conferred upon him the honorary degree of D.D. by unanimous vote of its Senate on December 6, 1824.

He was called from our church in 1825 to become Professor of Languages at Rutgers College. In June, 1826 he became Collegiate Pastor of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in New York City. While there he was editor of "The Reformed Dutch Church Magazine" through four volumes.

After suffering a stroke which paralyzed his speech and limbs but left his mind clear, he lived through sixteen years of patient endurance until his death, February 10, 1860. Many noted men gathered to honor him and their tributes were printed in a Memorial, in which we read: "Few men in the American church occupied so prominent a position, and exerted so wide an influence as he, when he was stricken in the full vigor of his power and usefulness."

To show that his ministry here was not forgotten in Basking Ridge, Brownlee Place was named in his honor.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND JOHN COE VAN DERVOORT, 1826-1834

The Rev. Mr. Van Dervoort was an earnest, kind-hearted minister who served our congregation only for a few rather difficult years.

John Coe Van Dervoort was born in Lamington, N.J. on November 23, 1795, the son of Paul and Mary Coe Van Dervoort. He was licensed by the Classis of New Brunswick (a body similar to our Presbytery), and received by the Presbytery of Newton on August 19, 1819. In September of the same year he was ordained and installed at German Valley and Fox Hill, N.J.

In September, 1826 he accepted the call to Basking Ridge.

A good many new members were added during his ministry, as many as 56 at one service. On the whole, however, this was a period of decline in the life of our church. Some members were drawn away to the new congregation formed in New Vernon in 1833. Farming activities diminished and many young men moved to the cities. Church finances were at a low ebb, in what the Trustees' book speaks of as "embarrassed circumstances." They had bought Dr. Brownlee's house in 1826, but sold it again in 1829.

Mr. Van Dervoort continued the tradition as headmaster of the Academy, but this too did not flourish as before, in spite of the enticing advertisement which he inserted in the New York Observer and Religious Chronicle on Saturday, October 27, 1827:

### BASKING RIDGE CLASSICAL SCHOOL

"This Institution is located in the village of Basking Ridge, Somerset County, New Jersey, about 22 miles from Elizabethtown Point, and 37 from the city of New York; with which there is communication regularly twice a week by stage. The village is delightfully situated being high and healthful, and affords peculiar advantages to youth in the pursuit of an education for mercantile business, or for college.

Its inhabitants are distinguished for their exemplary morals, hospitality and intelligence, and it is believed that there are fewer temptations to vice here than in most places. The terms of tuition for an English education are from 5 to 8 dollars per Session and for the language 12.50 per Session. There are two Sessions in the year, once commencing on the first Monday in May, and the other on the first Monday in November. Board may be obtained in the village at the moderate price of 1.50 per person. On timely application, several young gentlemen can be accommodated in the family of the principal. The greatest attention will be paid to the morals of the youth, and a system of government affectionately and impartially administered."

During this ministry an attempt was made to segregate the Negro members of our church, but without success: We read in the Trustees' Report of April 11, 1828, "Resolved that one tier of seats on the north-west side of the Gallery be appropriated for the People of Color and that the seats below now occupied by them sold or rented and that the Rev. Mr. Van Dervoort be requested to give notice from the Pulpit next Sabbath and the People of Color be requested to sit in the Gallery the first Sabbath in May. The above resolution was carried in the negative. The colored people remain where they are below stairs."

In 1832 our church affiliation was transferred to the Presbytery of Elizabethtown – of which it is still a member today.

Mr. Van Dervoort was released by the Presbytery in the spring of 1834 to accept a call to Paterson, N.J.

### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND JOHN ANDERSON, 1834-1836

In the fall of 1834, the Rev. John Anderson was called to serve our church on a trial basis for a year, then ordained and installed as minister in 1835.

Mr. Anderson was an Irishman from the north of Ireland, with a strong brogue

and “some of the eccentricities of his country”. He seems to have served our congregation diligently and won their respect and affection.

He made a very complete family visitation, noting down that among the 308 families there were 1672 individuals, of whom 258 were members of the church.

When in August, 1836, he requested to be released in order to accept a call from the Canal Street Presbyterian Church in New York City, the congregation went on record with the following resolution: “We feel that we shall lose the labors of a truly pious [missing text-did not print] divine, and the society of a man whose gentlemanly deportment has ever justly secured for himself a grateful remembrance in our recollections.”

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND OSCAR HARRIS, 1838-1851

The pulpit had been vacant for nearly two years when the Rev. Oscar Harris was called to fill it. He was a fine scholar and theologian, a modest retiring gentleman who commanded the respect of all who knew him.

He was born in Goshen, N.Y. August 16, 1804; graduated from Williams College in 1827; and was ordained at Towanda, Pa. in 1833.

Bernards Township at this time included two villages, three hamlets and many crossroads settlements. In 1840 Basking Ridge was the largest village, containing four stores and 40 homes.

The decline in farming and general community income continued during this period, and in 1838 the classical school in the Academy was dissolved entirely. Two new churches undoubtedly drew away some members of our congregation: the Presbyterian Church at Liberty Corner which was formed in 1837, and St. Mark’s Episcopal Church organized in Basking Ridge in 1850.

Our church, however, continued strong in its faith in these times of adversity, and was actually building hopefully for the future. For it was at this time that the old sanctuary was torn down, and the one of brick which we still use today, was built in 1839 on the same site. The inscription on the slab over the west door, as we have mentioned before, proves that our congregation has worshipped on the very same piece of ground since the early 1700s: “This church was rebuilt A. D. 1839, on the site of the former one reared A. D. 1749 where stood the Ancient Log Church near the beginning of the last century.”

During the time of construction the church services and meetings were held in the old Academy building, which the Trustees rented for \$15 a year.

The new building was dedicated February 5, 1840. The sanctuary was almost square, and contained 52 pews downstairs. The pews on either side of the pulpit were called “Amen Pews”, and all had doors on them. The offering at that time was taken in long-handled boxes. In the Gallery there were 26 pews, and the organ and choir were located here. In 1845 the Session selected a chorister, and it was recorded that “eleven men and seven ladies offered to sing,” thus forming our first choir.

Mr. Harris resigned the pastorate in 1851 after some years of ill health, but remained in Basking Ridge for about two years teaching private pupils in his home.

He died at Middletown, N.Y. August 15, 1872.

MINISTRY OF  
THE REVEREND JOHN C. RANKIN, D.D., 1851-1895

The pastorate of Dr. Rankin was an especially distinguished one, and the memory of his personality is still vivid among our older members.

John Chambers Rankin was born at Greensboro, Guilford County, N.C. on May 18, 1816. He graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1836 and taught school in Saulsboro, N.C. for a short time. From there he went to Princeton Theological Seminary where he graduated in 1840. In that same year he was licensed and ordained as a missionary by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and sailed for India with his wife, Sarah Comfort, the daughter of a minister in Kingston, N.J. They worked as missionaries in Hindustan for eight years. Four of their children were born there.

Dr. Rankin immediately learned to speak the Urdic tongue, and in 1845 wrote and published a lengthy paper in that language, replying to a Mohammedan book against Christianity. Finding that the climate of India was affecting his health, he left the plains and stayed in the Himalayan mountains for some time, hoping to recover, but without success. He was forced to return to America in 1848.

Here he regained his former energies and traveled extensively in the South. He then settled in Elizabeth, N.J., and there filled the pulpit of the old First Presbyterian Church for six months while its pastor, Dr. Murray, was in Europe.

In 1851 he accepted the call to our church in Basking Ridge where he remained as pastor for 44 years, until age forced him to resign.

His first few years in Basking Ridge must have been very unhappy for him personally, as his wife never recovered from the climate of India and became a helpless invalid until her death in 1867; and their son James, who was born here, was burned to death when very small.

In 1870 Dr. Rankin married a widow Mrs. Nancy C. Scales of North Carolina, who had a daughter Betty. This daughter later married Dr. Rankin's son Edward, who was also a minister.

Dr. Rankin was impressive and dignified in appearance, his clothes always immaculate and his linens well starched. When dressed in a high hat and cape, his long figure – he was six feet three inches tall – was an image which actually frightened little girls, for many of our older members still recollect crossing the street hastily so that they would not have to greet him. According to their somewhat embarrassed recollections, they were also avoiding being kissed and scratched by his stubby chin – for it seems that the good pastor insisted it was his privilege to salute in this way any young lady not yet married! Another member of our church today, however, remembers how she enjoyed being trotted on his big foot when he visited her home – so apparently he did not terrify her!

Of the effectiveness of Dr. Rankin's personality in the pulpit, Dr. Voorhees wrote that he recalled with great pleasure "his earnestness, his vigor of thought, the deep sympathy expressed in his rather plaintive voice, and the impression he gave of an abiding consciousness that he was an ambassador of Jesus Christ." Another account speaks of him as "that human tower of spiritual strength."

There were many changes made in the church buildings during Dr. Rankin's ministry. Shortly after he came to Basking Ridge, the old parsonage farm was sold and Dr. Rankin wrote that a manse was built for him in 1852. (This is the same manse

building at 1 North Maple Avenue which was moved to another part of the plot and completely renovated in 1958.)

The Sunday School and Friday Evening Prayer Meetings were held on the second floor of the old Academy building until 1854, when a new Session House was built where the present Basking Ridge library now stands – but facing West Oak Street. This was a very impressive building of red brick with white trim and four white columns in front.

Miss Nettie Allen has described how the room looked when she went there to Sunday School: “There were no tables or chairs, but long pews on either side of the center aisle. The teacher sat in the pew in front. The whole school assembled there, then after the opening exercises the Primary children left the room and went across the street and up into the Gallery where we had our lesson. At a certain time a man came over and told us it was time to return, so we trudged back.”

In June, 1869 a storm – which some people then termed a “tornado” – tore off nearly all the tin roof of the sanctuary and left some of it hanging in the old oak tree. The roof was then covered with slate, and at the same time the sanctuary was enlarged to accommodate a total of 118 pews. A new bell, which has remained there to the present day, was hung in the tower in 1875. It weighs 1,009 pounds, and was made in Troy, N.Y. A new organ was purchased in 1886 and placed downstairs. Then by 1887 the Lecture and Sabbath School Room in the Session House had become too small, so the building was torn down and a new “chapel” of frame built – which is our present library building. (It was later faced with brick.) This contained three rooms: one large one in the center, with a small one on each side. In 1892 the interior of the sanctuary was completely renovated at a cost of about \$2500, and it was only then that the old pews with the doors were removed.

