

**My
father's house**
A history of Autumn Ridge Church
Rochester, Minnesota
(1857 to 2009)

By Daniel Carlson

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Purpose

To celebrate God's faithfulness and to honor those who've gone before us in ministry. Proceeds from this book will support ongoing programs of Autumn Ridge Church.

Acknowledgements

Rev. Gary Seaquist is a multi-talented member of our Autumn Ridge Church pastoral staff. Not only is he Pastor of Enrichment and Care, he also is an accomplished artist whose pen and ink drawings grace homes and commercial establishments throughout our city. His drawings of our former church structures add a great deal to the prose in Chapter 1. Thanks, Gary, for kindly permitting this use of your art on the cover and in the text of this book.

Photos of John V. Daniels and the 1883 tornado are courtesy of the Olmsted County Historical Society. Photo of Kerry E. Conley is courtesy of Minnesota Reflections, an online project of the Minnesota Digital Library Coalition. The book was printed by Johnson Printing Company, Rochester, MN.

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*Dedicated to Micah Garmers,
a Sunday School student of mine.*

*Micah made me laugh
and made me cry.*



*Micah Garmers
August 1982 — September 1996*

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Foreword

It was dad's idea. I was enrolled in a master's degree program at Winona State University. A thesis was required. What to write about. My father, Ken, had a suggestion. "Why not focus on the history of First Baptist Church?"

I'd been brought up in First Baptist, knew something of its history, knew where to go for resources and I agreed with dad that such a history could be a useful contribution to the life of the congregation. The task was rigorous, time consuming and ultimately successful, clearing the way for my career in the teaching profession.

When asked to update our history recently, my first response was "no thanks." But laptops have replaced manual typewriters and a few new stories deserve telling.

Few churches have Autumn Ridge's history. It has been hit by a tornado, consumed by fire and moved more often than a career IBMer. It has evolved from a pioneer fellowship to a dynamic modern church. Autumn Ridge has more people on its staff than it had charter members; greater Sunday attendance than Rochester's frontier population.

So why care about the past when we can't change it anyway? Well, history is important to God. The Bible is, in part, a book of history. And a clear understanding of our past can help us plan our future as a congregation.

Our heritage is inspiring, amusing, entertaining, challenging, and yes, sometimes disappointing, in which case we can learn from our mistakes. Say what you will, this is one grand story.

I have worked in children's ministries for 25 years because of a fun-loving, happy-go-lucky former student of mine named Micah Garmers. This book is dedicated to him. Micah died young as a middle schooler. Micah taught me the importance of mentoring children. I hope parents will pass these stories along to their kids. Better yet, I hope our children will read this book for themselves. Perhaps one of these youngsters will be Autumn Ridge's next historian.

Dan Carlson

Historian, Autumn Ridge Church

Rochester, MN



Dan Carlson

Chapter 1

Our buildings

The Christian church is a body of believers. In today's world believers generally gather in a building. The building is not only a house of worship. The structure and grounds express how seriously members tend to business.

A well-maintained facility reflects a caring, faithful and enthusiastic congregation. An unsafe, out-of-date facility discourages growth. The elderly or those with mobility issues rule out inaccessible churches. Scriptures ask “. . . how can they hear without a preacher?” But without good amplification, heating and cooling they will not hear or pay attention.

On June 17, 1857, four men met in a log schoolhouse to organize a Baptist church. Included were: John Daniels, a real estate broker and banker; Jessie Garr, a merchant; C.F. Anderson, a book and stationary store owner and school operator; Tyler Carpenter, a farmer and A.M. Carpenter, a carpenter. The organization was perfected on August 22 that year.

Thirteen persons became charter members of First Baptist Church (FBC) including: Mr. and Mrs. Addison Mowe, John Daniels, Mr. and Mrs. C.F. Anderson, Tyler Carpenter, Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Carpenter, Mr. and Mrs. John Harmon, Mr. and Mrs. J.P. Gurr, and Harriet Carpenter. Others who joined shortly thereafter were: Pastor and Mrs. Erastus Westcott, William Chandler, Catherine Carpenter, Miss Francis Baker, William Kent, Franklin Reed, Nancy Baker, Betsy LeSeur and Maria Walker. Most of Rochester's early citizens migrated to Rochester from the East and New England. Their

ancestral origins were chiefly British and Northern European. FBC members had ethnic backgrounds typical of Rochester in 1857. English was always the church's spoken language. With the exception of the Andersons, who were Scandinavian immigrants, few had direct European ties or ties to the indigenous Winnebago Indians who roamed the Minnesota prairies.

Although meetings began in October, 1857, there was no structure, so members gathered in Morton Hall, an unpretentious building that, on weekdays, doubled as a courthouse and butcher shop. It was adequate for the short term, but the fledgling congregation clearly needed a building of its own in which to meet. So Tyler Carpenter and Amzi Stedman formed a site committee.

God blessed their efforts and a few months later, on April 24, 1858, the congregation voted to accept land donated by Addison Mowe on which the first AFC structure would be built. The property was located just off Broadway, bordering the Zumbro River. Fontaine Towers Senior Living Center now stands on this site.

Construction soon was underway on a spacious 30- by 50-foot structure. Estimated cost, \$1,500; a sizable sum of money for the 38-member congregation to raise. Members contributed \$350. The American Baptist Home Mission Society, in New York City, chipped in \$300 and the remaining \$850 was financed. To pay off the loan, an aggressive fund raising initiative was launched. Each member agreed to contribute a nickel a week toward debt retirement.

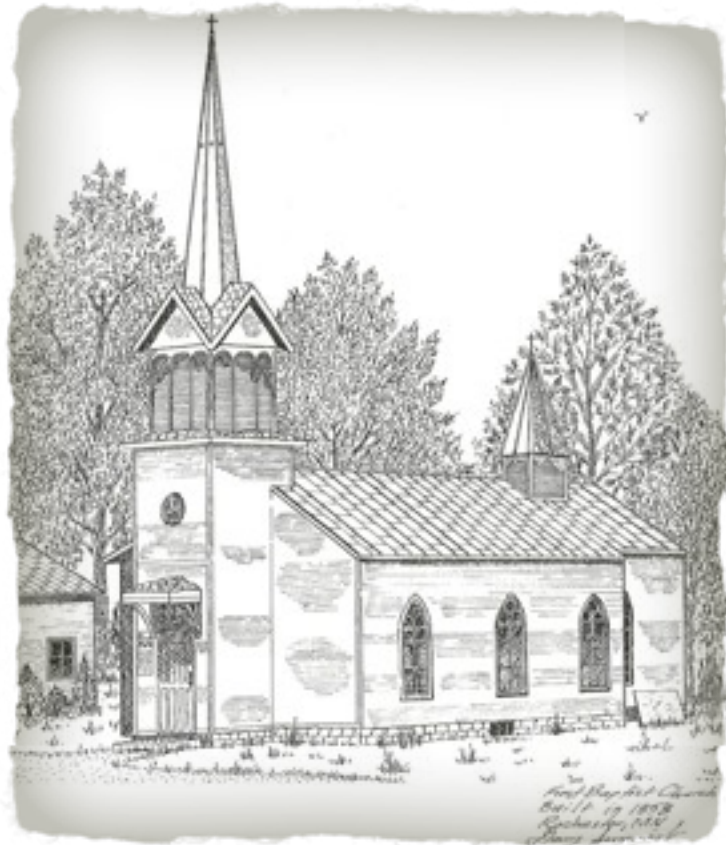
Upon completion of the structure, Leonard's Olmsted County history called the yellow frame building "decidedly unattractive." The *Rochester Post* was more charitable, calling the building a "neat little wood structure." The first service was held October 13, 1858.

The first baptism was February 7, 1858. The church lacked an indoor baptistry, so baptisms were held in the nearby Zumbro River.

Our congregational ancestors were hearty people. Baptisms generally were performed in winter. Sometimes it was necessary to break the ice to immerse candidates. Martha

(C.F.) Anderson wrote that this chilling experience “showed virtue of the martyr to take a plunge in (the river’s) icy depths. A hole would be cut in the ice with great solemnity and the deacons would take the last particle of ice from the cold black surface of the waters.”

Twenty-six people were received into membership by immersion in the winter of 1861. In 1866, the church welcomed 52 more members, 35 by baptism. Candidates were dunked vertically so the minister could stay dry.



***BUILDING ONE** was located just off Broadway bordering the Zumbro River on the present site of Fontaine Towers Senior Living Center.*

No records survive telling when winter baptisms stopped. But lake baptisms resumed in the 1990's and are held twice annually at a local lake and at Family Camp . . . in summer months.

By 1865 Rochester's census was 2,663. Minnesota's population was 248,847. Dr. William Worrall Mayo made Rochester his home in 1863. His sons, William J. and Charles H. Mayo, gained worldwide acclaim as surgeons. Their medical clinic's growth greatly influenced the town's development and, no doubt, contributed to the growth at FBC. In 1870, the church had 161 members.

A single young man named D. N. Mason was the church's first pastor. Soon there was a wedding, and off the couple went on their honeymoon. Which set some to thinking a surprise might be in order upon their return.

The interior of the little wooden chapel in which the congregation met had never been finished. Several members of the congregation decided something needed to be done about that. So while the pastor and his new spouse were away, members bought and installed carpeting in the aisles. They painted and papered the walls. They bought a sofa and built a desk. Returning to Rochester, Pastor Mason had not only a new bride but an attractively appointed chapel in which to conduct services. John Daniels, founder and president of Union State Bank (Wells Fargo's forerunner) financed the project. The Ladies' Society arranged entertainment fundraisers to defray expenses.

On February 22, 1869, a narrow congregational majority voted to build a new church structure. Supporters cited the impressive growth that had occurred, resulting in overcrowded conditions which discouraged future growth and vitality. Opponents were concerned

about parsonage debt. To get the project off the ground, members pledged \$3,500. The American Baptist Home Mission Society of New York City came through with a \$2,000 loan, and work began.

The new building was designed to accommodate 500 worshippers. Estimated cost: \$10,000 to \$12,000. It was 52- by 78-feet in size, with 26-foot-high side walls, a big step up from the 30- by 50-foot dimensions of the congregation's first structure. The new church also featured an attractive 107-foot spire which announced to town citizens the unique nature of the building. This is God's house.

The Tudor-gothic architecture was designed and site managed by Oscar Cobb of Rochester. Thomas "T.W." Stebbins, a member of the church, was general contractor. The entire Stebbins family was



***BUILDING TWO** was situated on the site now occupied by Mayo Clinic's Gonda Building.*

active in the church. T.W. was a deacon and trustee, simultaneously, while Mrs. Stebbins served as assistant Sunday School superintendent.

The brick church had a stone basement. There were caps, sills, arches of cut stone and stained glass windows. In contrast to its view of the earlier structure, the *Rochester Post* was favorably impressed by the church's appearance, calling the building "the handsomest church edifice yet finished in the city. The structure . . . must exceed in comfort and beauty the highest expectation of its organization." The *Post* went on to report the building's cost at \$17,000.

Mayo Clinic's Gonda Building now occupies the site of First Baptist Church's second structure. Across the street and to the south was Rochester's Central School, where Will and Charlie Mayo attended (now the location of the Mayo Building). The Mayo home, Charlie's birthplace, was just to the southwest (where the Sieben's Building stands).

The building was dedicated December 29, 1870. D.D. Reed of Winona, a future pastor, was present at the ceremony. In 1886, during his pastorate, the building's debt was retired.

On August 21, 1883 a tornado claimed 26 lives, mostly from Rochester's north side. Another 34 people were hospitalized in whatever then served as a hospital. FBC's chimney was blown through the roof and the steeple was damaged. The *Rochester Post* listed this loss at \$850, about the size of the first church's mortgage.

The Methodist Church took a direct hit. Its claim was \$10,000. The Congregational and German Lutheran churches also lost spires. A quickly formed Relief Committee, which included Pastor D.D.

Reed, assisted 233 families and helped rebuild homes lost in the storm.

The next Sunday FBC and the Congregationalists had a joint memorial service for prominent Rochester miller and tornado casualty, John Cole. The twister's swirl caught him walking home from his mill. He was dead in the street at the age of seventy-one.

Cole opened Rochester's second flour mill in 1857 on the mill pond in Lower Town where the Rochester Public Utilities power plant now stands. This was Rochester's outskirts then.

The mill had two water wheels and the latest technology for separating bran from chaff. He installed a steam engine to help power the mill and patented his own brand of flour. His son later added the original Olds & Fishback Mill, or "Old Stone Mill," in Upper Town along the Zumbro River, below the present Government Center. By 1905 the Cole Mills, under the son's ownership, was producing 50,000 barrels of flour a year.

Cole, the son of a linseed oil manufacturer, came from Boston. He was immersed at First Baptist in East Boston as a young man, became a bookkeeper for a wholesale grocer and married the boss's eldest daughter, Annie. The couple honeymooned in Minnesota in 1854, accompanied by the bride's father. When they got to Saint Paul the father died of cholera. A few years later Cole was in business in Rochester. Their primary residence was Winona; their second home was Rochester. The family had a FBC pew where he sat for his last service. The pew was heavily draped in black at his memorial service. He was close to FBC's Rev. Reed, as Reed came from Winona.

Cole was eulogized in the *Rochester Post*: “Mr. Cole’s long residence and business operations in Rochester made him a prominent man among us. But he will be remembered, not so much for his business career, which was successful in the best and highest sense, as for his genuine, unobtrusive piety and benevolence which, although working quietly like the sunshine, carried comfort to many homes and hope to many hearts.”



Aftermath of the storm—The remains of homes, public buildings, barns and business’ were scattered following the devastating “cyclone” that demolished Rochester in 1883.

Other FBC families were affected as well. The E.F. Whitings had a wing torn from their dwelling. The Welch farm in Haverhill was destroyed. Bert Crowell’s photography studio skylight, roof, and cornice were damaged. Insurance was often insufficient as policies did not cover acts of God. Federal Disaster Relief was a wild dream. People were expected then to clean up their own messes.

The tornado had a silver lining as Saint Marys Hospital emerged thanks to the alert and sacrificial Franciscan sisters. The nuns were efficient administrators, a spiritual gift then commonly thought unique to men. Will and Charlie Mayo honed their surgical skills in the new hospital, and surgeons

from all over the world made their way to Saint Marys Hospital to observe their techniques. Their fame spread and over time the Mayo's surgical clinic became Mayo Clinic, which continues to attract patients worldwide.

Agriculture also had ups and downs. In 1878 a grasshopper infestation devastated Minnesota's wheat crop. By the 1890s soil nutrients were depleted due to lack of crop rotation. Farmers were forced to change their methods.

Main Street business was in decline. The national economic "Panic of 1893" rippled through local banks. Progress moved one step forward, two steps backward. In 1870, when FBC's second structure was dedicated, membership was 161; by the turn of the century it was 167. Neither Rochester nor the church was growing.

FBC continued to improve its building. In 1896, a Mrs. Davis (nothing else is known about her) left in her will \$100 to install electric lights. In 1900 a raised hardwood floor and memorial stained glass windows were installed. By 1912, the membership had climbed to 372. That year the church dedicated a new pipe organ, one of Rochester's finest. At \$3,000, the cost was double that of the church's first structure. Two-weeks after the organ's installation the building and organ were destroyed by a fire.

George H. Gamble was pastor of FBC. Pastor Gamble's two sons, Ross and Paul, stoked the furnace early one Saturday morning. Mrs. Gamble checked it at 11:30. The boys rechecked the furnace at 1 p.m.

At 2 o'clock Mrs. Bert Crowell, who was practicing on the new pipe organ, noticed smoke and a small flame in the room between the

furnace and classrooms. She sounded the alarm immediately and Rochester's Volunteer Fire Department responded quickly, but the fire raged out-of-control.

The fire's origin was never determined. Faulty wiring or furnace defects were presumed causes. Bert Crowell, a portrait photographer, and husband of the organist, photographed the loss and later sold the images for a church fundraiser.

On the Sunday after the fire the congregation met for morning worship services at Rochester's YMCA on First Avenue and Second Street Southwest. The evening service was

held at Grace Universalist Church. The YMCA became the temporary worship home of FBC. Mid-week prayer meetings were held at the parsonage.

The FBC-YMCA relationship grew from at least two distinct origins. Pastor Gamble was a YMCA secretary in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where he previously pastored Hebron Baptist Church. FBC's longtime Sunday School superintendent and trustee board chairman, Kerry Conley, was president of the Rochester YMCA. Perhaps more important, the "Y" and FBC both were evangelical



A new challenge—In 1912, two weeks after FBC dedicated its new, \$3,000 pipe organ, the structure was destroyed by fire of unknown origin.

ministries with similar doctrines. The “Y” was a Protestant para-church outreach in those early year of its history.

The burned building was underinsured. Structural coverage was \$5,500, furnishings \$500 and the pipe organ was protected for \$2,000. FBC collected \$8,000, the maximum amount. The insurance adjustor’s conservative damage estimate was twice the actual payout. Others felt the loss was much higher. Nevertheless the funds received did seed construction of a new facility.

Although difficult to comprehend at the time of the loss, God again had a plan for FBC. Mayo Clinic’s remarkable growth placed a premium on the congregation’s land.

In 1906, Dr. Will Mayo was elected president of the American Medical Association. With that honor his professional stature grew and Mayo’s medical practice expanded dramatically. Patients were flocking to Rochester for health care. The “Mayo Brother’s Clinic” needed more hospital beds, and diagnostic rooms.

The Mayo campus started to emerge. To increase hospital space, the Rochester Sanatorium Company was formed. The church’s next door neighbor, Elliot Knowlton, converted his large Victorian home into the original Kahler Hotel-Hospital. Knowlton was a successful dry goods store and Union State Bank owner. He was joined in this project by hotel man, John Kahler, and by Dr. Christopher Graham. Graham was a partner with the Drs. Mayo and a brother to Dr. Charlie’s wife, Edith. In 1910 the Sanatorium Company enlarged its hospital-hotel with a major addition.

When First Baptist’s building burned, the company, wanting to preserve its expansion options, offered to buy the land. When an equally central church location became available at Fourth Avenue

and Second Street (now the Baldwin Building location), the FBC membership accepted an offer of \$18,250 for their land, top dollar for a downtown building site.

A hotel-hospital, the Damon Hotel, was built on the church's former land. (Subsequently the Mayo Clinic's Damon Parking Ramp was built there; the Gonda Building stands there now). This marked the first in a series of profitable real estate dealings.

In 1912, Rochester was thriving as never before. Nearly all the local workforce was employed and business profits were generally good. This was an ideal time to raise money for a new FBC building. Former two-term Rochester mayor and dentist E.L. Sinclair headed the church's fund drive.

Kerry Conley chaired a newly formed Building Committee. Conley was founder and former president of Conley Camera Company, Sears & Roebuck's exclusive camera vendor. Later elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives, Conley's legislative obligations made him unavailable to serve as Building Committee chair. Pastor Gamble assumed many of Conley's duties, although Conley retained the title.

The total cost of the new church and parsonage was \$48,000, broken down as follows: Land on Second Street: \$8,000. Church structure and furnishings: \$33,500. Parsonage: \$4,500 and \$2,000 in miscellaneous expenses. Old foundation stones were reused and FBC Sunday School boys cleaned and repurposed 40,000 bricks. When the church was dedicated in 1914 the membership had a \$5,700 unpaid balance, and of this only \$900 was not pledged. There was no long-term obligation.