Our church membership remained at about 250 throughout Dr. Rankin’s ministry, in spite of some losses to the new churches which were springing up in the vicinity at that time. Bishop Janes Methodist Church in Basking Ridge was dedicated in 1854, and the Stirling Presbyterian Church was organized in 1873 with the help of our pastor and Session. In 1859 the property for St. James Roman Catholic Church was purchased here.

There was still not much travelling done in those days from the village of Basking Ridge into the outside world. One could get to New York City by taking the daily stage coach to Morristown and there boarding a train – or one could go in various other directions by stage coach. But it was only in 1873 that Basking Ridge became a station on the “New Jersey and West Line Railroad” which later became the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western. From then on the character of the community changed steadily from a rural area of farms, to one with many commuters’ homes and estates. School for the younger children in those days was still a one-room affair, but in 1858 Dr. Rankin organized a private classical school which gave courses in higher education and preparation for college.

Meanwhile the Civil War had involved the nation in 1861, and a company of soldiers was raised in Basking Ridge who marched bravely away, some never to return. Some were buried in the old churchyard, but as this was still very small, many were laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery.

A Christian Endeavor Society was started in our church during Dr. Rankin’s pastorate, and in April, 1872, The Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society was organized with Mrs. Rankin as its first president. There were eleven charter members. During the

first year 53 more were added, and by 1875 there were 100. The earliest contributions were made to schools in India and Syria. Later money was also given to home mission work in Liberty Corner. Miss Hattie Robinson also organized the Gleaners' Mission Band for Young People at this time, and the Little Light Bearers for very young children. These were the beginnings of organizational work for missions in our church.

In 1867 Princeton University gave Dr. Rankin the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

During all these years of active church life and new building, Dr. Rankin became so interested in the history of our church and the area around it, that he spent a great deal of time doing extensive research on the subject. This resulted in two "Historical Discourses" presented by him as sermons: the first on August 11, 1872, a supplementary one on March 24, 1892 when he was 76 years old. Without these amazingly accurate and detailed accounts of the beginnings and early years of our church in Basking Ridge, the present history could never have been written, and we are most grateful to him for this labor of love.

The first "Discourse" was 24 printed pages long. What an experience it must have been on a hot August Sunday to deliver this, and also to hear it! Dr. Rankin must have made good use of the large feather fan which he was accustomed to use in the pulpit! Many years later in speaking of this event, Dr. Voorhees commented: "How he dared venture such a performance in the middle of August I cannot guess. But I can imagine something of the vigor and power with which it was delivered, embodying as it did the results of his researches into the history of the church he had already served over twenty years, and the community he had come to understand and love."

Before this time, Dr. Rankin had already been a frequent contributor to the "Princeton Review", and was the author of a book "The Coming of the Lord," published in 1855.

It was fortunate for us that his "Historical Discourses" were preserved more carefully than the loose sheets of paper on which he recorded marriages he had performed. These were found many years later in an attic rolled around a broomstick!

Dr. Rankin resigned his pastorate in 1895 because of advancing age – he was then 79 – but remained among us as beloved pastor emeritus until his death, April 24, 1900, at the age of 84. He was buried under the old oak.

A tablet was placed on the rear wall of the church (toward the square) honoring the memory of this great pastor with the following inscription: "And they that are wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." -- Daniel 12:3. As another tribute to him a street was named Rankin Avenue.

His character and contribution to our church and community are perhaps best summarized by quoting one of the obituaries printed at his death: "That he was a truly great man is admitted by all who knew him, not merely on the ground of great intellectual strength and vast learning, but on the broader ground of nobleness of character, of purity of life and of the steadiness of his purpose in doing good ... He did not affect to appear in the character of a reformer, but taking things as they were, he endeavored to get the most benefit out of existing institutions, religious and political. His talent was practical in an eminent degree, discarding theories and innovations, and concentrating all his energies upon realizing the best practical results from existing circumstances ..."

Rev. George Francis Greene, D.D., in his address at the unveiling of the memorial



tablet said: “With his example before us we cannot hesitate to believe that Christianity is a workable religion.”

MINISTRY OF  
THE REVEREND EDGAR C. MASON, 1895-1899

Mr. Mason began his pastorate in Basking Ridge on the very Sunday after Dr. Rankin’s resignation, so there was no interval between ministries – always a good thing for the active life of a church.

Edgar Cooper Mason was born January 29, 1864 at Jonesboro, Tenn., and educated at Maryville College. He studied at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati and at Union Theological Seminary, and was ordained by the Holston Presbytery in 1890. After some years of preaching in Greenville and in Beverly, Tenn., he became pastor of a church in Kingston, Tenn.

While he was pastor at Basking Ridge, the community was growing very little, but Mr. Mason was nevertheless able to increase the church membership from 226 to 283, and on one Sunday in 1897 he brought in a record number of 59 people on confession of faith.

It was under his leadership that our church for the first time assumed the support of a specific missionary, Rev. W. T. Mitchell in Mainpurie, India – a project which continued into the two following ministries. Mr. Mitchell and his family always visited Basking Ridge when on furlough.

The Sunday School more than doubled its membership between 1896 and 1898, and a Home Department and Cradle Roll were organized at this time.

Mr. Mason enjoyed writing verse in his spare time. He even addressed in rhyme a regional convention sponsored by our newly formed Young People’s Christian Endeavor Society, beginning as follows:

“Fellow Endeavorers, I must confess  
That I am glad to give you this address;  
It is a very easy thing to do, --  
And I could give my street and number, too;  
Whenever letters come to me this way,  
They have upon them, ‘Basking Ridge, N. J.’  
And often some my address to enhance,  
By adding to it, ‘Presbyterian Manse.’  
But I should judge that you did not intend  
For me to say this little and then end.  
Yet I must bear in mind, or recollect,  
That lengthly talking you do not expect  
From one who in this church does preach and pray,  
And meet the same good people every day.  
These people have grown weary of my voice,  
And at some stranger’s word they would rejoice ...”

After some references to the age of our church, he then paid tribute to Dr. Rankin:

“And we are still linked with the sacred past;  
For there is with us one, now aging fast,

Who served this people forty years and four –  
And for these years they love him all the more.  
May age rest lightly on his reverend head,  
Till heaven's gate is open to his tread!" ...

In conclusion he gave a gracious welcome to the visitors:

"Our church is open, wide as heaven's door,  
For you to enter and possess the floor,  
The pews, the pulpit, chairs and organ grand  
So deftly touched by such a skillful hand.  
Our homes are open to your welcome tread,  
If you should need, or wish, our board and bed.  
Our hearts are open, too, for what could we  
Withhold from any Y. P. S. C. E.! ..."

Other verses of Mr. Mason's which have come down to us in newspaper clippings include his humorous account in the style of James Whitcomb Riley, of his troubles and downfall when learning to ride a bicycle; and another in serious vein, dedicated to our war heroes.

Dr. Bennett spoke of Mr. Mason as having brought great vigor, earnestness and vision to his work and a forward step in the activities of our church.

The Trustees' records show that we extended the hand of fellowship to other churches in Basking Ridge even in those days, for in 1899 we invited the Bishop Janes Methodist Church to use our chapel while they were building their new sanctuary.

There is also recorded the addition of a plot of land adjacent to the manse, when it was deeded to the church by Dr. Rankin in 1896.

The Rev. Mr. Mason died March 22, 1935.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND JOHN T. REEVE, D.D., 1900-1912

John T. Reeve was born July 12, 1872 in Swinford, Leicestershire, England, and received his education at Rugby Academy. He came to this country with his parents in 1886 at the age of fourteen. Later he entered Lenox College, Iowa, from which he graduated in 1897. In 1899 he married Lizzie May Scott. They had two children: Warren Scott Reeve who became a minister; and Katherine May.

In 1900 he graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary and came to Basking Ridge, where he was ordained on October 10<sup>th</sup>. He was to be one of the most outstanding ministers in the history of our congregation.

His successor, Dr. Bennett, wrote: "There have been many times when God's leading has been apparent in our church, but never were the evidences more unmistakable than in this call. The choice of pastor could not have been more happy or fortunate ... The young pastor took up his work with an energy and in a power that were prophetic of great usefulness, and the church entered upon what is unquestionably one of the greatest periods of her development."

This was a time of many changes and instability in the population and living conditions at Basking Ridge, as the town became more and more a suburb of commuters, and good roads, electric lights, a water system, better schools and other improvements

were added, new families moved in, and other went away.

Yet it was also a time of great growth in membership for our church, as during Dr. Reeve's pastorate 288 were added on confession of faith and 118 by transfer from other churches. Some of this increase was due to revivals held in 1902, when the Rev. Charles Inglis of London led the meetings; and again in 1904 when the Rev. J. B. Ely of Philadelphia helped to bring in 61 new members. But Dr. Bennett wrote later that most of this ingathering was undoubtedly due to Dr. Reeve's faithful visitations and personal labors.

The Sunday School also added more than 100 members in his first ten years to total 307, with increased attendance as well. A Ladies' Aid Society, and a Men's Brotherhood were organized. In 1902 the members of our church first began writing letters to the missionaries whom we were assisting.

These signs of a renewed religious spirit were accompanied by great efforts on the part of the entire membership led by Dr. Reeve, to refurbish and build additions to the church properties. In the fall of 1900 the Christian Endeavor Society undertook the painting of the old chapel (now the Basking Ridge Library). In the following spring a new floor was laid on the church porch. Next the public roads surrounding the church property were remade at church expense. An additional strip of land was bought and carriage sheds build there, which Dr. Reeve felt helped increase church attendance, "as we do not stop for the weather in these days!" At the same time the old hitching posts around the church were removed, and some \$4000 was spent on planting and improving the grounds. Tree experts from Trenton pruned the old oak at this time, cleaned out much dead wood and filled the hollows with cement.

In 1903 the parsonage was completely renovated and in the following year the churchyard, which had been an overgrown wilderness, was cleared and planted with shrubbery and trees. In 1905 the parsonage lawns received attention and the street there was widened at church expense.

In 1907 work was begun in building an addition at the rear of the sanctuary, made possible by a generous gift from elder Samuel S. Childs; the church at that time deeded the old chapel (now the Basking Ridge library) to him. This included new Sunday School rooms and the octagonal room used then as a chapel – now called the John Knox Room. At the same time the east wall of the church was found to be unsafe and was rebuilt. In 1908 all these improvements were dedicated and put into use, including an organ – at a total cost of \$27,000. Dr. Reeve reported with justified satisfaction that by April, 1909, the bills for all this had been paid and at the same time the church that year contributed the largest amount in its history to benevolent purposes. In 1910 a tract of almost four acres was added to the churchyard, the gift of William Childs.