The architect, Harry Jones of Minneapolis, employed brick and stone. Jones, a noted Minnesota architect, designed Butler Square, which still stands in Minneapolis' downtown warehouse district. His unique designs set him apart from his peers.



***BUILDING THREE** graced the four hundred block of Second Street SW. The sign atop the building became a Rochester landmark. Mayo Clinic's Baldwin Building now occupies this site.*

Jones included several memorial stained glass windows with matching chandeliers. One of the windows, the circular *Christ in Gethsemane* window, is now incorporated in Autumn Ridge's Timothy Chapel. That window was a memorial to Erastmus Swartwood, a successful farm speculator. Ray Wagoner and his wife, Lorraine Wagoner-Larson, donated funds to install the window in the 16th Street church in memory of their son, Steve.

Seating capacity was 300, which was approximately half that of its predecessor. Because attendance exceeded 300, a second service was added. The second service helped the large church maintain a small church feeling.

The building was not the jewel its predecessor was as the designs greatly contrasted. The new building was affectionately

referred to as a “mighty fortress” while the old church had a more traditional steeple and long sanctuary.

The Second Street church was the last structure to sport a hitching rail in front. But Dr. Charlie Mayo didn't need one. With his purchase of a 1902 Thomas Flyer, Dr. Charlie was one of Rochester's first automobile owners. The next Mayo car was a Queen, a two-cylinder, chain-driven car with no windshield, chauffeured by FBC member, Carlos Ellis. Later Ellis drove a pair of Knox cars owned by the Mayo brothers. One was a two-cylinder runabout; the other a four-cylinder touring car with a roof and side curtains. The dirt roads were full of ruts. But on good roads, Ellis claimed he could go 50 miles an hour. Only after rain had smoothed the roads could he open the throttle. A one-way trip to the Twin Cities took four hours.

Ellis chauffeured Dr. Charlie for eleven years. Part of his daily duty was taking the Mayo brothers home for lunch. He resigned when Dr. Charlie refused him a raise, plus his wife, Lenora, didn't want to live in the country at Mayowood. She longed to return to city life.

Ellis started a garage to repair machinery, including Louis Hill's Packard. (Hill was Great Northern Railroad chairman and a moving force in establishing Glacier National Park). Rochester was unfamiliar with the word “garage” until Ellis used it. That was pretty fancy language for a grease-soiled mechanic. Brothers Earl and Carlos started and operated a Dodge dealership in Rochester from 1921 until 1950.

The automotive age was dawning. Carlos Ellis notwithstanding, the car of choice was the Model T Ford and the horseless carriage forever replaced the horse and buggy. Roads and

traffic helped expand Mayo's patient base and revolutionized commerce. The Rochester work force grew and church sites had to be larger to provide parking.

First Baptist's third building dedication was April 26, 1914. Dr. John Earl, Des Moines College President, gave the message. FBC Pastor Gamble said the key verse was "not to be ministered unto but to minister" (Mark 10:45). Pastor Gamble died the following winter at the age of fifty-three. He was succeeded by R. A McMullen.

Except for a pipe organ installation during Rev. R.A. McMullen's pastorate (1915-20), capital improvements and even general maintenance were minimal until the 1950s. Between 1912 and 1930, membership increased minimally, from 372 to 393.

Just as membership began to grow in the 1930s, the church and its members suffered financially from the Great Depression. But in 1944, as World War II was winding down, FBC was ready to move forward again. An architect was hired and work began on expansion of the sanctuary. In 1954 the congregation invested \$31,000 in remodeling and some much needed repairs. That amount nearly equaled the building's original cost.

In the 1950's Rochester's population grew from 29,885 to 40,663. The Mayo Building's first ten floors were built and IBM opened its plant on the northwest side of town.

Cornfields filled up with homes. Schools could hardly be built fast enough. John Marshall High School expanded even before opening. FBC was pretty much Rochester's only evangelical congregation (although "fundamentalist" was the descriptor then). The Assemblies of God was the only local Pentecostal group. The

other churches considered themselves mainline Protestant or Roman Catholic. There was also a Jewish synagogue.

Conservative Christians new to Rochester often picked a FBC pew their first Sunday, began working on their perfect attendance pin on their second, brought hot dishes to the potluck suppers by their third and were singing in the choir by month's end. The congregation shared in Rochester's growth to the point where active membership surpassed 600 and Sunday school attendance exceeded 400. Space was at a premium. Something needed to be done.

A Program of Progress was launched in 1957, FBC's centennial year. A \$105,000 fundraising goal was established and a big plywood thermometer was prominently posted in the sanctuary to record giving.

The Church decided to renovate existing facilities, build a new educational unit and purchase land for an eventual move. The Sunday school addition produced a three-floor, 11,000 square foot addition where the old parsonage formerly stood. The project's total cost, including furnishings, was \$150,000. The new building was dedicated October 9, 1960. Former pastor George Edstrom gave the dedication ceremony message. The mortgage was retired in 1963.

A new facility remained a dream for many years, but by 1965 FBC's membership was 491 and average Sunday School attendance was 352. These figures were the lowest in decades and were accomplished the old-fashioned Baptist way—the Church split. When Mayo Foundation offered \$305,000 for the property on December 1, 1965 the offer was voted down.

Nearly one year later to the day, FBC reversed its decision and accepted Mayo's \$325,000 offer. That same night members voted to

buy Zumbro Lutheran's building on Fourth Street and Third Avenue Southwest. The transaction provided a short-term answer to growth and parking problems and bought time to focus on long-term facility needs.

Mayo Foundation permitted First Baptist to park in employee lots during off hours. Few saw parking as a long-term problem. But indeed it was. Mayo's expansion eliminated many parking lots in downtown Rochester. It would be hard to maintain a church on that Fourth Street site today, with the Harwick Building and grassy mall occupying what then was parking.



BUILDING FOUR was owned by Zumbro Lutheran Church prior to its purchase by First Baptist. It was located on Fourth Street and Third Avenue SW.

The property transfer had to wait until Zumbro Lutheran moved into their then new building near the present Soldier's Field Veteran's Memorial. On November 17, 1969, FBC moved into its new home.

The dedication service was held December 7. Some \$75,000 was raised to cover moving expenses and improvements. Donations helped. So did a \$20,000 insurance windfall the church received

when an adjoining house owned by the church burned down. The “new” building, FBC’s fourth, was owned debt free.

The Second Street building was razed October 6, 1970, by Riverside Sand & Gravel Company (now Frazer Construction Company), owned by Autumn Ridge member, Lowell Penz. The cornerstone was saved and rests along the Romanesque colonnade between Autumn Ridge Church and Timothy Memorial Chapel. Timothy Chapel is named after Timothy Penz, second son of Lowell and Darlene Penz. Timothy died in an auto accident.

The FBC education unit remained for several years, housing Mayo’s School of Physical Therapy. In the late 1970s that building too was torn down to make room for the Baldwin Building.

The newly purchased Zumbro Lutheran structure had several beautiful stained glass windows and a pipe organ. Bats, which have good hearing, occasionally flew in to hear the sermon. They swooped over worshippers causing many to wonder why God included such critters on Noah’s ark. Eventually a column, “The Church Bat,” was featured in FBC’s newspaper, *The Link*.

The sanctuary accommodated 450 including balcony seating. The three-floor Christian education building across the street was very functional except children and adults had to cross the street to get to the church or Sunday School.

With the move into new facilities, FBC again saw membership stagnate. In 1969, when the move was made, membership was 543; by 1977 membership was 557. Still, in 1974 a New Properties Committee was formed.

On May 5, 1976 the membership voted to buy a ten-acre site at 415 Sixteenth Street Southwest for \$50,000. The seller, Bob Gray, was

a son of the church and remains so today. Church sites were scarce in Rochester. The land was a good investment. A week later, FBC members faced another business meeting to terminate its senior pastor. The two issues were viewed separately, however, and both were approved.

Church construction went on hold until Paul Siewert came as senior pastor in 1977. That same year, building and finance committees were formed. The following year the Finance Committee was authorized to sell \$750,000 in bonds. The bond issue was widely advertised but the sale met an abrupt bear market. In 1980 the market hit bottom, with prime interest at 20 percent and 90-day certificates-of-deposits topping 18 percent. Given this market volatility, FBC bonds were unattractive investments.

The burden fell on older members because young families were paying home mortgages with interest in double digits. Younger members had limited ability to enter the low-interest bond market. Some older members of more independent means favored a more basic and economical plan.

The church suffered cash flow problems when conventional credit evaporated. The membership was advised it was fortunate to get a second mortgage on its only remaining parsonage for 17 percent interest. In October, 1980, the loan was refinanced at a more favorable rate and the church cut \$200,000 in construction expenses. A sanctuary balcony was sacrificed as costs were reduced.

The church's architect was K.W. Waljarvi of Saint Paul. An Illinois firm managed the construction. Because FBC was not its own construction manager, it forfeited its tax exempt status. The church paid sales taxes on all building material purchases. Finance charges

on the extra costs added tens of thousands of dollars in unnecessary expense.

Groundbreaking was held in March, 1979. The cornerstone was laid June 1, 1980. The sanctuary seated 600 on bright orange padded pews (compared to 500 in the 1870 building). For the first time in its history the church was air-conditioned and featured an “all purpose” gym.

The building was functional and practical but not majestic in architecture. Some features remained unfinished when the building went into service.

The gravel parking lot led to dirt-tracking problems.

The gym and bathrooms were unpainted and untiled. A single Sunday morning service

accommodated everyone in the early

years. Wednesday night

was for children and youth activities, choir practice, Bible study and committee meetings. This enabled members to be home on other nights of the week.

Patti and Marty Gloff began beautifying the grounds with thousands of bushes, shrubs, trees and floral arrangements. This ministry reminds us that life began in a garden, and Christ was



***BUILDING FIVE** was located at 415 Sixteenth Street in Southwest Rochester. It is now occupied by a charter school.*

betrayed in Gethsemane. (The volunteer pace quickened on arrival at the Autumn Ridge campus and included wetland management. DNR ground water specialist and Autumn Ridge member Jeff Green is managing a preserve which includes ponds, foliage and a friendly bird habitat.)

In the 1990s the baby-boomlet demographics progressed through Rochester's schools. Mayo provided the growth engine as many new families moved in. IBM's workforce also was changing as Big Blue's "lifetime" employment plan, under founder Tom Watson, made way for short-term gains. Local layoffs came due to competitive forces, job outsourcing, contracting of services and partly because IBM's own products created efficiencies that required fewer workers.

Layoffs starting in the 1990s made the technology field a hot and cold shower as shooting-star companies Western Digital and Celistica (IBM Canada) sold almost-new northwest Rochester buildings to Mayo after brief Rochester stays. Western Digital never occupied its high tech building. These companies employed FBC members. To keep their jobs, some of them had to leave Rochester. IBM eventually cut its workforce by nearly half from its peak years.

FBC was attracting local families both from Rochester and from outside Olmsted County. Families would consider FBC despite 25-mile drives. They came from Kasson, LeRoy, Eyota, Grand Meadow and elsewhere—quite a change from when people didn't even drive in from Bamber Valley or Salem Corners.

Church growth became a seminary specialty. Pastor Siewert earned a doctorate in that subject. Membership growth somewhat represented a theological change of thinking. In Great Awakenings in

earlier years, believers attributed church growth to changed hearts due to the Holy Spirit, evangelistic fervor and aggressive witnessing. By the end of the Twentieth Century church growth included those elements but the formula was more purpose driven. Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, was studied by FBC's elders in the late 1990s. Mega-churches such as Willow Creek in Chicago and Saddleback in California became prototypes for instructional materials, worship resources, building design, staff training and contemporary worship. John Steer was welcomed as senior pastor in 1989. Steve England was hired in 1996 to coordinate facilities use and streamline business practices.

FBC attendance grew 56 percent in the 1990s. Adjustments had to be made for more efficient building use. Sunday evening had become the least attended service. A six o'clock start time was tried to help families with young children, but eventually First Baptist followed a trend noticed at many congregations. Sunday evening's service was dropped at summer's end in 2000.

Before the Sunday evening service was retired the faithful lifted their voices in song under the direction of longtime Billy Graham song leader and announcer Cliff Barrows. Barrows probably has led more singers than anybody on the planet, having directed the mass choir featured in most of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's worldwide campaigns. He was in Rochester for a Mayo Clinic appointment, came to church to worship and was pressed into service for a hymn or two.

Three services (two traditional and one contemporary) were held on Sunday mornings beginning September 17, 2000. The congregation was encouraged to balance worship service attendance,

but the most popular service was the third—the contemporary service.

Families wanting to worship together often couldn't. Sunday school was offered twice but attendance was uneven. Adult Sunday School was reduced to create space for children. Small study groups were organized, meeting largely in homes. A Common Ground coffee area was instituted as a fellowship venue in the gym. A contemporary service was added on Saturday night beginning October 6, 2002, bringing weekly worship services to a total of four. Now, Wednesdays were for children's clubs, Bible study and choir practice. But Middle and Senior High youth met on other nights of the week. Soon there were activities every night. It was difficult to schedule wedding receptions or make church facilities available for community use.

In 1993, FBC invested \$1,000,000 in 46,000 additional square feet of space. The expansion nearly doubled space available for Sunday School classes and the nursery. The sanctuary was expanded by a few back rows, bathrooms were upgraded and office space increased. The platform was greatly enlarged. The choir loft was eliminated. Eventually a rear projection screen was installed to enhance sermon presentations.

Dance and drama now had an expanded stage. Dana Sawyer and her mother, Toby Lagervall, were synonymous with dance in Rochester for over a generation. Both made FBC their church home starting in the 1990s and helped incorporate dance in a few events. Pastor Steer used his Royal Air Force training to waltz with Dana at a Christmas musical. It was, however, probably easier for King David to use dance in ancient times than it was for First Baptist at the turn

of the millennium. Still, drama was a regular evening fare but used less often in the mornings.

A tidy windfall came from the sale of nine acres to HyVee Foods for a supermarket and strip mall. Zoning was not at issue, but neighbors' fears of reduced property values were. Yard signs opposing HyVee appeared. Nevertheless the sale was closed in 1996. FBC was debt free three years later.

FBC continued coping with growing attendance but the costs to build anew would exceed ten times what the Sixteenth Street building had cost. Would that next building also be inadequate within 20 years? How could a new building be paid off? Would ongoing ministries suffer from construction? For those who felt the present membership was already "too big," a larger building was even more daunting.

Sixty-acres of farmland came up for sale west of the Olmsted County History Center and Salem Road Covenant Church. In November, 2001, the congregation voted to purchase the land for \$1.2-million at 4.75 percent until the time was right to build.

Americans were unsettled then due to terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in Manhattan and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Foreign patients, especially from the Middle East, virtually stopped coming to Rochester. Previously they rented entire floors at the Kahler Grand Hotel. World business conditions were uncertain for firms like IBM. The Dow-Jones dropped like a stone; consumer confidence was shaken. Governor Jesse Ventura mailed tax rebates in August. Minnesota was in awash in red ink in September.

One member of FBC, Jessica Sachs, was aboard a jetliner that terrorists crashed into the Twin Towers. She had moved to the East,

trained as an accountant, joined a Big Three firm and was traveling on business. Her former youth pastor, Karen Foster, recalled Jessica's life at FBC in *The Rochester Post-Bulletin*.

Former FBC elder and Mayo immunologist, Greg Poland, was seen regularly on the nightly news during the anthrax and weapons of mass destruction scares.

A ministry of peace and eternal security has particular appeal in times of adversity and uncertainty. Some call this foxhole religion. Billy Graham was sought out for a memorial service at the National Cathedral in Washington. Nobody quite knew when, where, or if the enemy would strike next. Fighter planes were observed in Rochester's skies doing regular security sweeps. The Federal Prison held in custody an Egyptian cleric who rallied conspirators some years earlier in a failed attempt to blow up the World Trade Center. Some FBC members, such as Lt. Tim Schroeder, worked extended prison shifts days on end without leave following 9-11. Deputy Police Chief and FBC member Steve Johnston faced security issues galore as Rochester had long been a destination for world leaders such as King Hussein of Jordan and the Royal Saudi family.

Could Rochester also be a terrorism target? Rochester had a significant Muslim population. Suddenly national loyalties of Muslims were in doubt. The only 9-11 co-conspirator convicted of related charges was arrested in Minnesota. Christians typically knew little about Arab language, history or even faiths. Likewise, the Muslims were misinformed about western faith and practice. Families turned inward and many who had not been attending church before 9-11 did so after the attacks.

Bumper stickers reading *God Bless America!* were commonplace and Irving Berlin's song underwent an enormous resurgence, including being sung at every seventh inning stretch at Major League Baseball. Religion was a natural discussion topic considering that the U.S. was an Islamic jihad target. Old time religion was serious business considering the times. Soon American troops were in Afghanistan and Iraq. Names of Minnesota casualties were regular news. How would a war on terrorism affect jobs, gasoline prices, heating bills, retirement accounts, insurance premiums, the ability to raise money and the availability of building materials? Nobody knew. As with our fathers and mothers in bygone days, FBC was walking against the grain of conventional wisdom. Our flickering headlamp came from faith and perseverance which stemmed from the confidence that this flame was eternal.

Working out finances was fundamental. One primary money source was from the members themselves; another could be from sale of the Sixteenth Street church.

Many thought a sale would surely affirm God's presence. But no bona fide offers emerged. Meanwhile, construction materials shot up pushing building costs even higher. The question was: should FBC proceed on faith without the sale and hedge against spiraling prices or wait until all the pieces were in place? Both positions entailed risk. Crowded facilities might cause some families to leave but inadequate funding is always problematic in a construction project.

The church voted to build. In August, 2004, ground was broken for a \$14.3-million campus to be built on the previously purchased 60-acre site. Membership then was 840. Average Sunday attendance

exceeded 1,000. The annual operating budget was just over \$2-million. Sale of the Sixteenth Street building represented a significant obstacle to the vision of completing and occupying the new facility.

That same month, FBC approved a lease to Studio Academy giving this charter school an option to purchase the property. The Studio Academy Board subleased space to Adam Abdulle Academy, a newly formed, almost exclusively Somali elementary school. For one semester, these two schools shared the building with FBC. The rental income offset costs of additional interest on the unpaid principal.

Most FBC members felt God was urging a move. They were enthusiastic about decisions to move ahead. Some were not so sure. Yes God's son apprenticed as a carpenter, but what do the Scriptures teach with respect to real estate and contracting? How should the church develop its market strategy while representing Christ? Those favoring new construction recalled how complications affected construction of Nehemiah's wall and Solomon's temple. They maintained that challenge is inevitable with change. Sale of the Sixteenth Street structure was but one of the church's challenges.

Indeed, had construction not started when it did, building costs might have increased after Hurricane Katrina's wake in September of 2005. One displaced Katrina family came to FBC in the storm's aftermath. The husband had a "tent makers" ministry and supported his ministry as a Baptist minister by driving a cab. FBC helped him to obtain a replacement vehicle and he returned to New Orleans. FBC's Elder Board chair and Mayo surgeon, Bob Stanhope, and others traveled to the Gulf to provide medical assistance to hurricane victims.