Meanwhile another important development had been the growth of the "Italian Mission" in Bernardsville. This had originally been started by a group of women who had intended to organize a W. C. T. U. which did not materialize. But the work for the Italians of the neighborhood continued and by 1903 the Rev. Francisco Pesaturo of Newark was holding services there twice weekly, and Dr. Reeve made pastoral calls with him. Once a week evening open-air services were held at the Millington Stone Crusher, or if the weather was bad, the laborers sat in their bunk houses while the Rev. Mr. Pesaturo explained portions of the Bible in Italian. Each Saturday night there was a class in English in a hall in Bernardsville followed by a service with stereoptican pictures

illustrating the life of Christ.

Finally it was felt that a resident pastor was needed for the mission. In 1909 some of our members joined the people in Bernardsville for what Dr. Reeve called a "field day", gathering stone donated by Mr. George B. Post from his estate, and started the building of Bernardsville Chapel. Later a manse was built there also, and the Rev. Tommaso Barbieri, a convert from the Roman Catholic faith, was called as its minister.

For some years all services there were in Italian, but the Sunday School was always conducted in English, as the children were going to school and learning the language there, and few of them knew much Italian. Attendance at the Italian Chapel continued to grow.

In 1910 Dr. Reeve's Alma Mater, Lenox College in Iowa, bestowed the honorary D. D. degree upon him. He had many opportunities to go to other fields of labor, but resolutely refused them until 1912, when he accepted a call to the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. It was with deepest regret that our congregation accepted his resignation in September of that year. His vigorous leadership had brought new life into our church, and a newly respected standing for it in the larger Presbyterian circles.

Dr. Reeve later served as minister for thirty years to the First Presbyterian Church in Lancaster, Pa., and then at the South Presbyterian Church in Syracuse, N.Y. From there he retired in 1953 and is now living with his wife in Lancaster, Pa.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND LAUREN G. BENNETT, D.D., 1913-1944

Lauren G. Bennett was born June 15, 1879 in Kinsman, Ohio, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bennett of Atlantic, Pa. He graduated from Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pa., in 1905, and then became principal of a school in Conneautville, Pa. for two years. This he followed by taking a similar position in a school in Harmony, Pa. for a year.

He then decided to enter the ministry, and graduated from Princeton Seminary in 1911. After being ordained by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, North, in the same year, he became pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Morrisville, Pa.

In 1913 he came to our church in Basking Ridge where he served as our pastor for 31 years.

In March, 1913, he had married Clara G. Burgess of Morrisville, Pa., and they came to our manse together that same month. They had two children, Margaret, and Robert William.

There was great unity and much enthusiastic support of all church activities during Dr. Bennett's ministry. The membership increased from about 350 to 584, with a total of 1012 being received into the church. In 1921 alone, the record number of 68 new members was enrolled after a vigorous evangelistic campaign.

When America entered World War I in 1917, 49 members of our church entered the armed forces, some of them never to return to us. These were sad and difficult years.

In 1920 our church celebrated its bicentennial with special services.

In 1927 the church assumed support of Rev. Warren S. Reeve, a missionary in Japan, who was the son of our former pastor, Dr. Reeve, and this was continued for twelve years.

Dr. Bennett took an active part in the church affairs of our state. He was chosen

Moderator of the Elizabeth Presbytery in 1920 and in 1934 he became Moderator of the Synod of New Jersey. Westminster College honored him with a D. D. degree in 1935.

His twenty-fifth year as our pastor was celebrated here in 1938 with a large and happy reception, and in 1939 we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the building of our sanctuary. At this time Dr. Rankin's two "Historical Discourses" were reprinted, with "Addenda" by the Rev. Oscar M. Voorhees, D. D., Miss Nettie Allen and Dr. Bennett, to bring the records up to date. Dr. Voorhees had done a great deal of research on the history of our church and community; and Miss Allen had already been the capable and untiring church historian for many years.

A number of changes were made in church activities during this pastorate. The volunteer choirs were organized, and in 1933 they first wore special robes. In 1934 Mrs. Bennett was instrumental in the merger of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society and the Ladies' Aid Society, which now became the Woman's Guild. A study was made of youth work in other churches, and in 1939 attendance at our Christian Endeavor Society and Young People's Forum was very satisfactory. Dr. Bennett furthered the friendly relations of our church with others in the community in many ways by holding joint prayer meetings in Lent, and in other combined activities.

In the spring of 1944 Dr. Bennett's failing health forced him to ask the church to accept his resignation. This was done with great reluctance and regret. For some time Rev. Robert K. Staley, our assistant minister, filled the pulpit until he was called into service, for he had already enlisted as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy. During these war years 142 of the men of this church served in the armed forces, five of them never to return.

Dr. Bennett had looked forward to retiring quietly to Morristown to live – but instead he was called to the Life Triumphant while still at the manse, on July 16, 1944. His widow is a member of our church again today.

Through his friendliness, fine personality and interest in people, Dr. Bennett had endeared himself to everyone in the church and the surrounding communities. His tall, dignified figure, his kindly manner and his devotion to church and country will always live on in the memory of everyone who knew him.

#### MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND J. MERION KADYK, D.D., 1944-1951

In Dr. Bennett's farewell sermon after his resignation, he clearly foretold the coming growth of our church and the hard work which would confront his successor, for which Dr. Bennett himself no longer had the physical strength.

The ministry of Dr. Kadyk in every way fulfilled this prophecy. His vigor and enthusiasm soon stirred the congregation to much-needed action and a thorough reorganization.

Dr. Kadyk was born Sept. 26, 1904 in Fulton, Ill., of Holland-Dutch parentage. He received his B.A. degree from the College of Wooster in 1925, his B.D. at McCormick Theological Seminary, and finally his D.D. from the College of Emporia, Kansas, in 1942. He married a former Wooster classmate, Elizabeth Herpel of Reynoldsville, Pa., and they had five sons: Folkert, Frederick, Peter, Marc and Willem – the youngest being born while they were living in Basking Ridge.

His earlier pastorates were in Tulsa, Okla.; San Antonio, Texas; Wichita, Kansas;

and Germantown, Pa.

He immediately realized the great potentialities for growth in our church in Basking Ridge, and constantly sought to anticipate its future needs. He first established a church office with a permanent secretary; initiated the printing of annual reports; started the publication of the monthly newsletter to the congregation, called "Oak Leaves"; supervised the compilation of a new Church Register and had the names of all families placed on mailing plates and divided into Parish Groups for visitation.

An Every Member Canvas was instituted which greatly stimulated the growth of the membership, the amount of contributions, and the participation of more people in the activities of the church. During these seven years, 560 new members were added to the church rolls, so that upon his resignation the membership had reached 970.

Dr. Kadyk was particularly interested in youth work, and his outstanding contribution was in the expanded program for all age levels under the supervision of an Educational Council. Miss Marjorie R. Carnahan was brought in as fulltime youth director from 1946-49, and her warm, friendly personality drew the young people to Church House after school hours like a magnet. This house was purchased in 1946 and used not only for offices but also for an overflow of Church School classes and the newly organized church library.

Enrollment of the Church School during these years grew to a total of 574 with 65 teachers and officers, and its work was completely reorganized. The new Presbyterian curriculum was introduced at this time. Purchase of motion picture and slide projectors added greatly to the programs of all the organizations for young and old.

With all this expansion, still more room was needed for classrooms, so after intensive fund-raising a new Church Hall, now Calvin Hall, was constructed under the sanctuary in 1949, in space which was formerly only partly excavated. A number of graves found there were moved, but the old hand-hewn beams of the early building were carefully preserved and are much admired in the room today.

A rotation plan for church officers was instituted, and a Joint Finance Committee was organized to revise the bookkeeping and reporting on church funds. The Board of Deacons was activated through new committees. A fund for the purchase of a new organ was started during this time.

The Oak Club for men of the church and community sprang into being, and the Mr. and Mrs. Club was reorganized. Two new young people's choirs were formed. Subscriptions to "Presbyterian Life" were ordered by the church for every family.

A splendid contribution to the church was made in 1949 when two members, Daryl M. Chapin and Robert Galbreath, together with Perry Prothero of the New Providence Presbyterian Church, gave up an entire summer to building a carillon connected with the organ by an electronic keyboard. This was made from Army surplus materials, and the loudspeaker for it was one which had been used at the English and American landing in France – a fine peaceful new use for war equipment!

This was only one example of the unselfish work which many members contributed under the dynamic inspiration of Dr. Kadyk. Throughout these years one could see volunteers, young and old, painting or carpentering or contributing in some way of their time and talents to beautifying the church property.

From this brief report one can see how Dr. Kadyk revitalized every facet of our church life. It was with sincere regret that his resignation was accepted in 1951 when he

received a call to the Presbyterian Church in Riverside, Ill. He is now serving the Westminster Church of Oklahoma City, Okla.

MINISTRY OF  
THE REVEREND WILLIAM H. FELMETH, 1951- ?

THE MINISTRY: After an interval of five months when our church was without a pastor, we were happy to welcome Mr. Felmeth, who has now been with us for ten busy, consecutive years. His warm, radiant personality and complete devotion to the needs of the church, both here at home and throughout the world, have endeared him to everyone. His great concern for national and foreign missions has stimulated much new action in this area, while the continued growth of the congregation's activities necessitated a great deal of renovating and new building, as well as the addition of more members to the church staff to cope with the added responsibilities.

William Harte Felmeth was born May 21, 1918 in New Kensington, Pa. He is a graduate of Pingry School in Elizabeth, N.J., and received his A.B. degree from Harvard in 1939 and his Th.B. from Princeton in 1942. He was ordained and married Katherine Porter the same year, but instead of entering the ministry then he went into the army. He rose from the rank of Second Lieutenant to Captain, and was Battery Commander and Staff Officer in the Aleutians and in Europe. Only after these years of active duty did he return to become pastor at the First Presbyterian Church in Cranbury, N.J. from 1946 to 1951.

On July 1, 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Felmeth and their two daughters, Susan Katherine and Martha Anne, came to our church in Basking Ridge, and in 1953 their third daughter, Deborah Harte, was born.

Mr. Felmeth has been very active in the Synod of New Jersey as a member of the General Council, and chairman of its committee on National Missions from 1951-59. His great interest in the outreach of the church also led to his serving on the executive committee of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church, and taking part in teaching missions to Cuba in 1956 and to the Dominican Republic in 1958. He was Moderator of the Presbytery of Elizabeth during 1960-61.