The early 2000's saw "Imagine a Place. . ." and "It's Time" campaigns to raise new building funds. Throughout this period the congregation was challenged and energized by the slogan "Not for Us" that described the vision and purpose for the new church campus at Autumn Ridge. It became obvious that donations for the new facility would largely impact the neighbors, guests and visitors of future generations. In this sense, the Autumn Ridge Church project was seen as a gift to the community and to the world rather than an effort to make comfortable those who funded its construction.

As plans were made to move into its new facility the leadership of FBC came to the conclusion that a name change might be appropriate. A FBC Name Change Task Force (NCTF) was established. The seven-member group began meeting in the spring of 2005.

The NCTF studied background resources, discussed personal experiences and opinions and gathered information regarding the experiences of leaders of other large churches. The team conducted a non-scientific internal survey of the initial attitudes of FBC respondents and themes were identified from the survey results. The NCTF then established seven core values regarding the church name and examined legal and constitutional issues involved in a potential name change.

The team studied the history of the church. They discovered that FBC had already changed its name once. "First Regular Baptist Church" was the original church name at its founding in 1857. The word "Regular" in the original church name had a specific denominational meaning in 1857, reflecting acceptance of either of

two traditional mainstream Baptist doctrines (Calvinism and Arminianism), but rejecting the beliefs of another denominational sub-group, the Free Will Baptists. The name “First Regular Baptist Church” was thus a denominational statement implying a mainstream Baptist Church planted by the Baptist Mission Society (now part of the American Baptist Church). In fact, First Regular Baptist Church was actually only affiliated with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) between 1944 and 1964 (20 years of its then 152-year history). It was in 1964 when the congregation voted to become an unaffiliated Baptist church that the word “Regular” was officially deleted from the church name.

FBC had both informally and formally studied the possibility of a change to a non-denominational name since the 1980s. In particular, a study group in 1994 concluded that the “Baptist” label hindered church outreach, but that a change in name alone would do little to increase outreach unless the change was accompanied by a fresh attitude of service to the community and the world.

There was concern in 1994 that the unity of the body was a primary value and that the risk of disunity at that time outweighed the potential strategic advantages of a new name. Ten years later, in 2005, the deletion of denominational labels from evangelical church names had become a dominant regional and national trend. Many were concerned that the “Baptist” name created an unnecessary barrier to outreach and evangelism. With the planned sixth relocation of FBC a strategic opportunity was re-opened.

The NCTF noted that the idea of naming congregations developed after New Testament times, suggesting that the church name is not a biblical issue. The team determined that, like a physical

church building, a church name is a tool for ministry.

The NCTF seriously considered a variety of names, including “First Baptist Church” and “Autumn Ridge Community Church,” and compromise names such as “Prairie Rock Baptist Church” and “Prairie Rock Church — A Baptist Fellowship since 1857.” The NCTF concluded that a bold change to a simple, inviting name was preferable.

After two weekends of open congregational discussion and prayerful consideration, the majority of NCTF members felt that the core principles identified in its study suggested that the church name be changed to remove obstacles to the attendance of the largest possible number of guests. “Prairie Rock Church” and “Autumn Ridge Church” were recommended as possible new names.

The Board of Elders of FBC accepted the NCTF report in May, 2005 and recommended “Autumn Ridge Church” for congregational approval in July, 2005. Congregational opposition to renaming the building after its street address—Autumn Ridge—was minimal. In supporting the change, Pastor Steer explained that the reason for the name change was to open wide the doors of the church to everybody in the community, whether or not they considered themselves Baptist. The motion for a name change breezed to acceptance. The church’s Statement of Faith remained unchanged. Autumn Ridge Church was born, with the congregation assuming this name upon relocating to its new facility.

The congregation of the newly named Autumn Ridge Church celebrated the new church campus as a gift to the community with worship services on December 18, 2005.

The facility has 74,000 square feet with a seating capacity of 1,080 in the sanctuary and performing arts center. The entire facility with education and administration space can accommodate 3,200. An adjoining Timothy Memorial Chapel, with custom cherry trim and a stained glass window relocated from the previous FBC structure, seats 200.

Timothy Chapel is a gift from Lowell and Sharon Penz. It is ideal for weddings, funerals, and small services. Another gift insured the establishment of Christos Bookcenter.

Grounds surrounding the buildings include a parking lot for 650 vehicles and a 6.7-acre wetland preserve. An additional seven acres of ponds feature prairie restoration. Diversity is the theme of the landscape design by Peter Larson of Minneapolis, with lawns, meadows, planting beds, gardens, trees, a soccer field and large portions of the property remaining in productive agriculture. At the time of the December 2005 relocation, cash-in-hand, pledges and the expected sale price totaled \$11 million dollars, leaving a balance of slightly over \$3.6 million.



***BUILDING SIX**, our current home, is positioned for growth on 60 acres at 3611 Salem Road SW. Our mission statement: "Loving God. Serving People."*

The master plan for Autumn Ridge Church was by Kenn Sanders of Scottsdale, Arizona. Architectural realization was by Station 19 Architects of Minneapolis. Alvin Benike was the general contractor. TSP Architects and Engineers handled the mechanical and electrical requirements. Structural Design provided structural contracting, with specialty acoustic design and audiovisual implementation by Audio Video Electronics of Minneapolis.

Lloyd Johnson, architect, and Key Builders, both of Rochester, teamed to erect the Timothy Chapel. Architect and church member, Lloyd Johnson, also served on the Building Implementation Committee, headed by Jim Maher.

Maher, a multi-talented PhD molecular biologist at Mayo Clinic by day, is also a classically trained orchestral string bassist and electric bass guitarist.

The Building Implementation Committee enjoyed more than 95 planning meetings over three years with Station 29 architects Ann Kuntz, Tom Peterson and Darrel LeBarron, as well as Tom Prendergast and the team from Alvin Benike, Inc. Other Building Implementation Committee members were: Paula Edwards (educator), Bob Dahlstrom (retired retailer), Chuck Treder (Mayo information services director), and Steve England (Autumn Ridge Church business manager). Time investment from the committee, staff, elders and dozens of others was sizable and over a sustained time.

One of the last services on Sixteenth Street was the funeral for Barbara Campbell, wife of longtime member, Gene Campbell. Barb's home-going is perhaps the only time a former Minnesota governor attended First Baptist. Wendell Anderson was Minnesota's Governor

in the 1970s. But in 1956 he and longtime FBC member Gene Campbell won Olympic hockey silver medals. Gene captained that team and Barb was often in the stands watching. The two players also were University of Minnesota teammates. Gene is a former Lourdes High School hockey coach and currently coaches the successful Rochester Raiders adaptive floor hockey team.

The new building opened in time for Christmas 2005 with the Grand Opening held the following month. Curiosity ran high as thousands toured Rochester's newest church facility. Both the Adoration and Celebration services were nearly at capacity that first Sunday. Worship Pastor Bill Price directed his Easter musical before sizeable crowds. Within six months, Cheri Hart, then pastor of Children's Ministries, said preschool attendance was at capacity. The Common Grounds Café was instantly crowded in-between Sunday morning services. A Saturday night Emmaus Service was added in the fall.

After the last Sunday morning service at Sixteenth Street, members hiked through snow to the Autumn Ridge campus. The event made the *Post-Bulletin's* front page. KTTC television's evening news program also covered the historic occasion. Hikers were led by the festive playing of two Scottish bagpipes.

In 2006 Autumn Ridge paid the piper. Financial uncertainties loomed shortly after the move. Economic storm clouds included Northwest Airlines' bankruptcy.

ARC's higher operating costs produced temporary revenue shortfalls but giving continued. Generally, commitments were honored. Rarely were ministries deferred or abandoned. If anything, they expanded and multiplied.

The Studio Academy purchase of the Sixteenth Street building was not closed by the hoped for March, 2006, date. The property was eventually sold to Morris Memorial LLC for a selling price of \$3.3 million. The church was carrying a debt load of \$8.1 million and wanted to spend it down. The elders also preferred not to be property managers and wanted to focus more on ministry. A new roof and other expenses lowered net proceeds to \$2.9 million.

The new Autumn Ridge Church structure is only Phase I. Expansion will come as needs grow and funds are available. The new building still lacks a gym. Other needs are sure to emerge. Architectural planning includes growth assumptions. Sanctuary capacity can more than double and overall space can more than triple.

During most of FBC's first 100 years the congregation was served by one pastor and his wife, augmented by volunteers. The past 25 years of steady membership growth has made it possible to employ ministry specialists undreamed of by our forbearers.

Today Autumn Ridge not only has a senior pastor and an executive pastor, it also has pastors of worship, enrichment and care, community life, outreach and discipleship, visitation, ministry development, high school, middle school, and children and a director of missions, and Rochester Network for Re-Entry. Other servants of God prepare PowerPoint presentations, the church newsletter (*RidgeLines*), the ARC website (autumnridgechurch.org), child care and weddings. An administrative wing houses the staff offices.

Since 1995, an independent Chinese Church has been meeting at FBC. Approximately 75 Chinese worshippers meet weekly in the Timothy Chapel.

A building no more makes a church than a house makes a family. Without a voice in the pulpit the edifice is little more than a meeting hall.

Most mid-1850s churches endured hardscrabble existences. FBC's first two buildings would have never been built when they were without Northern Baptist church planting efforts. These networks provided pulpit supplies and contact with other churches. In many cases these organizations survive to the present.

Chapter 2

Our pastors

First Baptist Church was begun by lay people. The first meetings may have been Olmsted County Bible Society meetings.

The Olmsted County Bible Society was formed September 16, 1855, in Robert Welch's home. Robert Welch was a licensed Free Will Baptist preacher, from Racine, Wisconsin. He also was a florist and gardener. His son and daughter-in-law were active at FBC into the next century. Welch was president of the society. John Daniels was treasurer. The next year Daniels helped start FBC.

The American Baptist Home Mission Society and FBC shared the \$600 salary of FBC's first pastor, Rev. Erastus Wescott (1857-60). Westcott was 41 years old when he and his family came to Rochester from New York. During his ministry at FBC he also taught, subsistence farmed and preached in Kalmar Township. In May, 1859, his salary was reduced to \$400. He left FBC in July, 1860. J. Mendal served several months as interim pastor.

In November, 1860, D.N. Mason of Chatfield, Minnesota, accepted a six months interim position at FBC. On May 5, 1861, Mason was ordained at FBC and became the church's second full-time minister.

He was married during his pastorate and his \$300 annual pay was a hardship. He said he could hardly live on less than \$800. He resigned but the church sweetened the pot with a parsonage. Mason continued as pastor until March 29, 1868, and thereby established the longest tenure of any pastor in the 1800s.

Mason was one of five members elected to Rochester's first public school board. He served a single one year term. This seems the only instance where a FBC minister held elected public office.

On November 15, 1868, Rev. Levi Abbott joined FBC as the church's third pastor. Abbott was a teacher, pastor and two-term Massachusetts state legislator before heading west to recover from lung trouble. Three months after he arrived the church held a special business meeting and decided to build a new church. In 1870, the church applied to the Baptist Home Mission Society for a \$2,000 building loan. Abbott presided over the December 29, 1870 building dedication. Abbott served FBC for about five years.

The decade after Pastor Abbott saw three brief ministries: R. Telford (1873-1874), C.H. Remington (1874-1877) and R.W. Arnold (1877-1882). This was a time of nominal membership growth, although thirty-five members joined during Pastor Telford's brief stay. FBC did not, however, extend his term. The church was hard pressed to meet its budget.

On June 1, 1883, Pastor D.D. Reed began a three year ministry. At a special meeting Reed proposed a debt retirement plan. Coupons ranging from twenty-five cents to a dollar a month were collected to erase an \$800 debt. By January 16, 1886, FBC was debt-free for the first time in 15 years. Almost immediately Pastor Reed proposed improvements to the property but the congregation would not support his proposal. He resigned November 5, 1886. Fifty-five people joined FBC during his brief pastorate.

Pastor Reed's successor, J.A. Heritage, had the shortest stay of any pastor. He came in 1887 and resigned that same year due to his wife's health

Pastor E.R. Pope replaced Pastor Heritage, joining FBC in 1887. While serving as pastor, he also helped organize FBC's first youth group, the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. He left in 1894 for a position, Minnesota Superintendent of Missions, with the Baptist State Mission Society but returned often to fill the pulpit when the pastor was away.

Three pastors finished the century: W.H. Davenport (1894-1895), O.A. Stevens (1896) and Frank B. Leach (1897-1900). Why the brief stays? The reasons are unclear. Most church records were burned in the 1912 fire.

F.C. Whitney accepted a call to FBC on September 24, 1900. Three years later a Yakima, Washington church called him and, to encourage him to stay, FBC members committed to an aggressive evangelistic campaign. They also raised his salary, from \$1,200 to \$1,300.

In January, 1906, FBC, along with others in Rochester's faith community brought in one-time major league baseball player Billy Sunday for a month of special meetings. The services were held in a specially constructed tabernacle in downtown Rochester. FBC records indicate "confessions of faith" numbered 1,296. That year, FBC's 72 baptisms were the most for any Baptist church in Minnesota, exceeding the previous high of 42 in 1889. During Whitney's pastorate church membership nearly doubled from 167 to 321. He was described as "incessant in his labors for the church." Many friends regretted his departure when he accepted Yakima's renewed offer in 1907. Later the same year, the congregation extended a call to George H. Gamble.

Pastor Gamble was exceptionally well qualified. This Kewanee, Illinois, native was a graduate of Knox College and Northwestern University Divinity School. He had served churches in Saint Paul and Saint Cloud prior to coming to Rochester. FBC records speak of Pastor Gamble as a man of great determination. When fire destroyed the church structure in 1912 he no doubt called upon that determination in providing much needed pastoral leadership and reassurance.

Records also speak of a series of meetings he held in a school house four miles north of Rochester. He walked the eight miles to and from the meetings. The weather was cold; the roads rough. But the meetings were well attended and he gladly made the special effort. Perhaps it took a toll on his health, because on February 12, 1915, after several weeks of special meetings in Byron, Pastor Gamble had a heart attack and died. He was 53. This is the only instance of a FBC minister dying while serving the church. Gamble's close friend and predecessor, E.R. Pope, filled in at least one Sunday after he died.

R.A. MacMullen candidated at FBC on June 6, 1915. Two months later he was called. His salary: \$1,400. He served five years and, at his departure in 1920, membership was 373, the highest to that point. Later that year Joseph Beaven of Seattle, Washington, agreed to serve as interim pastor. On May 1, 1921 the church removed the "interim" status and Pastor Beaven stayed until 1924. His first year salary was \$2,500. Membership was 307. During the Beaven years the church adopted bylaws which had not existed since the 1912 fire.

The next pastor, Ingram Bill, served on a part-time basis. He arrived in December 1924. His salary was shared by FBC,

the Baptist Convention in Minnesota and the Northern Baptist Convention. Pastor Bill's duties were divided between preaching and hospital visitation. On May 6, 1931, Pastor Bill resigned to allow the church to hire a full-time minister.

At the time of his departure, the church was experiencing significant challenges. Sunday morning worship attendance had dropped to 95; evening attendance averaged 50. Clearly, FBC needed a full-time pastor.

On October 1, 1931 Harold Nelson began his ministry. Soon attendance and membership began to grow again. The church avidly sponsored tent meetings, initiated a KROC radio ministry and started a foreign missions initiative. In 1932-33 Sunday morning attendance was 240; evening attendance was 207.

The FBC music ministry also blossomed. In 1935, a 30-year old lyric tenor, George Edstrom, accepted a minister-of-music position at FBC. Edstrom was a Moody Bible Institute graduate. While a student at Moody he worked at Moody's radio station. Shortly after Edstrom joined FBC, membership topped 400 for the first time. In addition to heading up the music ministry he became Sunday School superintendent and became kind of a jack-of-all-trades.

Pastor Nelson left in 1939, and Edstrom who had been ordained at FBC the previous year, accepted a call to serve as pastor of FBC. During his tenure at FBC, Edstrom mentored a young man who later would serve as pastor of FBC. The young man's name was Bill Pencille. He was a Macalester College graduate who was unsure about his life's calling. Under Edstrom's influence, Pencille soon was headed to Moody Bible Institute for missions training. Later Edstrom

rallied support that helped launch Pencille's 23-year missionary career in Bolivia.

During Edstrom's years at FBC a budding evangelist, Merv Rozelle, was a member. Rozelle had his own KROC radio program. Later, Rozelle worked on the west coast. His speaking had considerable impact that could stir emotions and draw large crowds.

In May, 1948, a handsome young president of Northwestern College, then in Minneapolis, delivered a sermon at FBC. The title: "Communism Versus Christianity as I Saw It in Europe." The speaker's name was Billy Graham.

Although serving as a college president, Billy Graham also was assembling a team that would dominate evangelical Christianity for the next half century and beyond.

Edstrom and Graham became fast friends through Youth for Christ, which was in its early years. FBC member and Mayo Clinic physician Carl Morlock became Graham's primary care doctor. Graham and his wife, Ruth, returned to Rochester often and forged a lifetime friendship with Carl and Kathryn Morlock (Dr. Morlock established friendships with many leading evangelicals including Dr. Carl Henry and Francis Schaeffer). Occasionally Billy Graham worshiped at FBC. Another First Baptist member, Dr. Carl Johnson, was a Wheaton College classmate of Graham. They visited from time-to-time but not for professional reasons. Johnson was an obstetrician.

The Edstrom years at FBC ended in the Fall of 1948 when George Edstrom accepted a position with Youth for Christ Europe. His thirteen-year FBC stay was the longest of any pastor to that time. In 1953, Edstrom was appointed personnel director for the Billy

Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) and assistant to BGEA vice president George Wilson. Edstrom maintained several close friendships in Rochester and returned to preach numerous times. He also became known for his KTIS broadcasts in the Twin Cities. He died in 1964 of a heart attack at 58.

Arthur Lambourne was next to serve. Pastor Lambourne accepted a call to FBC on October 17, 1948. Lambourne had been ordained in London in 1920 and spoke with an elegant English accent. Seven months into his pastorate membership stood at 493. He served FBC for about five years.

Lambourne's assistant was a recent Moody graduate, Roger Richards. Richards was ordained at FBC April 21, 1948. He was acting pastor upon Pastor Lambourne's departure and then was called as pastor, serving the church from May, 1953, to January, 1955, when he resigned to attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Forth Worth.

Some members believed a strong leader was needed to restore the church's standing in the community. That task fell to Kenneth Muck, formerly from Ganson Street Baptist Church in Jackson, Michigan. Before that he pastored churches in New York and Massachusetts and also taught at a seminary. Pastor Muck graduated from Wheaton College and Eastern Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Muck joined FBC in October 1955.

During the Muck years the budget increased and giving kept pace. Membership reached an all-time high of over 700. His brother, Webster, taught at Bethel Seminary in Saint Paul and sometimes supplied FBC's pulpit. Kenneth Muck resigned April 1, 1962, to join the staff of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches

(GARBC) churches. He last visited FBC on Dedication Sunday July 27, 1980. He died the winter of 1982 of cancer.