The expansion of our church membership and activities soon demonstrated a need for an enlarged staff, so in 1952 Mr. George S. Knieriemen, Jr., a Princeton Seminary graduate, came as a student assistant. After his ordination the next year he became a full time assistant pastor. He and his wife Cheryl gave excellent leadership to our young people. He set a high standard for his office with his faithfulness and ability in pastoral duties, and in his close working relationship with Mr. Felmeth. He served us until 1954, when he moved on to become the minister of the Presbyterian Church in New Vernon, N.J.

Mr. Donald R. Pepper joined the church staff while he was still a student at Bloomfield Seminary. After his ordination in 1954 he served as assistant pastor in our church with the responsibility for the work at the Bernardsville Chapel. It was due in great part to his sincere and enthusiastic ministry that in October 1956, the chapel was formally constituted as the First Presbyterian Church of Bernardsville, where he is still the pastor.

In 1955, Rev. Benjamin H. Adams, Jr. came from the Air Force chaplaincy to become our assistant pastor for two years. Mr. Adams, also a graduate of Princeton

Seminary, with his amiable manner did effective work in pastoral visitation and among our young adults. He was married in our Sanctuary to Miss Jane Kirkner before he left to accept a call to the Presbyterian Church in West Trenton, N.J.

Rev. Gerald S. Mills took his place in 1958 as assistant, later being installed as associate pastor of our church in 1959 by the Presbytery, in which capacity he is still serving us today. Mr. Mills was born August 25, 1932 in Cleveland, Ohio. He received his B.A. degree from Ohio State University and his B.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1954 he married Judith Kiss, and they have one daughter, Judith Elizabeth. He had served as assistant pastor in Ambler, Pa. before coming to Basking Ridge. Today he carries a special responsibility for the work of evangelism and membership in our church. His keen mind and warm, friendly personality have made him a special place throughout our church life.

**MEMBERSHIP:** During the last twenty years the changes in our community have been reflected also in our church. The Basking Ridge area, which had been settled by farmers and gradually grown into a rural town, has now become filled with people who like living in the country but who work mainly in Newark or New York City, or in the large industrial plants which have moved out into our neighborhood.

These changes have resulted in a constant state of flux for our church membership. Men whose positions change frequently are often called upon to move their homes. A tabulation of our church membership, therefore, shows that during the last ten years, 1251 new members were received, with a total membership at the end of 1960 of 1447. This means that today we must make even greater efforts to draw in all the strangers within our gates, to extend a sincere welcome to every newcomer, and never for a moment to remain content with the status quo.

**WORSHIP SERVICES:** We are happy to note, however, that the average attendance at church services during Mr. Felmeth's pastorate has doubled, which has necessitated two services on Sunday mornings, and in 1961 for the first time, three services on Easter Sunday. Our faithful ushers are being aided by more and more of the young men of our church family – always a healthy sign for the future. Our volunteer Senior Choir has now been joined by even younger age levels and a new type of music. In 1953 a Carol Choir and Cherub Choir were added, then in the following year the Westminster Bell Choir was formed; and today we also have a Geneva Bell Choir of seventh graders and a women's Carillon Bell Choir. We are very grateful for the fine music of our worship services and programs, so ably led by our organist and chorister, Mrs. Wayne F. Koppes, and her faithful assistants, Mrs. Henry S. Kraus and Mrs. Edward B. Knobloch.

**NEW BUILDINGS:** The growth in these years led inevitably to changes in our church buildings. In 1951, shortly after Mr. Felmeth's arrival the sanctuary was completely renovated. Then from 1954-55 we took a tremendous step forward when, after an intensive period of fund raising and planning, the new Education Building and Memorial Chapel came into being at a cost of \$233,360. These gave us more adequate, comfortable and beautiful facilities for all the activities of young and old, with Church School classrooms for children from two years old up to the adults; Family Suppers and meetings in the fine Westminster Hall; small weddings and funerals in the lovely chapel, where every item has been lovingly donated as a memorial gift. In 1960, Westminster Hall was the setting for an historical exhibit and pageant during Bernards Township's



200th anniversary celebration.

In 1958 the old Manse was moved to a better location on the same corner lot, its Colonial beauty restored by the removal of the Victorian front porch, and the entire interior rebuilt and redecorated. The old Cottage at the foot of the graveyard, now occupied by the associate minister and his family, was improved in 1958 and again in 1960-61, much of the work being done by volunteers from the church membership.

During the summer of 1960, after the financing of the much-needed new organ was at last in sight, the sanctuary was rebuilt to allow for a better arrangement of the choirs. The publication of this history of our church coincides with the dedication of the new organ in 1961.

**MISSIONS:** Under the leadership of the newly constituted stewardship committee during the last four years, ours has been one of the pioneer churches in using the “open budget”, which means that members give as much as they can as stewards of their church, after which the budget is planned to fit the amount contributed and pledged. We have now arrived at our goal of giving one dollar to the general mission of the church for every two dollars we use locally. In 1961 we anticipate giving \$41,900 to the general mission, and \$84,200 to local mission operations – and this after having completed and paid for the renovation of the church and installation of the new organ, a project costing \$75,000.

Our interest in missions has grown not only in dollars given, however, but in the very personal relationship which we have developed, under the enthusiastic leadership of Mr. Felmeth, with our mission projects. We sponsored and brought to our community a refugee from Germany, a young doctor from Holland, and a Dutch family from Indonesia for whom the Board of Deacons prepared a completely furnished home. We are now planning to bring over yet another Dutch family from Indonesia. In ecumenical and national missions also, instead of donating a sum to the mission funds of the Presbyterian Church in general as we did before, we now partially support ten specific missionaries with whom members of our church exchange letters regularly, and many of whom we have welcomed at various times to our pulpit. Like the British Empire of old, “the sun never sets” on our missionary enterprises, for our interests take us to areas on every continent around the globe. We are trying hard to live up to our pastor’s belief that “the health of a church is determined by its unselfish outreach.”

**THE CHURCH FAMILY:** The second great emphasis of our church life during these ten years – and one which we must nurture with greater vigilance than ever before, because of the constantly changing membership – is the need for a vitally related “church family.” Throughout our many organizations; by means of our Family Night Suppers; in our newsletter “Oak Leaves” full of spiritual guidance, notes about church events and people, and the amusing “Charlie Churchmouse” column; and through the constant counseling and visitations of Mr. Felmeth and Mr. Mills, we are trying to keep in touch with every member, young or old, and draw them all into joyous participation in the congregational life.

**THE LEADERSHIP:** Without an exceptionally fine group guiding us in our Session, our Board of Trustees and our Board of Deacons, none of these objectives would be within our reach. It is their splendid leadership, the untiring devotion of their many committees, which keep all this activity in motion and take us on towards still higher goals.

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:** The entire educational work of the church is directed by the Council on Christian Education, consisting of three members of Session, six from the congregation, our pastor and the Director of Christian Education. Miss Jean Cassat, D.C.E., headed our youth work for a short time in 1951, and in 1954 Miss Carnahan returned to us for three years, before going on to a church in St. Louis. Since 1960 we have been fortunate in having Miss Mary Ann Stames (now Mrs. Robert Andrews) as our Director of Christian Education.

Membership in the Sunday Church School during these ten years has grown from 574 pupils and 65 teachers and officers, to 683 pupils and 106 teachers and officers. We expect to begin double sessions in the fall of 1961.

The weekday Oak Twigs Play School is in its fourth year with a full enrollment of four-year-olds coming twice a week. A Vacation Church School is held every summer. The adult classes are a new and growing project.

The Westminster Fellowship has been reorganized in different age groupings, and much emphasis put on many service projects, retreats and summer camps. Each Christmas the young people raise money to bring some foreign students at Warren Wilson College to our community for the holidays. The College Career Group meets regularly during the summer months and at Christmas.

**CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS:** We have many groups functioning within our church family, enabling both young and old to share in outreach and fellowship: The Woman's Guild, which added an active Evening Department in 1952; the Oak Club for men, since 1956 a chapter of the National Council of Presbyterian Men; the Couples' Club; the Senior Society, first organized in 1956; and the Fellowship of Prayer, whose members never meet, but who for the last ten years have been praying individually each day for those who are associated with our church at home and abroad, and for a special list of those members who are ill or troubled. There are many among us who can testify to the tremendous healing and strengthening power of these intercessory prayers.

**TIME AND TALENTS COMMISSION:** This new group, formed in 1961 at the suggestion of the Deacons, is aimed at drawing into year-round stewardship the time and particular talents of each and every member of our church. It is a most challenging concept, a goal towards which we should all strive during the coming years. We in the Basking Ridge area have been very much blessed by the Lord in every way. We are rich in talents which could be used in His service, for in His sight no gift is too small. Let us search our hearts and think over the distribution of our time, and give more of ourselves in the days to come to the work of our church. For truly, "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required." (Luke 12:48)

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **SONS OF OUR CHURCH**

"He will send forth laborers into his harvest."

-- Matthew 9:38

We are very proud of the young men who have gone out from our church to become ministers and missionaries. From the earliest days sons of our congregation were inspired to devote their lives to the service of Christ and their fellow men.

The first of this group was Rev. Nathaniel Whitaker, who graduated from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in 1752. After serving as minister to churches in Woodbridge, N.J. and Norwich, Conn., he was selected to go abroad to arouse interest and raise funds for a school for American Indian boys and girls established in Lebanon, Conn. By Rev. Eleazor Wheelock. Mr. Whitaker took with him an ordained Indian preacher, Rev. Samson Occom. During two years in England and Scotland they raised a fund of 12,000 pounds, which was the initial sum used to found what later became Dartmouth College – where his portrait can now be seen in Webster Hall. It was in his later church at Salem, Mass., called The Tabernacle, that the first missionaries were ordained in America for the foreign field.

Rev. Francis Peppard graduated from the College of New Jersey in 1762 and began his pastorate as the first minister of the log meeting house near Log Jail and Springdale, N.J. He later served various New Jersey churches including that at Mendham, and the Yellow Frame Church near Hackettstown, where he is buried. His son, Francis Peppard, Jr. also became a minister and is buried in our churchyard.

Rev. Jacob Kirkpatrick, born 1785, lived with his family at the homestead in Mine Brook. He graduated from the College of New Jersey in 1804 and was pastor of the church at Amwell from 1813 until his death in 1866.

Rev. John Pennington Alward, born 1812, was ordained in 1840 and sailed for Cape Palmas, Africa, the following year as a missionary. He became ill and died there that same year. A memorial stone is erected to him in our churchyard.

Two sons of Major Thomas Talmadge, an officer in the American Revolution and an elder of our church, became ministers: Rev. Jehiel Talmadge; and Rev. Samuel Kennedy Talmadge who was named for our former minister.

Rev. Philip Lindsley was graduated from the College of New Jersey in the same class as Jacob Kirkpatrick, and became a tutor and professor there. Later on he became president of Cumberland College in Nashville, Tenn., and still later was Professor of Biblical Archaeology and Church Polity in New Albany Seminary. He was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1834.

Rev. Robert S. Finley, son of our former minister, was also a graduate of the College of New Jersey. He became interested in his father's work for the freed slaves and was editor of the "Liberia Advocate." Later on he was ordained and became a Presbyterian minister, as were his two brothers.

Another son of one of our pastors, Rev. Warren S. Reeve, became a missionary in Japan, where our church helped to support him for many years. He was pastor of the church in Burnsville, N.C. at the time of his death in April 1961.

Rev. Edward P. Rankin, also a son of one of our church's ministers, graduated from the College of New Jersey in 1868. He was a teacher there and then at Carroll College until his ordination in 1872. After 46 years in the ministry he retired, and died in California in 1937.

In more recent times a number of other young men of our church have gone into the ministry: Rev. Sargent Bush, Rev. Francis Mattei of the Bernardsville Chapel, Rev.

Alfred Deutsch, Rev. Robert Snable, and this year will see the ordination of Robert Beringer. We hope that there will be many more to come from our church family.

\* \* \* \*

As a matter of historical record we feel that we should tell also of some of our early members who held high state or national positions, or made some other outstanding record of public service.

Nathaniel Ayers, (1728-1806) was the grand son of John Ayers who donated land for our church in 1731. He was a member of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey from Somerset County, and later was made Justice of the Peace by the Governor and Council.

The Hon. Henry Southard, (1747-1842) was a ruling Elder of our church for over 50 years. He was a Justice of the Peace, Judge of the Court, Member of the Assembly, and Member of the House of Representatives.

His son, the Hon. Samuel L. Southard (1787-1842) was also a Member of the Assembly; Justice of the Supreme Court; a Presidential Elector; Senator from New Jersey; Secretary of the Navy in the cabinet of President Monroe; and finally Attorney General of New Jersey.

The Hon. Andrew Kirkpatrick, (1756-1831) originally studied divinity under Dr. Kennedy, but became a lawyer. He was a Member of the Assembly; Chief Justice for 21 years; member of the Legislative Council; and on the bench of the Supreme Court for 27 years. It is said that many of his decisions were among the most important ever made in the state.

The Hon. Joseph Annin, (1789-1835) was another State Senator, and Judge of the Court of Common Pleas.

The Hon. William Lewis Dayton, (1811-1864) was a State Senator; Judge in the New Jersey Supreme Court; United States Senator; Attorney General of New Jersey; and finally was appointed by President Lincoln as United States Minister to France. At his death President Lincoln wrote: "There is no man in public life for whose character I have greater admiration."

Brigadier-General George Smith Anderson, (1849-1915) was a graduate of West Point, and was active in the southwest in the wars against the Indians. At one time he taught at West Point, and at another time he served as superintendent of Yellowstone Park. He fought in the Philippines as a cavalry officer and finally retired there. In 1890 he received the Legion of Honor decoration from France.

\* \* \* \*

Much as we would like to do so, space does not permit us to mention the many other members who have been outstanding in character and accomplishments, or who have given years of devoted service to our church – the faithful teachers and superintendents of the Church School, the earnest workers in the Woman's Guild – the list would take up many pages. Yet without them, our church would not be what it is today. They are our "unsung heroes."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OLD GRAVEYARD

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

-- Revelation 14:13

A graveyard in the old days was known as God’s Acre. Surely this one belonging to our church is one of the most beautiful of God’s Acres, encircling as it does the great ancient oak.

What is known as the Old Yard surrounds the church and is bounded on the north by the row of pine trees. Here many of the earliest graves are found, usually in family groups. A few years ago Miss Nettie Allen and Miss Frances Stone together made copies of 317 of the epitaphs here – as many as they were able to decipher, from the 830 burials in this section.

The oldest stone is that of Henry Haines who died in 1736.

Some of our ministers lie buried here in the Old Yard: Rev. Joseph Lamb, Rev. Samuel Kennedy and Rev. John C. Rankin; and quite probably Rev. John Cross and Rev. Oscar Harris too, though we cannot find their graves now. Rev. Lauren G. Bennett and Rev. Thomas Barbieri are buried in the New Yard.

There is a memorial stone to Rev. Jonathan Alward who died as a missionary in Africa; also the graves of two missionaries’ children, Cameron Richardson from India and Jimmie Wilson from Korea.

At least ten Elders, of the church are buried here, and about 35 Revolutionary soldiers, as well as some soldiers from the Civil War.

The grave of a Negro slave, Caesar Hand, 1825-1883, is marked with this tribute from a grateful master: “Faithful and beloved.”

There are stones bearing testimony that two men lived to a ripe old age: John McCollum, who died at 103; and Daniel Cooper, who had six wives but lived to be 100!

The stone near Finley Avenue commemorating Mary Kinnan, 1763-1848, is particularly sought out by those who know her dramatic story, for she was captured by Indians, rescued after three years by her brother Jacob Lewis, and brought back to end her days in Basking Ridge. Her history, based on research by Dr. Oscar M. Voorhees, is told in the Historical Booklet of Bernards Township published to commemorate the town’s bicentennial.

There are so many interesting epitaphs here, it would be impossible to quote them all, but we would like to give you just one, of Samuel Brown (1712-1763) to whom we are indebted for the first legacy, of 200 pounds – bequeathed to our church:

“Is Brown deceased? Yes he is fled  
We trust he’s ris’n above the sky  
Tho’ mould’ring here among ye dead  
His sleeping dust interred doth lie.  
A pious man and Husband kind  
An useful Elder in this church  
A Friend sincere of generous mind  
Who for ye Publick had done much.”

## CHAPTER V

### THE OLD OAK TREE

“An oak was by the sanctuary of the Lord.”  
-- Joshua 24:26

Over the ancient graveyard broods our famous oak – protective, massive, a monument of endurance and patient strength. About 500 years old now, it has seen the growth of our church from its very beginnings in the little log meeting house. It has felt the shaking of the earth as soldiers tramped by to many a war. It sheltered the famous, the stranger, the little children – all who wandered into God’s Acre to rest or browse among the graves.

It is a white oak (*Quercus alba*). Under it you will find a marker giving its dimensions in 1924. When it was measured again in 1958, it was found to have grown some more! Its height had increased by four feet, its spread by 30 feet, and its circumference by one foot! So today it is 97 feet high, with a spread of 156 feet and a circumference of 18 feet.

Our congregation has loved and watched over this great tree all through its history. During Dr. Reeve’s ministry, experts from Trenton cleared out many hollows and filled them with cement. In 1928 a letter was sent out by “Friends of the Old Oak”, which raised almost \$2400 to hire specialists to care for it again. The cavity which they cleaned out in the trunk was so large that three men could stand in it. This and other holes were filled with three tons of concrete, and cables were installed to support the huge limbs. Since then the tree has been fertilized and cared for each year from church funds.

It is indeed a magnificently sturdy oak. Let us try to follow its example and keep on growing, in this our third century of life as a worshiping congregation. As we look back on our history, we realize what a proud heritage is ours, how much that was fine and strong and good there was in the earlier days, how much of our past we must strive to live up to in the future.

Just as the life of this tree depends on the nourishment it obtains through its hundreds of rootlings and leaves – so the strength of our Presbyterian Church in Basking Ridge depends on each and every member, young or old, weak or strong – to keep on enriching the spiritual life of our community that it may continue to truly be as “sturdy as the oak.”

#### MY FAITH, MY HOPE

When God is everywhere around,  
It is not very hard to see  
Our token of his loving care,  
A pillared church beside a tree.  
The roots of oak grow deep in earth.  
A living faith goes deep in me.  
O come and share this living strength  
In pillared church beside a tree.  
Up to the sun the branches go  
With hope to lift and set them free

O come and shine in rising hope  
In pillared church beside a tree.  
Far from the trunk great limbs extend  
In love to shelter you and me.  
Come and fulfill your growing love  
In pillared church beside a tree.  
My faith, my hope, my love I bring  
The risen Christ who died for me.  
So Hallelujah let us sing  
In pillared church beside a tree.  
— James L. McFadden

The Presbyterian Church  
Basking Ridge, New Jersey

Part II

1961 – 1989

Mildred Dunham Van Dyke

Eileen Luz Johnston

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are greatly indebted to Virginia De Shon and Mildred Van Dyke for the hours they spent researching church records, such as Dorothy Loa McFadden's *Sturdy As the Oak and Still Growing*, the annual reports, session, trustee and deacon reports, Oak Leaves and newspaper clippings.

We also thank Irene Mihlon and Eileen Johnston for selecting pictures for the text from the files and scrapbooks kept by the Historical Records Committee, Wayman Williams and Mark Albright for current pictures, and Herb Ryder for his drawing of Charlie Churchmouse. Our thanks also go to Dr. Jackson and Dr. Morris for reading the manuscript for content, to the office staff for help in locating source material and to Helen Mann, who typed the manuscript.

The most vital human part of any church is its people – the families and individuals who compose its life and shape its direction: elders, trustees, deacons, leaders of our various organizations and committees, church school teachers and superintendent, music personnel, secretarial staff and those entrusted with the care of our buildings and grounds. Many other people make a special contribution to help the work of our congregation move forward: some fold Oak Leaves, count the Sunday offering, prepare communion, usher, do library work and displays, and serve on committees. Valuable aid is given to our church office by the cheerful and faithful members who work as volunteer receptionists. Without the contribution of all who serve, there would be no history to record. We apologize if we have omitted anything important that should have been included.

Eileen Luz Johnston  
Mildred Dunham Van Dyke



## CHAPTER VI

### A CONTINUATION OF THE MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND WILLIAM H. FELMETH 1961-1974

In the later years of Dr. Felmeth's ministry, the congregation and community found the whole structure of society changing rapidly. With the building of Routes 287 and 78, access to the rural scene was made easy, and with this "progress" also came challenges: many corporations with the greater mobility of their employees; rapid increase in land values, which resulted in a more affluent community; more robberies and increased crime, alcohol and drug use. Many women entered the work force, which led to more challenges to be met with fewer people to provide the once volunteer services. Older members were retiring and leaving the community because of higher taxes and cost of living. Many factors contributed to a major change in social mores, resulting in some "living together" without benefit of marriage, more divorces with multi-family arrangements, single parents and "latch-key" children. It is heartening to note how our church tried to meet the challenges presented by these changes in lifestyle in our own congregation, in the community and in the larger society.