Pastor Muck's assistant, Lyle Eckleberry, served as interim pastor, until November 1963. He was a Northwestern College graduate and had pastored churches in Ridgeway, Colorado, and Morristown, Minnesota, and was seen as a man with great promise.

Eckleberry was one of three GARBC candidates who failed to get a two-thirds majority vote required under the constitution. Church business was nearly paralyzed over how strong GARBC ties should be. Nominating committees were at odds over candidate slates. Eventually more than a hundred members left FBC and formed Calvary Baptist Church in Rochester. Eckleberry went to Freeway Baptist in Arizona where he enjoyed a long ministry.

The church was without a pastor until March, 1964, when 42-year-old Bob Featherstone accepted the call. He had pastored a church in the East and was, at the time of the call, serving as stewardship director for the Baptist General Conference, where he was considered to be a "comer."

Featherstone was a Columbia University graduate. He had studied Japanese at Yale during a tour with the US Army and, after a few years in business, he enrolled at Bethel Seminary. He was a gifted writer and speaker and, upon joining FBC, gained a particularly loyal KROC radio following. His Rochester stay lasted only until 1966 when he left for Bethlehem Baptist in Minneapolis.

Featherstone later met Billy Graham in Rochester through Dr. Carl Morlock and ultimately was Graham's personal assistant, advance man for crusades, managed radio stations and wrote Graham's syndicated *My Answer* newspaper column. In 1975 he

joined his former FBC assistant, Lee Eliason, at Bethel Seminary where he taught until retiring to Ashville, North Carolina. From that location he continued with special BGEA assignments until his death a few years ago. Eliason was FBC youth director and assistant pastor while finishing up at Bethel Seminary. Today he is Bethel Seminary's Executive Director and Provost and preached at ARC as part of the 150th celebration in March, 2007.

Herbert McDonald served a brief period as interim pastor in 1966. Then, from 1966 to 1970, veteran missionary to Bolivia Bill Pencille was pastor of FBC. Earlier he had been an instructor in missions at Big Sky Bible College. (In 1989, Pastor Bill became Pastor of Missions at FBC. He currently does visitation and helps the Rochester Minnesota Chinese Church, which meets at FBC.)

Clarence Anderson succeeded Pastor Pencille. Anderson's previous pastorates included Baptist General Conference churches in Duluth and Stanchfield, Minnesota. He trained at the University of Southern California and Bethel Seminary. In 1976 Pastor Anderson accepted a call to serve Grade Baptist Church in Great Falls, Montana. Interim duties were fulfilled, for one year, by David Jamison, who earlier had been hired by FBC to coordinate hospital visitation and counseling. (Pastor Jamison remained into John Steer's ministry when he left FBC to set up his own Rochester-based counseling practice.)

In 1977 Paul Siewert, a Manitoba native, became pastor of FBC. He had degrees from Augustana College and North American Baptist Seminary, both of Sioux Falls. Shortly after arrival, Siewert challenged the congregation with a question: "What is the key ministry of FBC church?" After hearing from congregation members

and leaders, he answered the question in an article published in *The Link*, the church's newspaper. Pastor Siewert helped the congregation focus on "evangelism and discipleship" as key ministries. A vibrant singles' ministry emerged at FBC during Pastor Siewert's tenure. The music ministry also flourished under the direction of Jeff McNicol, a recent seminary graduate who joined FBC to assist with the single's ministry and music program.

Siewert left FBC in 1988 to assume the presidency of a small Bible college in Canada. Later he accepted a call to be Executive Pastor of Berean Baptist Church in Burnsville, Minnesota. Pastor Siewert and his wife, Helen, still return to Rochester from time to time to look up old friends. He was succeeded by C. John Steer, our current senior pastor, in 1989.

John Steer is a fourth generation preacher. His father, grandfather and great grandfather preceded him in this calling. Like his father he attended Spurgeon's Seminary in London where he played cricket, rugby, soccer, field hockey and led the cross country team.

Upon ordination he accepted a two year internship as assistant pastor of Eagle Rock Baptist Church in Los Angeles. There he met his wife Gretchen while leading a retreat for college students. Following the departure of the senior pastor to another church, John was invited to become the new senior pastor of Eagle Rock Baptist. He began his duties at the age of 27. His new wife was just 20 years old. Following 13 very happy years the Steers moved to Rochester. They have three children Nicholas, Emily and Hannah.

Pastor John is well-traveled having seen much of Europe, the Middle East, Africa and parts of Asia. From the beginning he

encouraged mission teams to travel widely. While this had been done prior to his arrival it was mostly done by youth on a limited scale. Short-term missions have become popular nationwide but in recent years FBC and Autumn Ridge Church pushed it to another level, especially in delivering medical services to developing nations.

His illustrated sermons address a range of texts and topics that generate interest across denominational lines. In his 20 years at ARC, the congregation has flourished with expansions in a variety of existing and new ministries. With help from the Elder Board, he presides over unprecedented membership, staff and budget growth and still brings a spirited British humor and resilience to magnify God's love and grace.

Gretchen Steer leads a women's Bible study that has become ARC's largest "small" group. She also is a writer and a gracious hostess to ARC members and friends who are invited to the Steer home in Southwest Rochester for a variety of purposes.

Our pastors dedicate the living and bury the dead; they marry the loving and counsel the hurting. Rochester's frontier pastors were in many ways the heartbeat of the city. No matter the era, these pastors challenged the membership to live life more abundantly.

Chapter 3

Parent organizations

In large measure Autumn Ridge Church owes its beginnings to the American Baptist Home Mission Society. This group was formed in 1832 to start frontier Baptist churches. In Rochester, the society helped attract the initial pastor, extended credit for the first two buildings and contributed to the formative operating budgets. Critical support came when America was suffering through the Panic of 1857 and unregulated lending institutions were unprotected from market cycles. Timely outside help was vital to establish and maintain FBC.

In pioneer days Baptist churches in Southern Minnesota often were affiliated with the Southern Minnesota Baptist Association (SMBA). This organization was formed in Chatfield, Minnesota, August 27, 1856. FBC of Rochester was admitted a year later and, in June 1868, hosted the 13th annual meeting of the SMBA. FBC member John Daniels was moderator. Through this association FBC discovered at least two future pastors (Mason and Reed).

Baptist churches also organized the Minnesota Baptist State Convention to support needy churches and extend home missionary activity. As early as 1870, John Daniels was a convention trustee. FBC's initial pastor, Erastus Westcott, was one of 21 men to incorporate the convention on August 26, 1879. As a State Convention offshoot, Westcott was active in founding Pillsbury Bible College in Owatonna and Daniels was one of the school's early trustees. Onetime FBC pastor, E.R. Pope, served as Convention

Superintendent of Missions after he left Rochester in 1894. He served in that capacity until his death in the early 1920's.

Nationally, the American Baptist Home Mission Society was one of several societies that merged in 1907 to form the Northern Baptist Convention. Other societies were responsible for publications, tracts and foreign missions. The Northern Baptists were above the Mason-Dixon Line; the Southern Baptist Convention formed in 1845 after withdrawing over slavery. Other Protestant denominations likewise split over slavery.

The Minnesota Baptist State Convention visibility diminished in the early Twentieth Century. Two factors likely hastened this shift: 1) The Northern Baptist Convention assumed some convention duties, and 2) ethnic churches represented the main growth for Minnesota Baptists.

In 1911 Minnesota had 245 Baptist churches with 24,049 members. More than half of these churches were foreign speaking. Foreign languages spoken included: Swedish (90 churches), Dane-Norwegian (21), German (13) and Finnish (2). Future immigration added to the total. Language and cultural differences prompted them to develop independently.

The Swedes formed the Baptist General Conference and established Bethel College (now Bethel University) and Seminary in Saint Paul; the Germans formed the North American Baptist Conference and moved their seminary from Rochester, New York, to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1949. As the other Minnesota ethnic Baptists became Americanized (i.e. learned to speak Minnesotan) they lost their distinct heritage.

Few records remain to document FBC's role in either the Minnesota or Northern Baptist Conventions. In the former, Rev. Pope had a special relationship. In the latter case, the Northern Baptist Convention and the Minnesota Convention shared Rev. Ingram Bill's salary (1924-1931).

FBC did participate in the New World Movement (NWM) in the early 1920's and pledged thousands of dollars. This cross-denominational program promoted evangelism, educational and social betterment, imitating to a large degree the agenda of the Federal Council of Churches.

The NWM sympathized with workers in a crippling steel strike—hardly a witness traditionally associated with mainstream Baptists who honored God's sovereignty by vigorous soul winning campaigns.

In 1920, the Northern Baptists elected Helen Barrett Montgomery as the first woman president of any American Protestant denomination. Montgomery was a Baptist minister's daughter, a co-laborer with Susan B. Anthony in the suffrage movement and a longtime activist in national Baptist causes. She had been licensed to preach since 1892. While her election started no new trend for women it probably opened eyes of traditionalists who felt women should be helpmates. (In 1907, future Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Charles Evans Hughes, held the same post).

Montgomery's presidency came the same year women gained national suffrage rights. FBC records don't reveal how the local membership responded to a woman president but generally FBC gender roles have changed very incrementally over the years. Only

in the past decade has FBC had women ushers. Women started serving communion in the new millennium.

This backdrop spawned, in 1933, a fundamentalist split led by 50 churches that formed the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. The GARBC felt the Northern Baptists were biblically compromised and too socially oriented. The GARBC also believed their seminaries were spreading spiritual falsehoods. (In 1972, the Northern Baptists became the American Baptist Churches, USA.)

In the late 1920's and early 1930's, FBC adopted more of a "fire and brimstone" style. Although FBC remained Northern Baptist, it was largely inactive in the Northern Baptist Convention. Pastors Nelson, Edstrom and special speakers had no Northern Baptist ties.

On November 3, 1944, First Baptist left the Northern Baptist Convention and joined the GARBC. Other GARBC churches already existed in Austin, Brownsdale and Kasson, Minnesota. In the early years, GARBC congregations were located in rural Minnesota. It took years before a Minneapolis/Saint Paul GARBC church was planted. Regular Baptists did not establish colleges; they merely approved certain institutions.

FBC representation at national GARBC gatherings was sporadic at best. When FBC was in-between pastors in 1955 some members wondered, "If FBC is Regular Baptist, why not get a GARBC pastor?" The pulpit committee traveled to First Baptist, a GARBC church in Austin, Minnesota, to learn more about the Regular Baptists. These recruitment sources led to the dynamic Kenneth Muck, who served FBC as pastor from 1955 to 1962.

One unanticipated trait was the Regular Baptist tendency of aloofness toward non-GARBC churches. The Regular Baptists also

denounced ecumenical trends and para-church organizations. They used only the King James Bible (partly because other translations were ecumenical products). “Thee” and “Thou” were commonly used in corporate prayer, presumably because the King’s English was heaven’s language. The GARBC preferred being called fundamentalists instead of evangelicals.

On May 1, 1955, Dr. Richard Elvee, President of Northwestern College in Minneapolis, spoke at FBC. Elvee said that he likely would not be invited back to preach in Rochester any time soon if at all. His prediction proved accurate. For the next several years FBC relationships were generally limited to Regular Baptist ideas, pastors and groups.

This noticeably changed church culture. In past years, few Rochester evangelical projects had happened without FBC support. But when a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association associate held a Rochester crusade it was ignored from FBC’s pulpit, even though its members comprised the leadership core for the crusade. Graham was under fundamentalist fire for working across a broad religious spectrum and for sharing a platform with Episcopal Bishop Pike. Back then Graham did not attend FBC due to unfriendly undercurrents.

One emerging FBC leader then was Jennings Johnson. This Minneapolis native came to Rochester to teach science, earned his PhD and, for many years, was principal of John Marshall High School. Johnson grew up in the Evangelical Free Church, moved to the Evangelical Covenant Church and became a Baptist when he married Carol. Johnson chaired the FBC senior board in the late 1950’s and 60’s. He worked on Graham crusades and other

evangelical efforts. He strongly favored FBC's cooperating with denominations of like minds.

Pastor Muck aggressively promoted the GARBC and attracted their national convention to Rochester in June 1959. It was their first Upper Midwest convention and featured many top GARBC names. Muck was a member of the GARBC Council of Fourteen governing board. He traveled tirelessly to help plant GARBC churches.

Differences of opinion among FBC members sharpened following Muck's 1962 resignation. GARBC loyalists left FBC and formed Calvary Baptist Church in Rochester. On September 23, 1964 FBC's remaining members voted to leave the GARBC. FBC then became an unaffiliated evangelical Baptist Church.

My family was friendly with Harold and Fran Mickey. Harold was administrator of Rochester Methodist Church. The Mickey's were among those leaving FBC. However, when my mother, Ruth, was hospitalized for colon cancer surgery in the late 1960s, Harold Mickey visited her daily. Most subsequent contact with former members was at funerals or chance street encounters. Both sides regretted the split and its impact on longtime friendships.

In 1964, the congregation voted to change its name from First Regular Baptist Church to First Baptist Church. The uninformed supposition was that "Regular" referred to the GARBC. It did not. First Regular Baptist Church was the congregation's original name, found on legal documents such as deeds, articles of incorporation and constitution. "Regular" had a distinct meaning unrelated to the GARBC.

Old Baptist churches commonly referred to themselves as "regular" (as in mainstream) or "particular" (as in Calvinist). The

British Prince of Preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, sided with the Regular Baptists during this controversy in England. These Baptists traced their roots to a London Separatist congregation in 1616 which organized as a General Assembly of Particular or Regular Baptists in 1689.

General Baptists believed salvation was available to all who accepted it (a general atonement). Free Will theology further taught the possibility of a fall from grace—an Arminian view. Salvation could be both found and lost as it was a matter of personal choice. General Baptists trace their beginnings to 1609. The GARBC's use of both "general" and "regular" in their convention name added to the confusion.

In the 1850's Wasioja Seminary, in neighboring Dodge County, espoused free will or general Baptist teachings. General Baptists are traditionally more oriented to social justice and altruism, such as fighting slavery, poverty and human rights abuses. They tend to emphasize the Sermon on the Mount and the Book of James and stress a social conscience rooted in scripture.

Nearly all Wasioja's seminarians enlisted in the Union Army due to their anti-slavery views. The seminary eventually closed as enrollment abruptly diminished and fire consumed their building. At any rate, the word "regular" engendered a distinct and purposeful meaning when First Baptist was founded. But many FBC members didn't grasp these nuances. Incorrect assumptions were made and the name change from First Regular Baptist Church to First Baptist Church passed without inquiry or debate.

After the disaffiliation some members hoped FBC would join the Baptist General Conference (BGC), which was founded by

Swedish Baptist immigrants. Three senior pastors since then, Featherstone, Anderson and Steer, have had BGC ties. Autumn Ridge maintains a warm relationship with Bethel University and Seminary; some ARC staff members have Bethel Seminary training. But a BGC referendum never came. Members didn't oppose the Baptist General Conference. They just preferred independence, partly because many ARC members were and are not lifelong Baptists.

As plans were made to move into its sixth new facility in 2005, the leadership of FBC came to the conclusion that a name change might be appropriate. Opposition to renaming the building after its street address—Autumn Ridge—was minimal. In supporting the change, Pastor Steer explained that the reason for the name change was to open wide the doors of the church to everybody in the community, whether or not they consider themselves Baptist. Others noted denominational designations are becoming anachronisms. The motion for a name change breezed to acceptance. The church's Statement of Faith, however, remains unchanged.

Autumn Ridge Church's tradition is one of congregational authority. However the actual management of the affairs of the church is delegated to the Board of Elders as the representative body of the congregation. While divisions of the house may still arise these differences usually are not over procedural issues. Likewise, statements of faith are published to help unify the body over faith and practice.

Chapter 4

Constitutions and statements of faith

Baptist churches have much in common and much in contrast. This partly stems from locally written constitutions, bylaws and statements of faith which often may be modified or completely rewritten by the congregation.

These documents provide a foundation for church theology and business. They are important but are not always read widely by congregation members. Indeed, after fire consumed FBC in 1912, ministry continued for several years without such documents and the church hardly missed a beat. It could rightly be said that First Baptist withstood the test of fire but its constitution did not. Admittedly these papers lack gripping plots. Besides the ultimate authority is the Bible, which members do read.

First Baptist incorporated in 1867. No records survive as to what documents preceded incorporation. These details probably were lost in the 1912 fire. FBC held regular business meetings from the start and held its first communion service in September, 1857, and regularly thereafter. Jesse Gurr and Tyler Carpenter were chosen deacons (the equivalent of our present day elders) and M.A. Mowe, John Daniels and Thomas Brooks were named trustees.

The early constitution entrusted spiritual discipline to the deacons. In the early years unexcused absences from communion meetings resulted in a deacon visit. One case of spiritual discipline was recorded in Joseph Leonard's History of Olmsted County (1910):

"A., who was a sincere but eccentric member of the Rochester Baptist Church, put in a winter teaming on the road,

his motive of power being yoke of oxen. On a blustery day when his hat blew off while trying to manage his unruly cattle, he committed the indiscretion of swearing soundly and profanely at them (and) . . . it becoming known to the church, a trial of the offender was held and he was expelled.

“He accepted the verdict philosophically, merely saying he did swear and supposed it was right to expel him, but he would like to ask Deacon C., the accuser, ‘Whether he ever drove stags.’ He afterward said that he swore and prayed to God and He forgave him, but Deacon C. never would. As he was a man of exemplary habits and lived a correct life several years after, it was presumed that he was reinstated.”

Minnesota law requires appointment of a group to be custodian of the properties and assets. Today members of our Elder Board deal with these issues. Our elders also submit the budget for congregational approval at the annual business meeting.

Typically, only the annual meeting is scheduled. State law requires special meetings for land purchase or sale. Similarly, special meetings are required to vote on a senior pastor, significant budget additions or using church property as security for a loan.

For most of the 1900’s FBC’s bylaws required its membership to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drink and beverage. In the early 1900’s a special offering was taken each year on the second Sunday in March for the Temperance Cause. Related speakers were invited regularly to speak from the pulpit, especially as prohibition gained momentum.

Billy Sunday’s campaign had a decided Temperance emphasis. The Temperance network allowed Mr. Sunday to organize soul

winning campaigns across denominational lines which included Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. When the Prohibition Amendment passed, enthusiasm for Sunday's traveling ministry waned.

Early FBC covenants also barred secret society memberships. It is not entirely known if this referred only to fraternal orders. Some felt lodge membership presented a potential doctrinal conflict (such as oaths, signs and purpose). The issue hardly is considered today because lodge membership is at an all time low. It is necessary to see this matter in a historical context to better understand why such a proviso was adopted. Since 1974, FBC bylaws have been silent regarding alcohol consumption and secret society affiliation.

One recent church development is Friday night's Celebrate Recovery (CR) initiative, which reaches people with hurts, habits and hang ups. It is a twelve-step, Christ-centered recovery program. Many have gained a deeper understanding of God's love, forgiveness and reconciliation. CR began in the living room of Pastor Gary and Bobbi Seaquist and has grown significantly. This ministry encourages healthy lifestyles and a genuine desire to lead others to Christ. In the bargain the church has been enriched by their zeal for the God of a second chance.

ARC has set out ash trays for people entering the building. ARC believes smokers and non-smokers alike can enjoy God's grace. Everyone is a work in progress and God welcomes us at whatever age or stage we are in our Christian walk.

Early covenants required FBC members to pledge annually "so that the church could budget accordingly." The voluntary offering remains at the heart of the church's ministries, but other methods

have raised additional funds. In the mid-1860's the Ladies Aid Society organized entertainment in downtown stores to help pay off church remodeling costs. In 1912, tickets ranging from fifty cents to \$2 were sold for an organ recital in the sanctuary. That campaign raised \$142. Also, advertising space was sold for services or products publicized in church magazines and directories. Members no longer make annual general fund pledges, although commitments are made to building funds or facilities and specific mission or outreach projects.

The ARC constitution has been changed and rewritten several times. In the 1940's, the church had separate trustee (properties), deacon (elder) and advisory boards. In April, 1950, the deacons and trustees merged. Three years later the "super board" concept was abandoned. In 1974, a constitution was written that included an Advisory Board comprised of various committee leaders. This board had responsibilities for budget, personnel and administration, but the deacons (now called elders) remained the senior board.

More recently, the constitution was revised upon Pastor John Steer's arrival in the early 1990's. That constitution remains the basis of today's constitution. The New Testament church title of "elders" was given to senior board members and the group is called the Elder Board. Other committees, called deacon councils, were more involved with direct ministry. Councils have been replaced with Deacon Ministry Teams. The ministry team concept was modeled after some larger churches that had already transitioned through membership growth. Churches with memberships exceeding 1,000 typically are more staff-directed. Twelve elders serve three-year

terms; four rotate off annually. Elders may return to the board after a year's absence.

Although the constitution is gender neutral, some believe that the Bible is not. So far only men have been elders. In the 1980's, FBC ordained Carla Werre as a nursing home chaplain. All women pastors are licensed. These ladies attend ARC elder board meetings and are available for input. The most oft-given reason against expediting women to church leadership is preservation of church unity.

Currently only elders and the church clerk are voted into office. The clerk's sole duties are at business meetings. Long ago, FBC had runoff elections, but no more. Candidates can be nominated from the floor with their consent, but that has never happened. Usually business meetings are fairly short considering the agenda's gravity. Often elders hold meetings to answer questions; especially prior to the annual meeting or any other meeting requiring a vote of the membership.

While church office holding can be demanding, church business is fun and a high honor that dates back to FBC's founding families. Like any team process, elders must give and take. One hundred fifty years from now the leaders of our era will be history's pioneers. Who from our time will be a footnote in that Autumn Ridge Church account?

Despite the efforts to keep our eye on the prize, Autumn Ridge's heritage also includes getting mired in its own vanity and pride. Such most prominently has been the case when religion has mixed with politics.

Chapter 5

Separation of church and state

In 1960, the prospect of a Roman Catholic president posed a bit of a dilemma for First Baptist Church. Baptists historically have stood for separation of church and state based on Luke 20:25: "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." The U.S. Constitution affirms this, saying that Congress shall pass no law which may "prohibit the free exercise of religion."

The Baptist faith began in England where the crown saw the state and church as one. To preach outside the Church of England in early days was considered treasonous and a challenge to the crown, who headed the church. Such conduct could result in years in jail without trial. Many "incurable" Baptists in those days were imprisoned. Some were killed. After all, they were preaching without a license. This was the case with John Bunyan who spent 12 years in prison and wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* and other famous works while doing time.

Early Baptists were denied university or seminary training and excluded from key professions such as law, banking, teaching, government service, military officers and the clergy. To be a Baptist was criminal and impoverishing. Baptist clergy were often untrained and qualified only by "the call." Their preaching aimed more to the heart than to the mind. Some Baptists are still anti-intellectual. In the movie *A River Runs Through It*, the Presbyterian minister describes Methodists as "nothing more than educated Baptists."

Baptists in colonial days simply wanted freedom to worship. This meant freedom *from* government. They ran into problems with

Massachusetts' state church. But America's sparse rural population enabled them to find sanctuary in Rhode Island. Left alone, Baptists grew dramatically in the 1800's and became dominant in certain regions. To some extent those Baptists adopted a "might is right" mentality which belied their early days of scorn and rebuke. Baptists were now part of the power structure. Their white pillars and steeples in the public square symbolized their influence.

Challenges to Baptist views were not always tempered with gentle love and reconciliation but by being gatekeepers of the status quo. Large congregations, some reasoned, affirmed God's blessing. They carried, almost, the same gospel of prosperity they had challenged 300 years earlier. Their power had become institutionalized rather than heart felt.

In 1960, Republican Vice President Richard Nixon of California and Democrat Senator John Kennedy of Massachusetts faced off for the presidency. Nixon was a Quaker, political conservative and strong anti-communist. Kennedy was a Roman Catholic who was more middle-of-the road in politically.

Because no Catholic had ever served in national office, church preference became a campaign focus. The only other Catholic presidential candidate, Governor Al Smith of New York, lost to Herbert Hoover in 1928. Some felt that Catholics were unelectable. Public opinion showed that the race was too close to call. Any issue could be decisive.

First Baptist Pastor Kenneth Muck agonized over the prospects of a Roman Catholic president. That summer he wrote:

“We recognize that the church is not a political forum, yet when spiritual issues are involved, it becomes our God directed duty to speak out unhesitatingly.”

Shortly before the 1960 National Democratic Convention, Pastor Muck wrote on the back page of the morning worship service bulletin:

“The history of the Roman Catholic Church is a sordid story of persecution for those who would not bow to its authority. Our president must be a man who is free to follow the dictates of his own conscience and not the one who resides in Rome. Freedom of worship is one of our blessed privileges. It could be taken away.

“The issues affect every American in his public life and his private life as well. While all these things may not take place at once, it is an opening wedge which is the principle upon which the Roman Catholic Church has functioned. The Roman Catholic Church has never changed its purposes and basic procedures for any country or generation. We need to be much in prayer that God will continue to give direction in the affairs of our land. As believers, we face probably one of the greatest challenges our country has ever experienced. Let’s stay awake.”

As the national elections drew closer, Pastor Muck wrote:

“The question of Mr. Kennedy’s allegiance to the constitution of our country is not the real issue. The statements which he has made regarding separation of church and state are not the real issue. The proposition of past performance as part of our military do not necessarily bolster his personal convictions relative to the office of the president. The abilities and character of Mr. Kennedy are important but do not cover up the real issue. It is not sufficient to say that we

have a system of checks and balances that will control a man's actions and decisions in the White House. Common sense tells us that historically these very protections can be wiped out very subtly and efficiently.

"The real issue is the fact that the Roman Catholic Church believes that it is sovereign not only in the realm of the spiritual life but also in the government of any land it controls. We need face FACTS and not be fooled. Winning personalities and pre-election promises do not change the bold picture which history has painted."

On the Sunday closest to Kennedy's inauguration Pastor Muck wrote:

"At the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches (NCC) held in San Francisco in December 1960 some significant statements were made. These leaders of the National Council unveiled their program for the Great World Church by the presentation of a 10 year program that will unite all Christian churches, with the ultimate goal which is union with the Roman Catholic Church . . .

"The NCC, as we know, is seeking to speak as the authoritative voice of Protestantism, yet it is the greatest conglomeration of beliefs one could ever imagine. Coupled with varying theological affirmations and denials is a strong push in favor of Communism. There are many religious leaders who are part of Communist front groups and many who are advocating the admission of Red China to the UN organization. It is no wonder that these things confuse the average man."

Pastor Muck believed that the National Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Movement would lead to a one-world church.

He saw international communism as the emerging one-world government. These determinations led him to conclude that the 1960's were at or near the end times. During the presidential campaign, Muck began a series of evening services on the Book of Revelation. Many of these themes were woven into his sermons. His powerful oratory lent impact to the messages. Preaching from this text he stated, from First Baptist's pulpit, that a Roman Catholic was unfit to be president of the United States.

As president, John Kennedy deflected his church affiliation so that Catholicism has not subsequently been an issue. Still JFK remains the only Catholic to occupy the White House.

A vice president from Texas

In 1960, Jim Cain and his family were very active First Baptist members. Cain was a Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist who came from Texas in the forties. After time in the military he returned to Rochester and soon became a First Baptist trustee. In 1951, Cain was Deacon Board chairman. Later he taught Sunday school and chaired a planning committee that led to a church addition. The four Cain children were also very active. The family rarely missed Sunday morning or evening services.

Dr. Cain trained at the University of Texas in Austin. His Southern Democrat father paid his medical school tuition during the Depression from his postmaster's salary in Austin, Texas—a job the father received through party patronage.

In Austin he courted and married Ida May Wirtz. One of the couples the Cains double dated with was Lyndon and Lady Bird

Johnson. In Lady Bird's diary the former First Lady described Dr. and Mrs. Cain as "our friend and doctor since the thirties."

The Cains knew the Johnsons through Ida May's lawyer father, Alvin Wirtz. Wirtz served briefly in the Texas State Senate with LBJ's father, Sam. Wirtz helped get LBJ his first Washington job as a congressional aide. After Johnson lost that job, Wirtz went directly to Franklin Roosevelt, asking him to appoint Johnson head of the National Youth Administration in Texas.

At 27, LBJ was the youngest such director. In 1937, Wirtz's congressman died and Wirtz managed Johnson's first congressional campaign. In 1948, Wirtz engineered LBJ's 87-vote Democratic primary win and then represented his candidate when the election was litigated to LBJ's satisfaction. That outcome earned LBJ the lifetime nickname of *Landslide Lyndon*.

Wirtz was Roosevelt's Undersecretary of the Interior. FDR counted on him heavily to rally New Deal support in Texas. Besides being a political insider, Wirtz was senior partner in the lucrative law practice of Powell, Wirtz and Rauhut. One of the firm's key clients is now known as Halliburton, a major builder of dams and airports and today a contractor in Iraq. It was Wirtz who got the Johnsons to invest in KTBC Radio, which formed the basis for the family business empire. He also gained sweetheart FCC licenses which multiplied these properties' value.

According to LBJ biographer Alfred Steinberg, Alvin Wirtz saw Johnson as a "substitute son" and served as a "political godfather." Johnson spent a lot of time at the Wirtz home. He knew the Wirtz family as well as his own.

Alvin Wirtz died of a heart attack in 1951. In the mid-fifties his widow, Kitty Wirtz, came to Rochester to be near her only daughter. Mrs. Wirtz joined First Baptist in 1956 and sat in the second row to the right facing the pastor every Sunday. Because my mother was organist in those years, I sat just in front of the Cain family. They were the first family to greet me every Sunday for several years. And Jim Cain was the only person to write me regarding this history when it was first written in 1982.

In 1960, a political “shotgun marriage” put LBJ on the Kennedy ticket. Both men were strikingly different in style, upbringing and power base. But JFK needed LBJ to carry the South. Still, the Kennedy and Johnson people had little mutual admiration. Privately, Jim Cain was telling friends. “We will vote for Lyndon but we do not approve of his running mate.”

That fall Kennedy-Johnson won by one of the narrowest popular votes to that time—since surpassed by the 2000 Bush-Gore election. Kennedy-Johnson carried Minnesota, although the strongly Republican Olmsted County voted for Nixon-Lodge.

The Southern Baptists founded Rochester Emmanuel Baptist in 1960 and the next year the Cains and Mrs. Wirtz transferred their memberships and stayed there until they died. The Cain daughters transferred their memberships to churches nearby their college campuses. The family left graciously and once in a while returned to FBC for special events. Twice, Emmanuel Baptist had building dedications at which the noted W.A. Chriswell, of First Baptist, Dallas, spoke. It was always thought that the Cain-Wirtz connection spurred Chriswell to come from the Lone Star state to the North Star state for those observances.

In 1963 an assassin's bullet put Lyndon Johnson in the White House and the Johnson-Cain relationship blossomed. Johnson named Cain to several special assignments. Cain accompanied the president on some overseas diplomatic missions and the Cains spent several nights in the White House. In 1964 Jim Cain helped direct the Johnson-Humphrey campaign in Minnesota which carried the state by a landslide. This time, LBJ carried Olmsted County.

When Johnson needed gallbladder surgery in 1965, Cain assembled a team of Mayo Clinic doctors. In a rare exception to Clinic policy the operation was performed in Washington. It was Dr. Cain who released LBJ's condition statement to the national media.

Toward the end of LBJ's four-year term, the First Lady asked Dr. Cain if her husband should seek reelection. Dr. Cain said that the president was healthy enough. But was he electable? Johnson retired from office after his term concluded in 1969.

LBJ had Mayo Clinic ties since 1941. After leaving the presidency he expressed through Dr. Cain a willingness to serve as Mayo Foundation trustee. The former president served until his death on January 22, 1972. Since then other former First Families have also had Mayo connections.

Dr. Cain second-guessed himself about LBJ's fatal heart attack at 64. By-pass surgery was available but uncommon when Cain advised against it. Such an operation may have extended the former president's life by a decade according to one cardiologist.

Evangelist Billy Graham delivered the Johnson funeral eulogy and Graham's personal assistant, Robert Featherstone, wrote the message. Rev. Featherstone was FBC's pastor in the early 1960's. In

1972 he was based in Rochester while his first wife, Gladys, underwent Mayo cancer treatments.

On May 2, 1980 a Rochester *Post-Bulletin* letter to the editor was published:

“Surely the born-again Christian knows better than anyone that government and the church must be separate. I think the Lord has blessed our country because we have claimed to be a Christian nation (meaning that we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior) and because each person is free to worship his own conscience.” The letter was signed “Ida May Cain.”

In 1976, Americans sent a Baptist Sunday school teacher and peanut farmer, Jimmy Carter, from Plains, Georgia to the White House. This moderate Southern democrat enjoyed only short-lived support from the Christian Right. Carter became a one-term president and the Moral Majority, led by Jerry Falwell, a Baptist Bible Fellowship pastor from Virginia, helped elect Ronald Reagan in 1980.

The Moral Majority didn't resonate at FBC. What was taking hold were concepts advanced by Christian philosopher and theologian, Francis Schaeffer who founded L'Abri with wife Edith in 1955. In the early 1980's, Dr. Schaeffer was diagnosed with cancer and the Schaeffers came to Rochester for treatment at Mayo Clinic.

Dr. Schaeffer held a L'Abri Conference at John Marshall High School and partnered on video with Ronald Reagan's future U.S. Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop. Until then abortion opposition came mostly from people of Catholic persuasion.

Schaeffer was one of the first respected Protestant thinkers to offer a compelling brief against abortion. He argued that Psalm 139:13, “You knit me together in my mother's womb,” was more than

a figure of speech. Likewise, Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I met you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart" he said, upheld sanctity of life for the unborn. He predicted that abortion would lead to infanticide, and diminish the value of the old, disabled and terminally ill. Life would become a slippery slope. He stated, "We (Christians) are the radicals," and urged his adherents to boldly step forward. Opponents were labeled secular humanists denoting a human rather than God-centered moral core. Humanists became the modern day Sadducees. This agenda was an urgent call to arms unlike no moral issue since slavery.

Partly because *Roe v. Wade* (1973) was researched and written in Rochester by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, local Protestant resistance came slowly. Blackmun enjoyed coffee at Holland's with the downtown old boys when he was an appeals court judge in the 1960's. Ken Carlson, my father and a longtime FBC member, shared in these coffee table discussions, which could be intense. Nevertheless the men parted as friends and the next day picked up where they left off. Publicans and sinners of all stripes were welcome.

Blackmun's views always carried more weight because of his intellectual depth and reserve. Dad worked for the firm that built the Blackmun home and, with rare exception, Dad stood up for his customers. Once, when a FBC man labeled Justice Blackmun a degenerate, Dad said "I think you will be pretty much surprised some day with the people you'll find in heaven." Harry Blackmun was a Methodist and even personal faith discussions were held at Holland's. My son was born the day the *Roe* decision came down and my memories are vivid. FBC was largely silent on abortion then.

Dr. Schaeffer died in 1985 but his abortion views fueled a movement. Not since Temperance had evangelicals entered the political fray.

Social conservatives (irreverently called “born againers”) in unprecedented numbers attended neighborhood Republican caucuses and county conventions. They differed widely from Minnesota Republicans Blackmun and Warren Burger, who authored abortion on demand. Try as they might, attempts to remove Rochester’s pro-choice Republicans failed.

Meanwhile, Rochester’s public schools were attracting many non-Christian immigrants. School choirs dropped Christmas carols. Christmas vacation became winter break. Public schools taught reproductive health, including birth control. Drugs and alcohol curricula were mandated. Some Christians felt the Judeo-Christian ethic had been replaced by moral relativism. They claimed falling test scores affirmed their concern. They criticized the teachers union’s resolution affirming a women’s right to choose reproductive health. Rochester referendums failed multiple times in a city that used to pass nearly all school board requests.

FBC elders adopted a statement showing no favor to public, private or home schooling and published it in FBC’s *First In Touch* newsletter. A fellow teacher asked me “What does this mean?” I could only say, “It means what it says.”

Many FBC families, including heart transplant surgeon and FBC elder Steve Munn, helped form Schaeffer Academy. Others from FBC joined its staff in the mid 1990’s. This school offers a unique and rigorous classical college prep curriculum with a Christian emphasis. Schaeffer’s name was used with his widow, Edith’s, blessing and

draws students from many churches. Educational interests rather than hot button social interests drove its formation.

In the 1990's, FBC's Dick Larson, after a long IBM career, became Congressman Gil Gutknecht's Rochester field representative. Larson also chaired the Olmsted GOP Finance Committee. This University of Chicago MBA studied under 1976 Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman. Larson is a patient fence mender and bridge builder who pragmatically and analytically uses his organizational talents for the people's greater good. Repeatedly he chaired church boards and has worked tirelessly for Autumn Ridge for over thirty years.

In 2006 two Autumn Ridge members ran for the state legislature. Carla Nelson, a onetime public school teacher and businesswoman, sought to regain her House seat after a two-year absence. Scott Wright, a Mayo cardiologist, ran for an open Senate seat. Wright did part of his Mayo residency under Jim Cain and attended Emmanuel Baptist with Jim and Ida Mae (both Cain and Wright were avid ham radio operators). But 2006 was not a Republican year and despite running honorable campaigns, Nelson and Wright both lost. Greg Davids, a new member, was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in the last election. Greg is from Preston and represents a rural district made up of Fillmore County.

Political misadventures do not necessarily mean that the church should minister to one person at a time. Twentieth Century technology expanded the church's potential audience exponentially while preserving the need for a personalized ministry. While it is not entirely clear how technology and the human touch can most effectively be yoked, the church has tried them all with mixed results.

Chapter 6

Use of media

First Baptist always has been willing to consider all options and methods in its mission to reach people for Jesus Christ. So when KROC became Minnesota's first radio station outside the Twin Cities and Duluth, FBC plunged ahead, sponsoring the *Back Home Hour* on Sundays at 9 p.m. along with a 15-minute morning program Tuesday through Friday at 10.

Radio

FBC moved its Sunday night program to Sunday morning on May 2, 1943. In the mid-1960s, the 15-minute programs were shortened to vignettes heard twice daily, since radio was moving away from block programming.

KROC AM had been a general-service station with middle-of-the-road music. In the late 1970s, FBC's daily programs were replaced with 30-second commercials and run on both KROC and KWEB.