During the year 1961, although the membership did not grow significantly, much was accomplished. The Session unanimously adopted a "statement of Christian Conviction" and "open occupancy" in a concerned effort against racial discrimination. This marks one of the most significant advances this church has made in meeting a crucial social problem of the day in positive Christian witness.

As to the physical plant, a new Austin organ was installed in the church sanctuary, and the East Allen Street manse was altered to become an adequate-sized house.

Robert A. Beringer, a son of this church, was ordained a minister on June 4, 1961. He subsequently served as minister of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church in Hopewell, New Jersey, and is presently pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen, New Jersey.

The Session appointed a new Time and Talents Commission. A file was set up as a guide to match the abilities of members to the needs of the church.

In May of 1962 the Reverend Gerald S. Mills left our church after four years to accept a call as minister of St. Cloud Presbyterian Church in West Orange, New Jersey.

The Reverend Theodore A. Blunk came to our church in October, 1962, as Associate Pastor, together with his wife, Mary Ann, and sons Timothy (then 9), Jonathan (then 8) and Seth (then 5). He had graduated from Denison University and Princeton Seminary, and had formerly been pastor of the Union Hill Presbyterian Church in Denville, New Jersey.

This year the dream of many years came true. Ground-breaking for the new First Presbyterian Church of Bernardsville, New Jersey took place in September, and work was begun on the building on Mine Brook Road. The Reverend Donald R. Pepper, who in 1954 had come to be our Assistant Pastor in charge of Mission work at the Italian Chapel in Bernardsville, became the pastor of the new church in 1956. Don has faithfully served this church for 33 years.

The Reverend James E. Morris, a graduate of Waynesburg College and McCormick Seminary became our Associate Pastor in September, 1963. He was formerly pastor of the Amboy Presbyterian Church and the Belle Isle Methodist Church

in Syracuse, New York. He and his wife, the former Dorothy Park had two children a daughter Cheri (then 3) and a son Keith (then 1). A new baby, Deborah, was born soon after their arrival in Basking Ridge.

In June, 1964, Robert G. Cotter left Basking Ridge to become pastor of the Branchville Presbyterian Church. Donald M. Davis and Frank H. Poole became student assistants in September.

This same year the narthex screen was added, and the renovation of the rear of the sanctuary was accomplished, entirely financed through special gifts and memorials of members and friends.

Early in 1965 it was discovered that there were structural weaknesses in the cupola area of the church building. After more than 125 years, the wooden beams supporting the entire weight of the cupola had weakened. The cupola had begun to sag and was in danger of collapsing. The dome covering had to be repaired and resheathed before the gold leaf could be applied. Today the cupola shines golden in the sunlight and is a symbol of hope for the future.

The year 1967 was a busy year for our church. The congregation marked the 250<sup>th</sup> year of its founding in 1717. During this year the church grew to a larger membership than ever before, but also became far more transient. The congregation responded to heavier demands to sustain the mission of the church locally and beyond the community by raising the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary fund, a thousand dollars for each year in addition to meeting our regular budget.

An important part of the observance of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary took place on Sunday, May 28, 1967 when four former Assistant or Associate pastors of the church, addressed the congregation: the Reverend George S. Knieriemen, the Reverend Donald R. Pepper, the Reverend Benjamin H. Adams Jr., and the Reverend Gerald S. Mills. All four pastors had served the church during the ministry of Dr. William H. Felmeth.

During 1967 the erection of the new Church House became a reality. The Church House was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harris Willits from the Willits Foundation. The new structure contains offices, work areas for volunteers, rest rooms, a library, parlor and kitchen. The usable basement areas house a clothing sorting and packing room and a youth activities room. The Church House is a great asset to both the church and also different groups in the community. It is used by Girl and Boy Scouts, Senior Society, the Historical Records Committee and tutoring classes for black children from Newark. The parlor serves as a gracious place for wedding receptions, a place to be with the family after funerals and a place for study groups and many community groups.

The Old Church House, formerly the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Shafer, was torn down because no one was interested in buying and moving it. It was a sad day for the older residents of Basking Ridge who knew it as one of the early houses of the village. The old well with its oaken bucket is still in front of the Church House on South Finley Avenue, and a beautiful carved mantel from the old house has been preserved in the Church House parlor.

During the summer of 1967 Dr. Felmeth exchanged pulpits with Dr. Jack Dalziel of St. Columbo's Church in Johannesburg, South Africa, under the United States-South Africa Leader Exchange Program. The congregation benefited from Dr. Dalziel's visit and also from Dr. Felmeth's experiences in South Africa by giving us a deeper knowledge of the racial tensions in that country.

In this year of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary the Session appointed a special committee of

members to review the mission of the church and formulate goals for the future. The committee determined the needs and capabilities of the present congregation and the major concerns of the community and the clergy in the area.

Within the congregation these goals were implemented in a number of ways. The new Service Desk developed into an effective means of matching all kinds of needs with time and talents. Volunteers performed services such as transportation for the elderly or others in emergency situations, or simply served as friends for the lonely. Young people were helped in finding jobs. It became truly a "Service" Desk and continued to serve for a period of 18 years until the deacons offered the same type of service through the Cluster Plan.

The "Oaken Bucket" in the lower level of the new Church House, with its nearby kitchen facilities, became a significant center for our young people, and for the youth of the community. The restlessness and the searchings of the youth during the Vietnam War years, accompanied by drug use and permissive sexual mores, reached the Somerset Hills, thus making this ministry very important. Many valuable and enriching things took place in the "Oaken Bucket." However, with a program of such magnitude supervisory needs increased and patterns shifted. Gradually having fulfilled its purpose, the "Oaken Bucket" faded out of existence.

The Church and Society Committee initiated a helpful conference on the needs of Senior Citizens. This concern eventually led to the building of Ridge Oak, a senior citizen community in Basking Ridge. The project was coordinated and supported by six area churches. Ridge Oak was dedicated on June 10, 1979. Later the community building which houses offices and the recreation room was named after Dr. Felmeth. Now, in 1989, Ridge Oak is a federally subsidized housing community for senior citizens of moderate income.

In the sixties, frustration and unrest over Civil Rights resulted in riots and fires in large cities such as Los Angeles and Detroit. In New Jersey there were uprisings in Camden, Trenton, Newark and Plainfield. Many people in our congregation volunteered to help out in urban projects in Newark, Plainfield and Elizabethport. We supported a housing project in Newark, collected food and furniture for people who were burned out or in need in Elizabethport and supplied volunteers to help with the ministries in both Plainfield and Elizabethport. We learned that we were no longer secluded in the Somerset Hills, but that the problems of society were all around us, affecting our families and our whole way of life.

In 1968 the Church and Society Committee of the church organized an Urban Task Force with the goal of correlating the needs of the inner city with the potential of the Somerset Hills. This goal was realized in several ways. At the Grant Avenue Community Center in Plainfield, volunteers helped in a one-to-one tutoring program. The Elizabethport Presbyterian Center became a real object of concern of our congregation. Members helped by making donations of household goods, clothing and holiday gifts to the Opportunity Shop, and by supplying Friendly Homes and Camp Scholarships.

The year 1968 was a year of change in other ways. Membership had increased from 970 members in 1951 to 1833 members in 1968, but the price of living in a mobile society was dramatized in 1969 when over 100 active members transferred to other churches. There was more money pledged for the work of the church for 1970, but because of the effects of inflation and in relation to the general income of the

congregation, giving was proportionately less.

Philip Stimmel, organist and choir director, left for public school and church positions in Barre, Vermont. In September 1969 F. Paul Dickey, a graduate of Stetson University and Union Theological Seminary School of Sacred Music, became Organist and Director of Music. Nancy Knobloch continued with her excellent direction of the youth choirs.

During the same year two of our members were taken under the care of the Presbytery of Elizabeth: Virginia Sullivan, who was pursuing studies for ordination as a Pastoral Counselor and Paula Haines, who was studying to become a Certified Church Worker. On March 8, 1987 Paula Haines was ordained by the Presbytery of Elizabeth on behalf of the Presbytery of Newark in the Springfield Presbyterian Church. Virginia Sullivan was ordained to the ministry in February 1974. Our church has had many members who have entered some type of ministry. In 1967 Andrew C. Chalmers was ordained to the Gospel ministry and Patricia S. Massey was certified as a church educator.

A number of changes occurred in 1970. F. Paul Dickey was drafted into the Army in April. In June he was followed by Erick Brunner, a graduate of Westminster Choir College, who became our Organist and Director of Music.

The Women's Guild deserves much commendation for its work and service to the church. Monthly luncheon meetings provided much needed fellowship among the women in a large church where it might otherwise have been difficult to become acquainted. The women prepared the annual congregational dinner and dinner for Presbytery and Presbyterian when they met at our church. Women sorted and packed clothing in the "cage" in the basement of the Church House, which served as the depot for the Church World Service clothing collection for the Somerset Hills area. The Guild also earned money for church projects by catering wedding receptions.

In 1970 the Mission Council decided that instead of sending large amounts of money to General Assembly "general funds", it would take responsibility for a significant portion of the total cost for a few "Partners in Mission." Thus \$5,000.00 was sent to Forrest Eggleston in India and Stanton Wilson in Korea. We also continued our support of Joseph Tjega in the Cameroon, Mr. and Mrs. Loren Stenberg in Venezuela and the Dominican Evangelical Church in the Dominican Republic. On the home front we sent \$5,000.00 to Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, North Carolina, and continued our support of Roger Smith in Wells, Arizona.

There was a strong music program at this time with six choral choirs and two bell choirs. Although the younger boys and girls sang in the church services only occasionally, they received valuable training, and their music was a joy to the congregation. The bell choirs were also a great addition to some services and special occasions.

In October 1971 the Reverend Theodore Blunk and his wife, Mary Ann, and family left Basking Ridge to move to nearby Martinsville, N.J., where Ted took up his ministerial duties at the newly organized Christ Presbyterian Church. During Ted's nine years at Basking Ridge he had worked very hard "to find and employ new ways for the church to enrich the home as a center of love – where love is received and given." He was very active in starting and leading many groups for youth, such as the Oaken Bucket, Senior High Basketball League and the Fellowship for 9<sup>th</sup> graders. In the community he helped to open the Fellowship of Churches to all denominations. He was active in the

Presbytery of Elizabeth and served as Moderator.