The 1930s introduced the *Golden Age of Radio*. Many families scheduled their week around the popular dramas and comedies. Radio was the cheapest and most accessible entertainment of the Great Depression. Radio personalities were household names as broadcasting had become the primary medium. KROC, with its NBC affiliation, was Rochester's clearest signal and, until the late 1950s, only local station.

FBC's radio program gave the church and its minister greater recognition. FBC was Rochester's first, and for many years only,

church with a daily radio ministry. When FBC was between ministers, interim pastors or laymen sometimes continued the programs, or the broadcasts were suspended. When a new pastor arrived he met with KROC management and went through the formality of reinstating the programs.

This occurred when Robert Featherstone arrived in Rochester in May 1964. Pastor Featherstone met with station manager Bob Fick and was introduced to a more rough and tumble side of broadcasting. Radio was changing and programming was now targeting to specific ages, genders, income groups, educational levels and other demographic descriptors. In larger markets, ratings measured listener preferences and those days were at hand in Rochester. Full-service stations were disappearing. Competing country and pop formats had specific goals, and KROC was forced to change with the times.

Featherstone was graciously ushered into a nice conference room where he expected to hear the deferential talk a minister often hears. Instead, Fick said, "Gentlemen, we have a business to run. If some preacher loses our audience it takes time to get it back. That makes our advertising harder to sell and KROC loses money. Featherstone, you'd better be good."

In 1964, FBC was spending \$2,800 annually with KROC. From my experience in radio in the late 1970s, individual 30-second announcements for a customer using a thousand per year ran \$2 to \$3 each. Very few advertisers used radio on that scale. In the late fifties, FBC spent nearly \$4,000 on radio and was perhaps KROC's biggest account. This business was low maintenance as no copy had to be changed and the church paid its bills promptly. It was probably a

house account meaning that no salesman earned a commission. Yet, Featherstone left the station feeling that he had to prove himself. He had to be good from the start but he had no previous radio experience.

Featherstone was blessed with an enthusiastic, crisp, articulate and resonant radio voice. He also came to know that creative ideas, good writing and a hard hitting short story were the basis of effective radio communication.

Soon Featherstone's radio ministry made him well known in Rochester. The Catholic Lourdes High School aired his daily KROC programs to students over their house speakers. Some nuns attended Featherstone's evening services long before the pope made broad reforms making such visits more common. Other visitors also started coming.

In hindsight, Bob Fick said "That Featherstone is a helluva a preacher." (I worked for Fick in the early 1970s at KROC). KROC's staff carried Pastor Featherstone's short *Think About It* vignettes for many years as a public service. They were syndicated by Northwestern College and KTIS Radio in Roseville, Minnesota, to more than a hundred stations. Featherstone spent more than twenty-five years in Christian broadcasting and managed several BGEA properties.

Featherstone later admitted "Bob Fick said exactly what I needed to hear. In fact, every preacher needs a jolt like that once in a while to make him better." In 1975, Featherstone joined Bethel Seminary and taught a communications course. He enjoyed sharing the Fick anecdote with his students.

FBC stopped airing its Sunday services in the early 1980's. For many years this practice was perpetuated due to tradition rather than results. The main argument was that the sick and the elderly listened to these broadcasts. But tapes could be distributed far more cheaply. Furthermore, KFSI, a local Christian radio station, was now broadcasting full time. Televangelists also were readily available.

Surveys could not even measure FBC's audience, suggesting that listener impact was numerically negligible. Several missionaries could be supported for the cost FBC paid for radio time. That had appeal, because radio was a missionary budget line item. But staff and church leaders alike were afraid to recommend ending the broadcasts for fear it might cause hard feelings. Broadcasting had become a signature church tradition. Eventually, partly due to budget considerations, FBC stopped broadcasting the morning worship service. Zumbro Lutheran filled the Sunday morning slot and has been on KROC ever since.

In 2006, ARC returned to radio and aired its worship services on KOLM-AM. Prior to that, recordings were distributed for a small charge. The return to broadcasting is on a smaller scale than years ago.

Television

In the early years, television probably had the same impact on American society as computers have today. America's vaudeville could be seen in living rooms. Pop culture could be created overnight. Certain programs had a true grip on our schedules. Others claim TV has changed our language, behavior and even morals. At First Baptist the evening service was moved from 7:30 to 7

in part to permit members to view popular network programs after church.

FBC first used television in 1960. The church bought half an hour at 12:30 Thursday afternoons on KROC (now KTTC) TV. The 13-week schedule cost \$715 and originated from the old KROC studio on what is now Country Club Road east of Rochester. Pastor Kenneth Muck and Minister of Music LeRoy Peterson were the main participants. Peterson sang and directed a men's chorus and a girl's trio. The program was discontinued at the end of 13 weeks.

In 1973, FBC decided to try TV again, this time on cable television. Sunday's service was videotaped and shown at the supper hour on Thursdays and on the following Sunday morning.

Rochester's cable access channel was in its infancy. Lighting was insufficient and shadows made choir faces indistinguishable. Only one camera was used. No editing was done.

The no-frills program featured what the industry strives to avoid—a "talking head." Cable TV had no credible viewer surveys and the audience was limited to Rochester subscribers. Who watched? Nobody ever knew. Still, the service was on cable for two years. The final 16 weeks cost \$4,700. Since that experiment, FBC has not ventured into TV except for occasional close circuit TV to receive instructional programs.

Publications

FBC's first known publication circulated during F.C. Whitney's pastorate (1900-07). A few copies of this paper, *The Message*, are in the Olmsted Historical Society archives.

A revised version called *The Gospel Message* came out in 1910. This bi-monthly mini-magazine usually was 16 pages and sold for an annual subscription of 25 cents. It accepted advertising from local businesses. One thousand issues were produced in each print run, with proceeds going to the FBC Young People's Society. *The Gospel Message* was a digest of articles from other publications and included FBC business reports and an editorial from the pastor. The 1912 fire probably ended this publication.

The next publication surfaced in 1964 as *The Link*. For the next thirty years or so this newsletter was nurtured by Zelda Ehrhorn. Zelda was a watercolor artist, dramatic reader, teacher and perhaps sort of the church grandmother. She was also the first woman trustee or property council member. She was nominated knowing that nobody would vote against her. Nobody felt it odd for a woman to serve in that capacity. Now women serve on building committees too.

As computers emerged it became necessary for FBC to hire talent to do the needed word processing. Sherrie Porterfield, a computer free lancer, began doing FBC special projects including *First In Touch*, *The Link's* successor. When the church moved into its newest facility and changed its name to Autumn Ridge the publication was renamed *RidgeLines*. Today the full-color publication is distributed as a worship bulletin and includes an interactive sermon outline form, pastoral column, an elder report, introductions of new members, announcements, births, deaths, hospitalizations and other news and information.

The sign

Sometimes people react more to how something is told than to what is actually said—style over substance. For centuries, crosses, paintings, sculptures and stained glass have artistically portrayed the story of Christian redemption. But telling the message with a neon sign is an approach that had not yet been tried in Rochester.

In 1941, a FBC widower, E.D. Hubbard, offered to donate a large neon sign to the church in his wife's memory. Hubbard was not well known at FBC as he and his wife had taught Sunday school at Bamber Valley. That rural school, though only three miles out of town, was considered far away. The Hubbards seldom attended services downtown. Nevertheless the congregation accepted Mr. Hubbard's kind offer.

The sign was positioned atop the church. In letters you could see from a long way off, it boldly exclaimed: JESUS SAVES. Because the church was situated on one of the city's busiest corners, the sign was one of the most visible outdoor messages in downtown Rochester.

Longtime FBC leader, Milt Scholer recalled there was considerable controversy among church members regarding the sign's installation. The prevailing view, however, was that the message conveyed by the sign accurately and succinctly communicated First Baptist's statement of faith. Proponents felt this message indeed should be boldly proclaimed. So for a quarter of a century, FBC came to be known as "the church with JESUS SAVES on the roof."

Predictably the sign generated local reaction. Many comments teased and ridiculed it. In his biography, the sign was the focus for

Dr. Chuck Mayo's rich sense of humor. Recalling construction of the Mayo Building, he wrote . . . "the building was rising behind its construction wall when I tangled with my friend Dr. Howard Gray over a trivial matter. The contractors and electricians and those concerned with the new building wanted a large sign erected to state what was being built and who was doing it.

"Many of the (Mayo Clinic) Board (of Governors) thought this was ostentatious and Howdie [*sic*] was a devout Baptist and as fixed in his ideas as I am in mine, so I thought to break tension with a light recommendation. 'We'll take the sign off the Baptist Church that says JESUS SAVES' I told him, and we'll get a picture of me and put it on the other side with the words 'So does Mayo.' Howdie thought that was unpardonably irreverent and didn't speak to me for three weeks."

Sometimes people would kid "What does Jesus do after 10 o'clock?" in reference to turning off the sign at night. On another occasion pranksters scaled the church roof and, to JESUS SAVES, added GOLD BOND STAMPS. Gold Bond stamps were point of purchase stamps that could be redeemed for an array of premiums. One co-worker of mine admitted involvement in this caper when he attended what was then Rochester Junior College across the street.

When the FBC structure beneath the sign was sold to Mayo Foundation the sign went with it. Faith Bible Church, KFSI-FM and Faith Christian School installed the sign on their southeast Rochester campus along Marion Road. The sign is less prominent there and no longer generates conversation.

Many FBC members vividly recall when the JESUS SAVES sign beamed the Bible's message to passers by. When the sign

disappeared from downtown there were those who missed its presence; others were quietly relieved.

Technology

The 1990's ushered in several tools unknown a decade earlier. These devices included: personal computers, networking systems, internet, e-mail, software of all descriptions, cell phones (with William Tell Overture ringers), fax machines, digital electronics (phones, cameras, amplification systems, video games, sound recorders, big screen TVs and even the church organ).

Many of these advances had immediate application to ministry. It became possible to instantly and inexpensively communicate with missionaries worldwide. Cell phones and laptops made office work portable and convenient. Information could easily be accessed online via computer, eliminating the need for a church library.

Study helps could be stored on a single compact disc (CD). It was possible to easily provide agendas and to e-mail clarifications. Data bases could be maintained for mailing lists, addressing envelopes, financial statements, pictorial directories, graphic arts and a host of applications.

Rear screen power point projection came into common use during worship services, weddings and funerals. In its newest facility, ARC has two large screens for viewing by the congregation and a rear screen for the choir and speakers. Teaching became multi-sensory in nature—visual, oral and written—each reinforcing the other. Church events were routinely preserved onto professional quality audio and video discs.

It was hardly possible to keep pace with the all the technological advances. When the church was moving into the new ARC campus, thieves wanted the sound system (the thieves were apprehended and one sought forgiveness, and became a believer). Security cameras now scan the building. The church must be evermore vigilant about identity theft and data privacy. A state-of-the-art computerized child check-in was implemented for Sunday school students at ARC.

Electronic advances have changed our language, leisure time and work methodology. And for the most part the advances are desirable. People can now visit ARC's web site and listen to Pastor Steer wherever they are. On the other hand computers also heighten child safety concerns, concerns about pornography, criminal hacking and even terrorism. Historians will no longer have written diaries and letters to go to for reference, making it harder to find and reconstruct primary sources.

Whether the message comes from a sign, a loud speaker, or a computer network, the message applies to all. That message has been sent to Rochester's neighborhoods and worldwide by this church.

Chapter 7

Missions

FBC's 16th Street location had parking lot exit signs reading: "You are now entering your mission field." Nearby was a sidewalk STOP sign. One sign emphasized missions as a mindset. The other told us to look both ways before crossing. Many jokes were made about how these signs put a new twist on the Great Commission: "Go, but watch out."

The Bible is clear about sending missionaries to the ends of the earth and Baptists historically have taken missions seriously. A church active in missions is demonstrating God's love. It requires faith to support ministries to people we don't know. It tests our faith when these people not only reject Jesus but may even burglarize a home or threaten a missionary family.

Autumn Ridge Church has a rich missionary tradition both home and abroad. Many of our greatest outreaches have been from ordinary local people whose resumes indicated no previous special likelihood for career success in missions.

Home missions

Autumn Ridge Church itself is an American Baptist Home Mission Society offspring. The society sent the founding pastor and provided financial help for the first two buildings. Once the church was self-sufficient the Home Mission Society went on to planting other frontier churches.

During E.R. Pope's pastorate (1887-94) the membership voted to alternate four benevolent collections annually for state missions and foreign missions.

First Baptist's home missions included special meetings or revival services. The most notable was Billy Sunday in 1906. His Rochester appearance that January followed the evangelist's standard campaign strategy. The evangelist's track record suggested that contributions would cover initial costs. Sunday kept the final two offerings, which totaled \$2,000. As a particularly colorful, humorous, and animated speaker he was booked three years ahead. When he left Rochester he was escorted to the railroad station by 1,500 people.

Traveling orators, religious or secular, drew well in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Amplification systems didn't exist so a powerful voice was needed to project the message. Churches had no loud speakers either. The preachers themselves were loud speakers.

Tent meetings drew well in the 1930's when FBC held six weeks of special meetings each year. Sometimes the meetings would be held in two, three-week installments. Other times they would be 42 meetings spread throughout the year. Members often provided meals and housing and the Mayo Clinic extended professional courtesy to clergy. Mayo check ups induced evangelists to come to FBC. Church records indicate that some meetings drew crowds of 800 people.

The last big name evangelists came to Rochester in the late 1940's. Charles E. Fuller of the *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* radio program preached at the Mayo Civic Auditorium. Fuller was the first national radio evangelist. His name is memorialized by Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California. In September, 1948, Billy Graham

came to the same venue. Both came under Youth For Christ (YFC) sponsorship, but FBC members provided most of the top local leadership. Pastor George Edstrom was Rochester's YFC local director. On January 22, 1950, Billy Graham spoke at Rochester's Central School Auditorium where Mayo's Dan Abrahams Healthy Living Center is located today.

Home ministries mostly fall into three areas: camps, campus ministries and youth. This overview will focus on those with long-term and/or hometown ties.

One important FBC home ministry starting in the early 1940's was the American Sunday School Union. Rev. John Larson, a Swedish immigrant, started the Union (now American Missionary Fellowship, or AMF). He still is remembered affectionately as "Uncle John."

AMF's most significant local outreach is Camp Victory located below the Rochester Public Utilities power dam in 2006. Recently Camp Victory received a \$2.5-million anonymous donation through the Rochester Foundation. Half the gift helped retire camp debt; the other half set up an endowment from which income could be used for general operating expenses. Jim and Jan Barnhart have led AMF since 1970. Several FBC couples including Vic and Phyllis Scott, Dale and Kris Wiens and Lowell and Joanne Erickson have played key roles either as board members, volunteers or both.

Peggy Weeks headed up Child Evangelism in the 1950's, organizing neighborhood after school Bible clubs. Participation was widespread and cut across denominational lines. FBC discontinued support in 1959 when it began to limit sponsorships to Regular Baptist-approved ministries.

In 1958, FBC planted a church in Country Club Manor, then a developing neighborhood west of Rochester. A home doubling as a chapel and parsonage was purchased and a minister was hired. The church organized in 1959 with nine charter members but closed in the early 1960's. The property was sold in 1964.

Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch near Stewartville grew out of tragedy when its founder and FBC member, Bob Bardwell, was paralyzed in a road construction accident in 1973. As Bob is apt to say, "Better to be paralyzed from the waist down than the head up." Ironwood's land was acquired in 1976. Ironwood has had wide usage by youth, schools and charitable groups. The Miracle Lodge for wheelchair campers is now completed. There is a beautiful horse arena and log chapel. Snow tubing is a popular winter activity. Dan Ostergard is a longtime camp employee and several ARC men, including Rusty Fiek and Burt Peterson, have been longtime volunteers.

FBC implemented Pioneer Girls and Boys Brigade in the 1970's. In 1981 AWANA replaced Pioneer Girls and shortly thereafter the boys did the same. Wednesday night is Kid's Club at Autumn Ridge and attracts a large number of children during the school year.

In the late 1990's, First Baptist formed a foundation, called Olmsted Outreach, to sponsor fledgling ministries lacking non-profit status. The foundation allows charities not yet recognized as non-profits to accept tax deductible contributions under its umbrella. Since the 9-11 attacks, obtaining non-profit status is costlier and more complicated.

In the 1990's three prominent local ministries needed this help: Rochester Community Youth Outreach, Rochester Network for Re-entry and Friendship Place.

Rochester Community Youth Outreach—Sandy Cookman, a long-time ARC member and former registered nurse, started Rochester Community Youth Outreach (CYO), which targets at-risk and troubled youth. Her positive attitude and constant smile contribute to her unrelenting determination to help people at Rochester's rougher edges. Her husband, Les, coached the Mayo High School girls' basketball team to a state championship. Since retirement Les has increased his CYO workload. The Cookman's daughter-in-law, Monica, has also been involved.

CYO reaches street kids that church services fail to attract. Some are homeless, have unsafe homes, are gang members or are on probation. The price of ministry can be high. Assailants mistakenly gunned down the Cookman's foster son, Sam, whom they met through the ministry. Sam's funeral service was held at FBC under heavy police security. (The murderers were quickly apprehended and convicted.)

Rochester Network for Re-entry—Andy Kilen was an over-the-road truck driver and a tile setter. In the early 1990's, Andy began visiting prisoners. With no special credentials, he just kept returning to the prisons where he conducted Bible studies.

In 2000, that ministry gave birth to Rochester Network for Re-Entry. In 2002, the network purchased Discipleship House, across from Bethel Lutheran Church, with FBC's help. Recently released prisoners now live there. In 2004, a second home down the street called Fellowship Home was acquired. In 2006, a third house was

added. Significant gifts have enabled the Network to operate with small or no operating debt.

ARC members Gary Melin, Max Broadwater, Mike Murray, Carla Nelson and retired Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice Sandy Keith, are board members. Andy Kilen's wife, Peggy, has been Re-Entry's "Volunteer of the Year." Some years ago Peggy told Andy he was "crazy" to take this step of faith. Now she has become at least as crazy as her husband. Rochester Network has now taken over the ministries of Community Youth Outreach.

Friendship Place—Friendship Place operates after school in a home east of the Olmsted County Fairgrounds. Coyla Shepard started the ministry after working with Sandy Cookman.

Coyla, a teacher by training, saw a need to encourage and connect with disadvantaged children—many from other lands. Outside of Friendship Place these children may be rivals. Inside, Coyla and her volunteers model God's love and teach mutual respect. Coyla is one of four FBC Exchange Club "Book of Golden Deeds" winners (Ray Wagoner, Bernice Scholer, and Evelyn Wiley are the others). High school youth and FBC adults volunteer at Friendship Place.

Chuck Hohnbaum, former chair of our Elder Board, and Paul Hemenway serve in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Chuck and Kathy moved to Madison, Wisconsin in July, 2007, where his job will expand as chief of staff to the president of InterVarsity. Paul works on the University of Wisconsin—LaCrosse campus where he graduated in the 1990's. Paul is the son of George and Sally Hemenway.

Congregational nursing emerged in the late 1990s through the efforts of Betty Steiner-Kershaw and Sandy Stensland. Part of this volunteer ministry included healthy living education, support during illness and death and public health issues such as monitoring blood pressure.

Foreign missions

The women of FBC were first to champion foreign mission activities. This account in the History of Winona and Olmsted Counties (1883) gives the beginnings of foreign missions at First Baptist:

“The First Baptist Foreign Missions Society was organized during the year 1873 by Mrs. L.B. Telford. Among the early faithful workers are found the names of: Mrs. T.W. Stebbins, Mrs. Margaret Kent, Mrs. M. Collins, Mrs. Goodale, Mrs. C.F. Anderson and Miss H. Messenger.

“The Society has steadily increased in strength and interest and has now connected with it in a mission band presided over by Miss C.O. Severance. For five years the Woman’s Society supported a Bible reader in China under Miss Fields and has since, in connection with the mission band, aided support of Miss Field.”

In 1907, FBC contributed to some overseas outreaches. Mrs. Kitty Welch wrote, “We gave largely to missions, having two live mission societies and have sent out missionaries, namely Rev. Hopkins, Mrs. Grant, and others.” Such support seems modest today but somewhat rare for its time.

In 1935-36, First Baptist earmarked \$541 for two missionaries to India. Upon their return to the United States that support was transferred to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Johnson. First Baptist member Milt

Scholer and Pastor Harold Nelson (1931-39) each secured a \$150 personal bank loan for the required deposit with the British Government. On June 5, 1940, Frank Johnson was ordained at FBC.

In 1940, this Missionary Board Report was entered:

“The Missionary Board recommends, because of the haphazard manner in which our missionary affairs have been administered, that henceforth Missionary Funds dispersed must be handled through a Faith Missionary Board, unless specified by the individual.”

Such an organizational policy was vital. FBC mission support would grow dramatically. During Pastor Edstrom’s first year (1939-40) the overall budget was \$6,749, with \$1,010 going to missions. In 1948, the overall budget increased almost five times to \$33,677. The mission budget grew 16 times to \$16,294. That year nearly half the overall budget went for home or foreign missions.

On March 30, 1944, Rev. Bill Pencille, Moody Bible Institute class of ‘42, arrived in Bolivia with his wife, Harriet, under FBC sponsorship. Their 23-year adventure was graphically told in Peter Wagner’s, *Defeat of the Bird God* (Zondervan: 1967).

The Pencilles planned to work with the nomadic Ayore tribe. The tribe had been cut off from western culture since the 1700’s. The year before Pencilles arrived, people from the tribe murdered five American missionaries.

The search for the Ayore tribe took two years of Bill’s first term and was done at considerable risk. Would he return home on furlough a failure? In 1950, Pencille connected with a young convert, Comai, who helped him learn the Ayore culture and language. Bill has kept in touch with Comai across the years and has taken ARC mission teams to minister to the Ayore tribe people. Presently,

Placido and Toni Mercado lead a team, which includes three Ayore couples, and continue the mission Pastor Bill and Harriet started.

In 1944, FBC briefly supported missionary Paul Eckholdt for dropping gospel “bombs.” This strategy was similar to CIA propaganda tactics used with limited success in underdeveloped countries where planes dropped literature. Countryside littering under the banner of missions demonstrates the need for FBC mission oversight. This shotgun method was replaced by a more direct, people-oriented approach.

Anne Stadslev joined FBC in 1950. In 1953, at the age of 50, she left Minnesota for a tribal ministry in Venezuela where she provided dental services until retiring in the late 1970’s.

FBC’s first missionary to Africa was Richard McMillen. Rev. McMillen served in what is now called the Central African Republic, starting in the early 1950’s. FBC supported him into the 1970’s.

Joyce Benston was baptized at FBC in 1944. On New Year’s Eve, 1953, she started a lifelong career on Ecuador’s High Sierra with the Quichuas in Bible translation.

In the late 1950’s FBC bylaws said this about missions:

“The second Sunday of each month shall be designated as Mission Sunday and special emphasis shall be given in each department or class to the missionary program of the Bible School. All offerings of this Sunday, except those specifically designated otherwise, shall be used to support the missionary projects of the Bible School.”

Most FBC early foreign missionaries were home grown. In the late 1950’s there was pressure to work through only GARBC mission boards, which could have meant the recall of many veteran

missionaries. Mission Board chairman Karl Lofgren resisted this change. Lofgren was a Swedish immigrant and Harvard-trained physician who, for years, headed Mayo Clinic's vascular surgery department. He had worked under fire before. He was stationed on Iwo Jima and observed U.S. Marines raise the flag. The scene was captured in a famous World War II news photograph. That was war. This was church infighting. Lofgren's views prevailed and many of these missionaries stayed on the field until retirement.

Leo and Gloria Sandren were missionaries to Chad, Central African Republic and Haiti. Leo came from a GARBC church. His father, Leo Sr., was pastor of First Baptist Church in Austin. The Sandgrens served more than 20 years with FBC support after the GARBC and FBC parted ways.

In 1964 Lee Ireland was killed in a car accident in Ghana, West Africa. He remains the only known FBC sponsored missionary to die while in full-time service overseas.

For the first 30 years, FBC had missionaries only in South America and Africa. In 1967, FBC started to support Virginia Mullin's leper ministry in Thailand. She had been baptized at FBC in 1952 and was on the mission field ten years before her church signed on to help. Tammy Lind recently completed her term working with lepers in Cambodia. Her ministry was similar to Ginny Mullin's in Thailand.

Susan and Woody Roland started their missionary career in Bolivia. Susan's parents are Bob and Grace Sawtell. Currently the Rolands are based in Costa Rica and oversee missionaries throughout Central and South America. They are veteran missionaries with more than 25 years service. Their daughter, Kari, taught at Sojourn

Academy in San Jose, Costa Rica. Kari now teaches English as a second language to Latin American missionaries at the Multiplication Center of International Teams in San Isidro, Costa Rica.

In 1973, FBC began sponsoring Ed and Diane Cooper to work with indigenous people in Canada. Diane is a daughter of the church. They remain engaged in that ministry.

In the 1990's, foreign missions changed in size, scope, and personnel. Affordable travel and "world perks" made it possible for many to be short-term missionaries.

One of the first churchmen to engage in this was Larry Vukov, a Mayo emergency services physician who began organizing annual Kenyan mission trips when Pastor Steer came to Rochester. Usually the trips had a service component such as building a small Hope Center building, holding vacation Bible schools and providing medical and dental care. Dr. Larry often provides the only annual medical treatment these people get. Joel Michelson often performs dental care. Sometimes other MD's and dentists have joined the team. Marilyn and Arnie Newman, career missionaries to Kenya, help coordinate the trips.

Shane Gauthier, a FBC youth ministries product, and his wife Kara are first-term missionaries to Kenya. Formerly the Gauthiers were in Central America.

Short-term missions have attracted hundreds of FBC members on two-week trips. In some cases people have taken leaves of absence from their work and gone to Asia, Africa, or other far flung places for over a year. Young and old alike are involved. Evelyn Royce went to Kenya and Bolivia in her late eighties and remains our oldest short-term missionary.

Youth mission trips became regular summer fare for high school teams. This became a leadership building opportunity. One popular destination was the Dominican Republic (DR). One short-term DR missionary, Andy Mack, with his wife, Selena, returned to serve for a number of years. Andy is Bob and Marilyn Mack's son.

Another approach was to target people groups. A missionary team was sent to Guinea to minister to an almost entirely Muslim population. Guinea required special families willing to endure hardship and isolation. FBC adopted the Maninka as its people group in the 1990's. Those continuing in Guinea are: the Campbells, Kendalls, Beth Roberts and Sue Bauerle.

One recent theme is the "10/40 Window." These numbers represent the geographic coordinates where most non-Christians reside. The Seelands minister in Papua, New Guinea, the Johnsons are in Papua, Indonesia and Ken and Steph Springsteen are in Singapore.

Another slow, but detectible trend, is having indigenous people minister in their own country. Gloria Persons is a Filipino married to Dick. Together they plant churches in the central Philippines. Joel Benjamin, a seminary classmate of Pastor John, leads the Ooty Study Center in India. In the Middle East Autumn Ridge sponsors the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary, which provides a presence possibly unsafe for westerners.

From 2002 to 2007, Dr. Mark Struck served as Pastor of Spiritual Formation and World Mission at ARC. The position of Missions Pastor had formerly been held by Bill Pencille, a retired missionary and former senior pastor of First Baptist Church, and Max Broadwater, a retired principal from the Stewartville public school

system. Among other important developments, Pastor Struck helped to develop a new relationship with “The Fellowship of the Lord’s People,” an evangelical church in Kosova.

Ray Kim, a Mayo Clinic internist, while traveling with a FBC team to Bosnia, treated a child, Berat Demoli, and diagnosed Hodgkin lymphoma. Kim, a hepatitis specialist, modestly said he was poorly equipped for public health medicine. But Kim was a non-Hodgkins survivor himself and his symptoms were almost identical to Berat’s. Another physician may have missed this. Berat came to Rochester, was treated at Mayo, and returned home healthy.

The Demoli family had no practicing faith, came from a Muslim land and couldn’t speak English. They were skeptical about Christianity and America. The subsequent hospitality shown by church members opened the Demolis to Christianity and caused them to reconsider their western bias. The mother attended FBC with a translator and helped change our understanding about Bosnians.

Similar experiences have emerged in Mongolia as Mongolians, too, have come to Rochester for health care. One Mongolian mother was baptized in Rochester before she returned home.

Several children, mostly Muslim, have since come to Rochester for treatment; some under Franklin Graham’s Samaritan’s Purse Children’s Heart Project auspices. These families have left with their western preconceptions and faith significantly changed. They have attended our church and sometimes have joined their fledgling hometown Christian churches.

ARC members have provided housing, meals, transportation and other hospitality. Gail and Larry Vukov’s second home, Creeknoll, is specifically used for missionaries and visitors with

housing needs. Mike and Becca Murray, Phil and Juli Fischer, Tamara and Rob McBane and many others have been hosts. Phil, a Mayo pediatrician and former ARC elder, served as a medical missionary to Zaire, Africa (now the Congo), from 1985-91, with his wife, Juli.

In bygone days our church heard from furloughed missionaries through slide shows. The audience was courteous but the presentations lacked punch as they droned on in summer heat. Now, many ARC members visit developing countries. Likewise, people from distant lands have settled in Rochester. No longer do our members trace family trees exclusively to Europe. It is easier to get excited about remote lands because of personal connections. ARC membership has grown far more diverse and the church has been greatly enriched. This is one of the biggest positive changes during the past 25 years

Chapter 8

Sunday School

Baptist church members believe that learning is life-long. People should not discontinue Sunday school at a certain grade.

Minnesota's first Sunday school teacher was Harriet Bishop, a Baptist lady, who was also Minnesota's first public school teacher.

Rochester's Country Club Manor elementary school is named in Bishop's honor. Sunday schools are a historic tradition and an important part of our identity.

Jesus Loves Me remains the Sunday school's anthem. The lyrics were written by Ana and Susan Warner, Sunday school teachers at West Point. For this they were buried at West Point with military honors. The tune was written in 1861 by Dr. William Bradbury, a prominent Baptist choir director and organist in the East. Bradbury himself added the chorus to the sister's four stanzas. Today the song remains a mission field staple. Even other faiths have hijacked this tune as Asians have been heard singing, "Yes, Buddha loves me..."

FBC's Sunday school's beginning is recorded in William Mitchell's, *History of Olmsted County* (1866):

"A Sabbath school was organized after the church was constituted, and soon numbered one hundred members, including teachers and officers. The school has been in progress from the first, winter and summer. Several times the library of the school has been exchanged or given to feebler schools and replaced by new. There are about 120 members in the school at present; 300 volumes, newly new, in the library. One hundred Sabbath school papers are distributed gratis every month."

In the past, FBC's most prominent members have taught Sunday school. One qualification for an elder is to have the gift of teaching. Rochester banker and state legislator, John Daniels, was Minnesota Sabbath School Convention president (1866) and vice president (1870). Noted Rochester attorney, Halftan Eckholt, was Sunday school superintendent for 15 years at the turn of the Nineteenth Century. Conley Camera Company president Kerry Conley followed Eckholdt for an equally long term.

One of the best Sunday school descriptions is offered in the 1909-1910 *First Baptist Yearbook and Reference Manual*:

"It is our desire and purpose to make our Sunday school a true Sunday school. To do the best work, officers, teachers and scholars should be prompt and regular in attendance; lessons should be studied in the week with the help of the study quarterly furnished by the school. Every member of the school should own a Bible. The pastor, superintendent and teacher desire co-operation of the parents in the work with the boys and girls.

"Our School has a place for every member of the family, from the youngest to the oldest. The Bible is God's Word through men to men, and should be studied as long as we live. We invite everyone to join our school, who is not a member of some other school, desiring to make our school a blessing to many children, young people and adults of all ages.

"Our primary department enrolls a total of 61 children and has eight officers and teachers. Our main school enrolls 175 scholars with 18 officers and teachers, making a grand total of 252 in our Bible School. The cradle members number 35. The home department enrolls 75.

“Our three Country Sunday Schools have 15 officers and teachers and enrolls 105 in their classes. So that our three country schools add 120, making the entire number connected with our Sunday school work 482.”

First Baptist, for several years, operated three rural Sunday schools. The largest was at Hadley Valley, four miles north of Rochester. The second was at the Jordan School House, three miles east of Rochester. A third school was at Bamber Valley, southwest of town and not far from Dr. Charlie’s Mayowood farm. FBC has nearly always supported rural Sunday schools directly or through the American Sunday School Union (now American Missionary Fellowship).

FBC’s Sunday School format was established about 50 years ago. The same basic approach remains today with only minor exceptions. Junior church for children has been used off and on. It was first tried in the early 1920’s and met, believe it or not, in the bathroom. It resurfaced in the 1970’s. Today, graded Sunday schools meet both at 9 and 10:30 a.m.

Through the years several special promotions have been used to increase attendance. During FBC’s Centennial this report was submitted:

“As we started off to a new Bible school year on the first of October 1957, we found ourselves in the midst of an attendance contest with First Baptist of Austin. The contest came on the heels of our Rally Day. We succeeded in winning the contest with a total attendance during an eight week period of 3,423 to Austin’s 3,197. The banner at the rear of the church sanctuary testifies to this.

“In 1958-59 average Sunday school attendance at FBC was 464 per Sunday. This was when conditions were very inadequate and overcrowded.”

Attendance was emphasized in these earlier years. Pins were presented for perfect attendance. At the end of summer First Baptist had Promotion Sunday or Rally Day to distribute Bibles and perfect attendance pins. If you attended an “approved Sunday school” (i.e. Baptist) you got full credit if you returned a signed verification. Worship services or Bible studies could not substitute. Neither could roadside devotionals, even if your parent was a Sunday school teacher.

In our family, Mom’s attendance was often missed because, as organist, she practiced with the soloist. Dad’s attendance was often not recorded as he arrived late due to casual conversation. They tried unsuccessfully to convince me that pins were mostly for children. Mom said we get our jewels in heaven. But I wanted a pin now. If Bobby Gray got a pin I should get one too. I needed to be perfect in something.

Men wore dark, solid-colored suits to church, giving the pin a great background. It stood out like a Mason’s ring or a high school activities letter. I felt the pin defined rank and standing as a Baptist.

Each year the pin recipients were read off and publicly awarded. My pin reached six years until the idolatry of summer swimming sidetracked my attendance. My pin is still displayed in our memorabilia box at home.

Paul and Lillie Schwanke sauntered down the aisle last to get their pins. They held “The Streak.” Paul was a masonry contractor and faithful usher. His strong calloused hands laid brick and block

during the week and distributed bulletins Sunday mornings. Lillie worked with children. It was a high moment when they reached 20 years perfect attendance. Kids cheered like Gene Larkin had just gotten his World Series winning hit. This was history in the making and we knew it.

A perfect attendance verse replaced Fanny Crosby's *Blessed Assurance* lyrics. The verse had a hint of future *Chariots of Fire* dramatic flair. The message wouldn't work for today's praise services but it might in traditional worship. The verse should be sung reverently; the chorus crescendos to the finish:

“Perfect attendance, now I have mine
For faithful commitment the pin is a sign
I'm getting more perfect, what about you?
If you missed last Sunday a signed note will do

Perfect attendance, I got my pin
It's my atonement and freedom from sin (slow it down)
I wear it on Sunday so people can see
So they can become as perfect as me.”

In the 1960's the greatest Sunday school change came as the adult electives were offered. Adult classes coincided with children classes. Almost always adult classes have been taught by men; women have taught children.

In the 1980's Wednesdays became club night. Christian Service Brigade and then AWANA attracted hundreds of elementary kids to church. Likewise, in the 1990's, adult Sunday school classes were

somewhat superseded by small groups. This happened especially when children's Sunday school growth forced reclamation of adult classrooms.

Recent FBC expansions have been driven by inadequate capacity for children and youth. This was the case made for Autumn Ridge's Phase I construction—that and shortage of worship space.

As with other church ministries, children's ministries have been professionalized. Cheri Hart and Kathy Hohnbaum planned curriculum, ordered materials, and stayed abreast of trends to excite some 400 kids. In 2007 Cheri took a Mayo Clinic position and Karen Anderle succeeded her.

Always these students are worth a laugh; at least they have been for me these past 25 years or so. Once I told my class about an NFL believer who suffered a spinal injury playing for the New York Jets. The story was written up in *Sports Illustrated*. He witnessed to hospital staff almost immediately. Lindsay Edwards peppered me with questions about his injury. My training was limited to Red Cross first aid while her dad, Bill, was a physician. I said, "Why don't you ask your father?" She told me, "Oh, he probably wouldn't know. He's just a pathologist." (Lindsay was a National Merit scholar.) Another time Dan Schouweiler said he had a job shadowing his insurance agent father, Phil. Dan said, "My dad doesn't have to do any work. He just talks to people and they pay him."

Just like in formal worship, children's ministries use videos, PowerPoint and good amplification. Sunday school teachers are now called shepherds who mentor perhaps a dozen children. A single teacher presents the lesson to over 40 children. Safety is a modern day concern. Adult backgrounds are carefully considered and

computerized swipe cards carefully account the child's comings and goings.

Youth ministries have long had their own minister. That lesson was learned in the early 1980's. Bill Henderson then headed all youth and children ministries. The job was very demanding.

Today, Karen Anderle heads our children's ministry. Josh Mulvihill is pastor of middle schoolers and Reggie Nichols is pastor of our high schoolers. The pipeline is full of kids.

The Mayo Clinic's greatest request for media accreditations came in May, 2006, when conjoined twins from North Dakota were separated by a 70-member team of physicians, nurses and support specialists. After the successful operation, lead surgeon, Dr. Chris Moir, assured the public that the twin's recoveries were on course. The Sunday before that hectic week, Chris and wife, Gayle, were teaching Discipleship Kids at Autumn Ridge.

Surgery requires a wide range of skills; operations demand precisely ordered steps. And while God heals the body, often using health care professionals, surgical techniques and medicines in the process, teaching prepares the heart and mind. Teaching takes years and requires numerous second chances. Learning outcomes don't materialize instantly. Nor are stellar teaching resumes the deciding factor. Those with ordinary backgrounds can be just as effective as those with professional teaching credentials. Lorraine Wagoner-Larson put smiles on her Sunday school students for 45 years.