Our members pledged the largest amount ever for support of the work of the church in 1972, in spite of a poor economic situation and only a slight increase in membership.

At this time there were several changes in our "Partners in Mission." Loren Stenberg withdrew to teach full time in Venezuela. The Reverend Wilfred G. Molyneaux, Jr. and his wife, Cara, serving in the Mission at the Eastward in Maine, became a welcome addition to our church family. Mr. Molyneaux replaced Dean Marshall L. Scott, who became president of McCormick Seminary. Later, the Reverend Samuel Grano de Oro, Barahona, Dominican Republic, was added to our mission team.

We were saddened to hear that Dr. J. Merion Kadyk, the fourteenth pastor of this church from 1944-1951, died on November 2, 1971 in Kansas, where he had recently retired. Our congregation owes him a debt of gratitude for the revitalization of the church under his strong leadership in a time of transition.

About this time Lonnie H. Lee arrived to join the church staff as student pastor. Highlights of his stay here were the organization of a coffee house in the Oaken Bucket, a mission work camp to North Turner, Maine, and weekly trips with high school students to help with flood relief in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. Lonnie graduated from Princeton Seminary in 1973 and resigned to accept a call from another church. He was replaced by Richard Weis, a Middler at Princeton Seminary, whose primary responsibility was youth work.

Because of a vacancy on the church staff, a call as Assistant Pastor was extended to the Reverend William L. Davis of the Hanover Street Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Delaware. He and his wife, Doris, moved into the manse in East Allen Street. The service of installation was held on September 24, 1972. Other notable events for this year were the renovation of the sanctuary and the finishing of the rooms in the basement of the Church House.

In February 1974 Dr. Felmeth, after 23 years of a rich and fruitful ministry left Basking Ridge to become Vice President in charge of Development at Princeton Seminary. He and his family were much loved in the church and in the community, and it was with deep regret that Session accepted his resignation. At the worship on Sunday, October 23, 1983, the congregation expressed its appreciation to Dr. William H. Felmeth for his years of vital service to our church and welcomed him as Pastor Emeritus, the first in the history of our church.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN INTERIM YEAR - 1974

After Dr. Felmeth resigned, the Presbytery of Elizabeth asked the Rev. James E. Morris, our associate pastor, to be moderator of the Session and the congregation. How fortunate we were! In his own quiet, unassuming and efficient manner, Mr. Morris took over the leadership of our church and with the help of assistant pastor William Davis and our student pastors successfully guided our congregation through this difficult transition period.

When Richard D. Weis, our student assistant, completed his studies at Princeton and accepted a call to be associate pastor to three joint congregations in Paterson, N.J., Douglas Baker was engaged to take his place. In September Bill Davis resigned when he was called to the First Presbyterian Church in Fairmount, N.J. There were changes in the music department too. Nancy Knobloch, assistant director of music, assumed full responsibility for the church music program for the time between Erick Brunner's resignation at the end of 1973 and F. Paul Dickey's appointment in June of 1974.

The Education Council decided to invite the children from first to sixth grades to participate in the worship service in the sanctuary before going to regular church school. Now in 1989, children still enjoy coming to hear the special sermon given for them.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PRESENT MINISTRY AND OUR CHURCH TODAY THE REVEREND J. CALVIN K. JACKSON, 1975-

Late in 1974 the congregation extended a call to Dr. Jackson and on February 9, 1975 he was installed as our church's sixteenth pastor. Dr. Jackson, born in Philadelphia, earned a B.A. degree in history from the University of Pennsylvania in 1950. After graduating from Princeton Seminary in 1953 with a B.D. degree, "Cal" attended the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, where he was awarded his Ph.D. in 1955.

From Edinburgh, Dr. Jackson traveled throughout the Mid-East, spending many thoughtful days studying biblical history in Jerusalem. Shortly after returning to the United States, he followed his uncle as pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, Md. It was during this eleven year pastorate that Cal met Lynne Vinczellar, who was continuing her education at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. They were married on June 4, 1960. In 1967, Dr. Jackson accepted a call to the Mount Washington Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio and was pastor of that church when he received the call from Basking Ridge. Shortly thereafter, the Jackson family moved into the Maple Avenue manse. At that time Stephanie Lynne was thirteen, Jeffrey Patrick eleven and Timothy Sean eight years old.

The much publicized problems associated with the changes in lifestyle in the 1960's continued to challenge our congregation. Long-time members, many of whom were active in the leadership of our church, left when they were transferred or decided to retire to other parts of the country. As corporate headquarters were built nearby, some

new families who joined our church moved away when they were relocated. Under Dr. Jackson's leadership, the congregation continued to search for ways to make our church more personal and to better serve our mobile congregation.

The Cluster Plan initiated to meet these needs called for a total reorganization of the Board of Deacons. The congregation was divided into twenty-one clusters, each composed of the members who live in a specific geographical area, with a deacon in charge of each cluster. Working with a small group of families enabled each deacon to learn of the special needs of the individuals in the group and to administer to those needs. Personal interaction between the deacon and the members of the cluster has resulted in better communication between the staff, session and congregation about what is important to the church and to the membership. Clusters continue to play an important role in the life of our church; much of the success of the cluster plan can be attributed to our dedicated, caring deacons and to the council and supportive guidance of Dr. Morris.

Since the mid-seventies our church membership has experienced numerous fluctuations. While in recent years we have seen the exodus of some who have been members for many years, we are blessed with the entry of vigorous new members, including young families. At the end of 1988 there were 1527 active members, a slight increase over last year.

How else does our church reach out to each member? Oak Leaves is sent to every church family and to prospective members 21 times a year. Issues contain messages from our pastors, brief introductions of new members, news of marriages, births and baptisms, cluster activities and announcement of upcoming events. A review of the many past issues (now in the 44<sup>th</sup> year of publication) reads like a diary of our church family. No write up about Oak Leaves would be complete without mentioning "Charlie Church Mouse", our lovable cartoon character. Since 1952 he's been found in almost every issue and couldn't or wouldn't be left out of our history!

The Fall Festival was designed to help members and prospective members learn more about our church. Each year every organization and council prepare a booth to acquaint the rest of the congregation with what they do and what they wish to accomplish.

A group of dedicated couples serves as shepherds to greet prospective members and acquaint them with various opportunities for service in our church.

Our congregation also reached out to make it easier for all to "come in" to worship. A ramp built to allow easier access to our sanctuary was dedicated on May 15, 1988. Construction of this much needed addition necessitated renovating or restoring parts of the front of the church, the steps, sidewalk and curbing. The completion of the ramp and repairs was the result of work, thought and devotion of many people: the committee who spent many hours studying and making plans and those who contributed so generously to the support of this project.

Members and prospective members are encouraged to participate in the many activities offered by Presbyterian Women, formerly the Women's Guild, Men's Noonday Fellowship, the Senior Society and the Acorn Club. This club, a successor to the Couples' Club has worked with the Women's Guild to produce Acorn Follies. Three different musical revues have been given providing fun and fellowship for all who acted or attended. Meeting in small groups encourages social interaction and those who participate often find that although our church is rather large, it does house a family that cares. Furthermore, most agree – the church family that plays together stays together.

In the mid-seventies a task force appointed by Session found the greatest need was in the field of Christian education. A third minister was called to work with the Education Council and oversee the church school program. This proved to be a challenging assignment. There were fewer children of school age, our membership was declining and fewer families were attending church – true in our church as well as in Presbyterian churches nationwide. Small class size sometimes necessitated combining more than one grade level. At times there was a shortage of adult teachers; fortunately high school students were willing and able to serve as cadet teachers. Under the able direction of our Minister of Education, innovative changes were made that allowed our church to continue to offer excellent Christian education programs to nurture our children.

Although many people have contributed to the success of our church school program, our adult and cadet teachers merit special gratitude because it was their faith, creativity and love that transformed the printed curriculum into a vital meaningful learning experience. We have been blessed with talented church school superintendents whose tireless effort and enthusiasm enabled the Sunday morning education program to function with remarkable organization and grace.

When a need was felt for more adult education, the Education Committee decided to hold a forum between the nine o'clock and eleven o'clock services. Exceptional educational programs on topics of current interest were presented by our own ministers, members of our congregation and other qualified, gifted speakers. These exciting, thought provoking presentations have drawn high attendance and lively participation. Sunday morning adult study groups were also held between services and provided an outstanding opportunity for mutual Christian study, growth and fellowship for those who participated. Beginning in late 1988 Kerygma classes, offering a thematic study of the Bible, were started between services and on Wednesday evenings. They continue to meet and fulfill a great need.

In 1982 the Tree House Child Caring Center was established by the authority of Session through the Christian Education Council. It offers the children of working parents quality day and after school care and has filled a real need in our community.

All of the programs mentioned above, church schools, adult education and day-care are under the aegis of the Education Council and of our staff in charge of education. These enthusiastic, energetic pastors have worked with the Junior and Senior High Fellowships and the Young Adult Fellowship. They have served as role models for our youth. Every summer one of the Associate Pastors has taken a group of senior high school students to Maine where they have worked to help those in need. As an example, one year the students renovated the fire-damaged home of a disabled veteran who was confined to a wheelchair. Maine Work Camp is considered to be one of the most vital, dynamic missions of our church.

Brief biographical sketches of these dedicated pastors follow. Winsome Munro served as Assistant Minister of Education from November 1975 until September of 1976. Judy Chendo began her work as Assistant Pastor in 1977 and resigned in 1980 when her family moved to California. Todd Jones, who had served as a seminarian in 1978 and 1979 returned after a year's study at Edinburgh University, Scotland, and began working with our young people during the summer months; in July the Session extended a call to Todd to serve as Assistant Pastor with chief responsibility in Christian education. His ordination by Elizabeth Presbytery was held in our church on October 26, 1980. Later he



was made an Associate Pastor. In 1984 Todd accepted a call from the Westminster Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina. A farewell reception honored Todd for his outstanding service to our church during his six years here. Early in 1985 the Rev. Kevin Scott Keaton succeeded Todd. Using his keen organizational and administrative skills and his extensive knowledge of Christian educational materials, Kevin contributed much to the life of our church. In January of 1987, he accepted a call from the Juniata United Presbyterian Church in Altoona, Pennsylvania. During the summer of 1987, the Session appointed Helen Beglin to serve as Consultant in Christian Education. Her expertise and experience in curriculum planing and her sensitivity in personal relations have made her a valued member of our staff. During 1988-1989 she served as Moderator of the Presbytery of Elizabeth.

In the summer of 1987 the Session also appointed Simon M. Steer, who had been a student assistant form 1985 to 1986, to become Director of Youth Ministry. There was great rejoicing when Simon was ordained to the ministry and installed as our Associate Pastor on Ash Wednesday, February 1989, in our sanctuary. He has established great rapport with our members, especially with our youth and young adults. Enthusiastic and understanding, Simon truly imparts the spirit of Christian witness to all. Under his able care, young adults are finding fun, friendship, and opportunities for service to each other and to the community. Singlemindedness is flourishing!

Our seminarians have also been teachers and friends to our youth. In the seventies, our church entered the Teaching Church Program of Princeton Theological Seminary. This meant that the congregation took responsibility for at least two students each year in a program of balanced field education. Not only did this arrangement prove to be of great benefit to the seminarians, it also proved stimulating and enriching for our congregation. Each year one seminarian has been responsible for our Junior Highs while the other has worked with the Senior Highs.

The seminarians who have worked so effectively with our youth are Douglas Baker (1974-1976), Mark Pickett and Margo Trusty (1976-1977), Todd Jones (1977-1978 and the summer of 1980), Sharon Esposito (1977-1978), Mary Doyle Morgan and Marnie Nimick (1979-1980), David Gilbert and Kirk W. Morledge (1980-1981), Renee Gumb and Stephen D. McConnell (1981-1982), Jean M. Shaw and Elsie Armstrong (1982-1983), John McCall and Marta Ash (1983-1984), Emily Duncan and Mary Hammond (1984-1985), Simon Steer and Andrew Rosencrans (1985-1986), Michelle Bartel and Audrey Lee (1986-1987), Ed Dawkins and Katheryn Barlow (1987-1988), Linda Lane and Douglas Hoffman (1988-1989).

Since 1984 monthly services of healing and thanksgiving have been held in our chapel on Sunday evenings. Special worship services are held on Easter and Christmas – noon time chapel services during Lent and three candlelight services on Christmas Eve.

Our church has had “Church Renewal” weekends. Dynamic and challenging guest speakers have lectured and led discussion groups on a thought provoking subject such as “What does it Mean to be Christian in Today’s World?” Members participating in these weekend sessions found that they provided a deepening and bonding experience, which helped them in their quest for personal and congregational renewal.

Our church has continued to be blessed with a fine music program under the gifted direction of F. Paul Dickey and of Nancy Knobloch, a music teacher in the Basking Ridge school system, who has been assisting in the music department of our church for the last thirty years. The six singing Choirs and the four bell choirs have

formed an integral part of our worship life and have provided much inspiration. For special occasions such as Easter and Christmas, the Oratorio Choir under the superb guidance of F. Paul Dickey has performed bringing worshipful meaning to the seasons.

We have celebrated many ordinations during Dr. Jackson's ministry. Those who have been ordained to the ministry by the Presbytery of Elizabeth are: Bob LaForce (August 28, 1977), Alison Halsey (October 9, 1977), Judy Chendo (October 2, 1977), Bill Stone, Jr. (June 4, 1978), Todd Jones (October 26, 1980), Elizabeth Sidar Hall (February 10, 1985), and Simon Steer (February 9, 1989). Susan Kramer-Mills, a daughter of our church, served as a Volunteer in Mission in West Berlin, Germany and will complete her theological studies next year. Dennis Jones, another member of our church, is a student at Princeton Seminary and looks forward to graduation next year.

Our church continues to be very generous in its support of missions. In 1983 the Session adopted a plan to increase the percentage of giving so that by 1989 one dollar out of three received in undesignated offerings would go directly toward mission causes. Each year the designated funds for missions were increased; the 1988 budget designated 32% of our total giving for missions. In 1989 our members pledged \$601,196, the largest amount ever, for the support of our church and its mission commitments. The total pledged fully supports the plans and related budget adopted at the January congregational meeting.

Our congregation supports a wide variety of teaching and healing, endeavors throughout the world. Over the years a substantial part of the mission budget was designated to outposts in India, Korea, Africa, Dominican Republic, Ireland, Arizona, Maine, Alaska and Georgia. In 1987 the Forrest Egglestons retired from their medical missionary work in India, a post they held for many years. Doug Baker, who was our seminarian from 1974-1976, is now working in Corrymeela, a center for reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

A long list of ministries, such as the Morristown Memorial Hospital Chaplaincy, Somerset County Jail Ministry, CROP, the Central American Refugee Center and the Ministry to the Elderly have been supported each year. Although some of these were funded year after years, other projects were dropped when a more pressing need was felt.

SCEEP stands for the Suburban, Cultural, Educational, Enrichment Program. Nineteen SCEEP centers were successfully operating in 1976 when our church decided to take part in this mission program. Each year twenty recommended students from the Newark school system are transported by van and spend their Monday after school hours at our church. Each child enjoys the attention and loving concern of his or her very own tutor as they work on homework or other materials designed to improve basic skills. Tutoring is followed by creative, recreational and cultural activities.

In 1976 our church decided to work with the Liberty Corner and the Bernardsville Presbyterian Churches to co-sponsor a group of Vietnamese refugees. Congregational support encouraged their growth toward independence through language classes, job training and help with daily living skills. In a short time all were able to find employment and live independently.

In 1981 our church sponsored a Cambodian family. When they became self-sufficient, they moved to Providence, R.I. to be with other Cambodian refugees.

An opportunity for a different kind of mission outreach occurred unexpectedly when the Jacksons moved from the Maple Avenue manse. For many years, dating back

to the 1960s, the Session had discussed the question of providing the pastors with a housing allowance to enable them to own their own home in lieu of church-owned manses. Early in 1980 the Session offered this option to our pastors. Dr. Morris opted to remain in the Homestead Village manse while Dr. Jackson bought his own home in Millington. The Session appointed a special committee to decide what to do with the vacant manse. After considering many options, they recommended that the manse be used by the Somerset County Women's Resource Center as a shelter for victims of domestic violence.

The Mission Council has been responsible for bringing local, national and world social issues to the attention of the congregation. The nuclear arms race, apartheid, homosexuality, human development, hunger, church lifestyle, and criminal justice are among the topics that have been discussed and acted on by our congregation. The Council and its committees have spent considerable time trying to understand the complex issues in Central America and in determining how our church should respond to this crisis. For the last six years the Peace Committee has supported the Amnesty International program. On the last Sunday of each month, committee members write letters to and on behalf of victims of human rights' abuses, many of whom have been imprisoned or denied their political liberties by dictatorial governments. The members of the Environmental Ethics Committee are leading us to a new understanding regarding our Christian stewardship responsibilities for our environment. Their major concern continues to be water resources and exploration of related solid waste disposal problems.

Many other significant events that have taken place since 1975 should be included in this history. One such occurrence was the registration of our church in the National Register of Historic Places. This citation protects our sanctuary and its properties from encroachment or destruction by any federally initiated or funded project without approval of the Secretary of the Interior. The church was also registered by the Presbyterian Historical Society with the designation "American Presbyterian and Reformed Historical Site No. 43."

On May 2, 1976 a new section of our cemetery named the Memorial Garden was dedicated. The lovely flowering shrubs planted there serve as a living memorial to those who have been interred.

The United Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and the Presbyterian Church U.S., separated at the time of the Civil War, were reunited in June of 1983. As a result of the reunion of the two denominations, headquarters of the new church moved to Louisville, Kentucky.

Our beloved oak tree is still growing. In 1958 the circumference was 18 feet. When it was measured in February 1989, its circumference had increased to 19 1/2 feet!

As we look back over Dr. Jackson's years with us, we realize how very fortunate and blessed we have been with his ministry. He has made the life of the church very important to all of us. The tone of the Sunday morning services makes the congregation a real community participating in worship and praising God together. The subject of the sermon is coordinated with the music, uplifting the spirit.

Dr. Jackson is a dynamic speaker. His eloquent, well-worded, creative sermons are delivered with authority. In these sermons he relates the essence of our faith to the needs of our day and our own situation. Dr. Jackson reaches out to the whole congregation and is sensitive to the needs of both young and old, active and inactive, conservative and progressive. When church boards and committees meet and have to

make decisions, differences of opinion do occur. Dr. Jackson seems to know intuitively how to help those who disagree, compromise and reach a decision that is acceptable to both sides.

His skills were also appreciated when he chaired the Presbytery's Interpretation and Stewardship Committee, the Care of Clergy Committee, and was a member of the Committee on Preparation for the Ministry. He serves on the General Assembly's unit on Stewardship and Communication, on its Task Force on the Placement System and on its Study on Per Capita Giving. He has been a Trustee on the Board of Bloomfield College and a Class Steward at Princeton Seminary.

A sparkle of humor, an appropriate well placed joke, enlivens many a sermon or meeting. When the Session was wrestling with the nature and direction of our church, both locally and nationally, Dr. Jackson commented that when Adam left the garden he was reported (according to extra-Biblical sources) to have said to Eve, "Dear, we are living in an age of transition."

Dr. Morris has now ministered to our congregation for over twenty-five years. He has contributed much to the life and work of the church, the community and to the agencies of the church. He served as a Commissioner to General Assembly on three different occasions. While here, he continued his studies at Princeton Seminary, earning a Master of Arts degree on 1966. Over the years the congregation has expressed its appreciation to Dr. Morris for his faithful and sensitive leadership as Associate Pastor. The congregation honored him in May 1982 when he received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Drew University and again in 1982 when he was elected Moderator of the Presbytery of Elizabeth. In October 1988 Jim and Dottie were a given special gift by the congregation on his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Associate Pastor. Dr. Morris has extended his Christian faith to the public sphere of life: to justice, to the stewardship of the environment, mission development and peacemaking. In relation to the latter he has made trips to Nicaragua and the Soviet Union. Another strength Dr. Morris has exhibited is his special ability to teach and explain Biblical truth in a lucid and understandable way. In his Bible studies, with quiet meditation, he encourages his students to find out how they feel about themselves as individuals in relation to God and others. Many of our senior members, to whom Dr. Morris has ministered through the years, remember his warmth, concern and friendliness. He is always there for consultation on life's problems or just to talk.

As one looks back over the history of the church, one is impressed with the faithfulness, spirituality, self-sacrifice, generosity, outreach and leadership of the people through good times and bad and always looking to the future church, supported always by the dedicated leadership of the clergy. Gratitude to the past is best expressed by fidelity to the future.

We are a congregation of enormous potential. To realize that potential is a magnificent challenge. So we face tomorrow in a spirit of trust, devotion and expectancy, giving thanks to God for the privilege of being heirs of grace and servants of Jesus Christ. Let us welcome tomorrow!