Children have been important for 150 years at our church. Autumn Ridge recruits the very best people available to nurture and mentor. From these classes come the next generation's Sunday school teachers, missionaries, church leaders and life's circle of friends.

While pronouncements from the pulpit remain the church's signature legacy, each generation has also produced outstanding laypeople. These folk have combined business and professional excellence with church leadership. Sometimes these contributions have superseded that of even the pastors because their contributions were so long and varied.

Chapter 9

Memorable members

A handful of men made memorable early contributions to the development of FBC. John V. Daniels “impressed his personality on the membership” more than the others. Daniels was described as a man of “unimpeachable integrity, sound judgment, great firmness—and even young fellows were willing to take advice from him.”

This Summit, New York, native was born September 5, 1809, and began his working life as a school teacher. In 1832 he married and started a dry goods business. Eight years later he moved to Bradford, Pennsylvania, and engaged in lumbering. When his wife died in 1856 he and his five children moved to Rochester.



John V. Daniels

The Minnesota prairie was about to open for settlement and Daniels and his brother-in-law opened a real estate office (Smith & Daniels) which became a lucrative venture. When President James Buchanan was elected in 1856, Daniels was appointed Rochester’s

postmaster. At the time he was a Democrat. Later, when the GOP was organized, he became a Republican.

Political involvement would mark the balance of Daniels' life. He served in the Minnesota State Senate (1861-69 and 1876-80) and in the Minnesota House (1874-75 and 1880-81). He was Rochester's mayor (1865-66) and served in numerous municipal offices of lesser importance.

The senate committees on which Daniels served indicated he held considerable influence (chairman of education, served on finance, public buildings, immigration, taxes and lands). In 1866 his bill located the State Mental Hospital in Rochester (now the site of the Federal Medical Prison). He also served on several boards to oversee the State Hospital's development.

At FBC Daniels was one of three original trustees. He was "one of the most liberal contributors to the fund of erecting a new church" and was on the building committee.

He was an "intimate friend" of Minnesota governor and fellow Baptist John Pillsbury, and served as a Minnesota Academy trustee (this became Pillsbury Bible College in Owatonna, Minnesota) at Pillsbury's behest.

Nearly all phases of Rochester's business was influenced by John Daniels. His real estate office provided credit and insurance. In 1858 he founded Union Savings Bank and became its first president (in 1873 the bank reorganized as Union National; in 1956 the name was changed to Northwestern and later Norwest. Today it is Wells Fargo).

Daniels owned a grocery store along with his brother S.H. Daniels. In 1866 he was one of several investors to incorporate the short-lived LaCrescent, Rochester and Yankton Railroad.

John Daniels' son, Milton, succeeded his father as bank president when his dad died in 1881. Milton was Rochester's first school board chairman and succeeded his father in the State House. Later Milton was elected State Senator. In 1892, failing health forced Milton to leave Rochester. A severe national depression caused financial problems at the bank and it was sold. Milton moved to Riverside, California, where his health returned. He founded Union National Bank of Glendale and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Daniels' daughter, Celia, married Aaron Osmun of Rochester. Mr. Osmun became part of Farwell, Osmun, and Kirk, a well-known Saint Paul-based wholesale hardware firm that survives to the present.

Although John Daniels' descendants didn't stay in Rochester, he left a strong impression on friends and former associates who did. One such man was Halftan Eckholdt, a one-time employee at S.H. Daniels' grocery store. Eckholdt was baptized at FBC in 1866.

Eckholdt came to the United States in 1850 with his widowed mother when he was five. He lived in New York City and later in a Norwegian colony in Pennsylvania founded by Ole Bull. The Eckholts came to Minnesota in 1857 and lived first in Berlin, Minnesota, in Steele County. Later they farmed near New Richland in Waseca County. When Eckholdt was old enough he enlisted in Minnesota's Third Artillery and saw three years of hard service in the

campaign against the Sioux Indians. He left the military with the rank of sergeant.

Eckholdt's father had been a magistrate in Norway and other relatives also had been lawyers. Perhaps this explains why Eckholdt left Rochester and completed a University of Michigan Law School course in 1874. When Eckholdt returned to Rochester, he soon became city attorney (1875-77) and then county attorney (1878-82). Neither part-time position paid well but they offered experience and a chance to establish a professional reputation. Eckholdt's predecessor as county attorney, Charles Start, was elected Minnesota attorney general in 1880 and served as Chief Justice of Minnesota's State Supreme Court (1895-1913).



Halftan Eckholt

During Eckholdt's professional life several aspiring candidates prepared for bar exams under his guidance. One such individual, Frank B. Kellogg, was American Bar Association president in 1913, U.S. Senator (1917-23), a U.S. Secretary of State (1925-29) and a Nobel Peace Prize winner (1929). Kellogg gained his legal success in Saint Paul and a public life worldwide, but the two maintained a lifelong correspondence.

Eckholdt was FBC Sunday school superintendent for 15 years. At one time he served as deacon and trustee simultaneously. In 1912 he was wintering in Florida and spending summers at his Lake Minnetonka cabin west of Minneapolis. He resigned as trustee and his son, Irving, took his place. Halftan Eckholdt died in 1915 at the age of 70.

Irving held FBC positions into the 1920's but eventually became inactive. His name was formally dropped from the rolls in 1954. Irving, like his father, was a lawyer who served as Rochester's city attorney (1918-21 and 1936-42) and as Rochester's municipal judge. In 1959, Judge Eckholdt took his own life. The funeral was held at FBC with Pastor Kenneth Muck officiating.

At the turn of the century Kerry Conley and his brother, Frank, operated a Spring Valley, Minnesota, jewelry, eyeglass, and camera store. In their spare time the brothers invented and obtained patents on a "silent shutter" and a "magazine plate" camera. In 1899 the brothers founded the Conley Camera Company to produce these inventions. Neither brother had previous experience setting up or managing a factory. Kerry was the firm's president.

By 1904 the firm employed 15 workers. Business was booming because Sears and Roebuck had selected Conley Camera Company to make its mail order cameras. (Richard Sears was born in Stewartville and lived in Spring Valley from 1869-1879, and still had local ties). To keep pace with the spectacular growth of their business the Conley brothers built a new plant in Rochester.

By 1907 Conley Camera Company's average payroll was 110 employees. The factory turned out 28,000 cameras and 80,000 plate holders that year, along with several other photographic products.

One year later Richard Sears retired as president of the giant mail order retailer and Sears & Roebuck went through a corporate transition. The Conley brothers sold 49 percent of their company to Sears & Roebuck to expand and market the nation's first pocket camera.

Two years later Conley Camera Company became a wholly owned Sears factory. Kerry remained in Rochester and invested in several ventures. For a time he was president of the Arthur Hotel in downtown Rochester which, for many years, was located across the street east of Mayo's Conrad Hilton Building. Frank moved to Oregon.

Kerry Conley was born in 1866 in Freeborn County, Minnesota. His family moved to Olmsted County to farm when he was ten. He attended Darling's Business College in Rochester and graduated from the Chicago Ophthalmic College (1891).

The Conleys were Irish, raised in the Methodist-Episcopal Church, and joined FBC by baptism. Kerry, his son, Walter and his wife, Sadie, were baptized at FBC in 1905; daughter, Irene, was baptized in 1914.

At FBC Conley was Sunday school superintendent and trustee for several years. He was trustee chair in 1913 during new church construction. His wife was a longtime Sunday school teacher.

Billy Sunday's 1906 evangelistic campaign in Rochester helped raise \$16,000 to establish a local YMCA. Kerry Conley was an early "Y" booster and president. Billy Sunday's prohibition emphasis and business acumen gave Conley his chance to ride public opinion into elective office. He served first as Rochester City Council President and, in 1908, won the first of three, two-year Minnesota House terms.

The Conley Camera Company turned to phonograph production in 1916. Camera manufacturing was dropped in 1927 and, in 1931, the company reorganized as the Conley Company. In 1940 the business was sold to a group headed by George Waters and the name Waters-Conley was adopted. In 1960, the firm was sold to Telex but the Waters-Conley name was retained until 1975 when it became the Telex plant. For some time the plant has assembled hearing aids.

In 1924, at 58, Kerry Conley died suddenly while playing volleyball at Rochester's YMCA.

Dr. Will Mayo retired from surgery in 1928. His brother, Dr. Charlie, followed him a year and a half later. Their operating room skills dominated Mayo's development and corporate culture. They had set high standards for a new generation of surgeons to perpetuate. One man invited to further that tradition was Howard Gray.

Dr. Gray was a high achiever who enjoyed success in nearly whatever he attempted. He was a Princeton football star in his pre-med years and took his medical training at Harvard. He came to Rochester in 1929.



Kerry Conley

That stock market crash year was an inauspicious time to arrive at Mayo. The Plummer Building opened in 1928 and some felt the Mayo Brothers had bitten off too much with their elaborate diagnostic building. But Gray's family had "old money" that was impervious to the Great Depression's harshest onset. His father was president and board chairman of Union Pacific Railway. His brother was a Chicago & Northwestern Railroad vice president. Gray's mother was a nationally known Sunday school teacher in his hometown of Omaha.

Once on rounds, Gray saw a railroad laborer discouraged and discomfited by a recent invasive operation. Gray consoled him with his well-known bedside manner saying, "I understand. My family works for the railroad too."

In August, 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt's son, James, needed surgery. The First Family brought James to the Mayo Clinic where he was examined by Dr. Gray. Gray went aboard the presidential train to explain to FDR the urgent need to operate. He then did the procedure with some of the top names in medicine looking on.



Howard Gray

After surgery, FDR got his good news directly from Gray. Once the president's son was discharged from the hospital, James Roosevelt recuperated in full privacy in the newly finished third story rooms of the Gray's Pill Hill residence. The well-known FDR picture with Drs. Will and Charlie in an open touring car was taken during that presidential trip to Rochester.

Eventually, Gray headed a surgical section, was a full professor with Mayo's Graduate School of Medicine and was on the Mayo Foundation Board of Governors (1948-55).

In the 1920's, Rochester was billing itself as "the Medical Capital of the World." Rochester was a company town. Health care was its main business. But up to that point no Mayo staff physician had joined FBC. That would begin to change when the Grays joined the church.

FBC was in need of fresh leadership when Howard Gray and his wife, DeWenta, arrived. Attendance had fallen. FBC languished with a part-time pastor. Family budgets were sorely strained and the church itself was in arrears.

For many years, Dr. Gray was music committee chairman and later a deacon. DeWenta was a Sunday school teacher for 25 years.

In the summer of 1955 the Grays were on their cabin cruiser which they docked at Lake City Marina on the Mississippi River. My father, Ken, stopped by to visit him and Gray's casual conversation ironically turned to his dislike of funerals. He said, "I would much rather disappear and never be found." That same weekend his wish was very nearly granted. A dinghy came loose from the big boat. Dr. Gray dove into Lake Pepin to reattach it but never made it back. It took a search party to recover the body. He was fifty-four.

Gray's obituary was Rochester *Post Bulletin's* banner headline on Monday. Said the newspaper, "Because of his unfailing ability to instill both hope and cheerfulness in his patients, Dr. Gray was held in warm affection by countless patients whom he treated." The pallbearers comprised a medical pantheon of that time. The funeral was perhaps the only time a Mayo family member ever attended First Baptist. Dr. Chuck Mayo served as one of Gray's pallbearers. Other pallbearers included Nobel Prize winner, Phillip Hench, H.J. Moersch, and H.M. Keith (father of future Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice, Sandy Keith). Future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun was an honorary pallbearer as were numerous other physicians and Mayo administrators. The only honorary pallbearer from the church was Erv Singfiel, a Rochester Public School custodian who often served on First Baptist's senior board.

The drowning led the legislature to require Coast Guard approved flotation devices for all boating passengers in Minnesota.

A Howard K. Gray Memorial Fund was instituted by the Mayo Foundation to provide two-week scholarships at some American surgical centers. The Royal College of Surgeons in London set up a Howard K. Gray Library.

Some of our forebears have had quite exclusive beginnings. Yet not all ARC's historic members have been blue bloods. Surely our church devalues its heritage when we overlook the simple servants that set our tables, visit our sick, and give the widow's mite without complaint. Their lives, too, are to be honored and recalled for posterity.

Chapter 10

A servant's life

Minnesota's first settlers came from the East. The state's second wave came from Europe. In the first hundred years Minnesota's census showed that Afro-Americans comprised no more than one percent of the state's population. Of that total seven of every eight black Minnesotans lived in Minneapolis, Saint Paul or Duluth. The rest were scattered statewide.

In Olmsted County there were 29 Afro-Americans in 1880; 38 in 1930. While those totals remained steady, the composition turned over as people came and went. No Afro-American families settled in Rochester in the 1920's and 1930's and stayed long-term. Except one.

The first mention of an Afro-American at FBC is found in the *Rochester Daily Bulletin* in an article with a caption "Colored Folks Have a Wedding" which ran July 26, 1917. The bride, Henrietta O'Shields, married a soldier from Saint Paul. The wedding was held at FBC and conducted by Pastor R.A. MacMullen.

No confirmation survives as to whether the O'Shields attended FBC. Henrietta's brother, Richard, was perhaps Rochester's first great athlete. He helped Rochester High School (RHS) win a state basketball title in 1917, starred three seasons on RHS's undefeated football team and was RHS's first Afro-American graduate. He then played football and ran track at the University of Minnesota where he earned a BA and MS. From there he was a college coach or athletic director for 37 years. In 1948 and 1952 Richard O'Shields was a U.S. Olympic track coach which included high jumper gold medalist,

Mable Smith. His color limited his coaching opportunities to predominantly black schools outside of Minnesota.

Richard's accomplishments gave the family respectability in Rochester. People felt this affirmed the view that a "colored boy could succeed if he was given a chance." At least that was the opinion of Harold Evans, a FBC Sunday school teacher, YMCA worker and Grand Wizard of Rochester's Ku Klux Klan.

Rochester's Klan was small. They occasionally had cross burnings on the town's east edge in the woods overlooking the current Federal Prison campus. Bob Bigelow, FBC's senior member, grew up near there and snuck up on one cross burning and saw Evans in full regalia. Klan members rode a Model T straight truck in local Independence Day Parades while men in neckties, three-piece suits and wide-brimmed fedoras dispassionately looked on. Klansmen were boldly open about their affiliation. Klan bigotry was not limited to race; it also extended to Catholics and Jews. The Klan prided itself as patriotic and principled rather than as a hate group. Still, it was the type of organization which FBC members were admonished against joining.

This was the Rochester to which Evelyn Wiley moved in 1925 shortly after her grandma, Lucy, died in Faribault, Minnesota. For the rest of her life this godly grandparent's portrait hung in Evelyn's home. It was from Grandma Lucy that Evelyn got her Christian upbringing, unselfish character and patience to live in a nearly all white world.

Grandma Lucy was a fair-skinned mulatto born to slaves in Nashville, Tennessee, then called the "Athens of the South." Following the Battle of Nashville, Lucy was sent to Minnesota where

she was raised by General James Baker of Mankato. Baker was provost marshal in Saint Louis during the Civil War and served as a colonel detached from Minnesota's Tenth Regiment. He commanded Gratiot Street Prison, which incarcerated 2,000. He was de facto warden, police chief, executioner and chief magistrate. He also served in the jurisdiction where General Grant's home, "Hardscrabble," stood and where Mrs. Julia Grant's family lived.

At the end of his tour Baker was brevetted a general, a common practice used in lieu of medals to distinguish an unblemished military record. Baker accordingly used the title "general" for the rest of his life. Baker, who held many federal and state appointments, was college educated, a man of accomplishment and a published author.

His father was a Methodist minister and General Baker remained close to the church throughout his life. He imparted that faith to his adopted child, Lucy. It was this Methodist church where Evelyn Wiley accepted Christ and was baptized as an infant.

In 1876 Lucy married Charlie Wiley, who was also born into slavery. Charlie came from Huntsville, Alabama in the heart of cotton country. Huntsville produced eight Civil War generals. Four wore blue uniforms; four wore gray.

The couple settled in Faribault in 1883 where only a handful of Rice County faces were black. An Afro-American owned barber shop existed in Faribault for several years and it appears as if Charlie bought him out. At any rate, Charlie barbered until he died of Bright's Disease in 1905, just after his only grandchild, Evelyn, was born. Evelyn's mother died of tuberculosis a few weeks later. Grandma Lucy became Evelyn's primary care giver as her father was

soon doing time at Minnesota State Prison in Stillwater. Evelyn's father briefly cut hair in Faribault upon release from prison, then moved to the Twin Cities. He lived an itinerant life, remarried, but was never again close to Evelyn. General Baker died in 1913 when Evelyn was nine.

Faribault was called "The Athens of the Northwest" for its three academies (for the blind, the deaf and Shattuck) and one Episcopal seminary. Evelyn graduated from Faribault High School, then home of the Fairies (now the Falcons). The yearbook, the *Atheanian*, says of her, "the quiet worker is the one who succeeds."

Evelyn left Faribault after Grandma Lucy died in 1925 and went to live with Aunt Maude and Uncle Archie McDougal. The McDougals came to Rochester in 1919. Archie played baseball and then cut hair at the Kahler Hotel for many years. The McDougals owned a home in southeast Rochester near Hawthorne Elementary School. Evelyn lived with them for many years. Kids dared not play Halloween tricks on the McDougals because they gave Rochester's best popcorn balls and nobody wanted that to end.

Almost upon arrival in Rochester, Evelyn began working as a Pill Hill domestic in southwest Rochester for Dr. Hamilton and Beatrice Montgomery. Dr. Montgomery was a recent Harvard Medical School graduate who had joined Mayo Clinic as a dermatologist. Evelyn was a common sight walking in her white uniform with proud erect posture. Evelyn helped raise the Montgomery's two children and accompanied the family on trips to Boston, Maine, New York, Chicago and to three World Fairs. Later, the kids looked Evelyn up almost before they saw their parents when home on visits.

In the 1940's an early childhood specialist named Helen Remley started living with the Montgomery's. Bea Montgomery, along with Theodora Phinney, established a modest pre-school for children of Mayo Clinic residents that grew into the Aldrich Memorial Nursery and now is part of RCTC. Helen and Evelyn became fast friends and started attending the Assemblies of God. Both ladies moved to First Baptist in the late 1940's.

Aldrich Nursery was famous for its director, Dr. Benjamin Spock, who wrote *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, which sold 50,000,000 copies in 39 languages. The book was a parents' owner's manual for children. While Evelyn never worked at Aldrich she volunteered often, especially



Evelyn Wiley

baking cookies. For a time Aldrich Nursery was located directly across the street from First Baptist.

Rochester in the 1940's was hardly diverse. The Avalon Hotel, located on Broadway near the railroad tracks, was purchased by Vern Manning. The Avalon offered rooms to Afro-Americans who had trouble renting rooms elsewhere. Afro-Americans and whites could not ride Clinic or hospital passenger elevators together or occupy the same hospital room. If Afro roommates were unavailable the black

patient paid the single room rate. When famous band leader Duke Ellington played in Rochester, the band rented all 32 Avalon rooms. Rochester was a conditional city for Evelyn. She was a high school graduate, had a solid work history, unquestionable character and a prominent patron, but still she fell short.

Both Evelyn and Helen became active at First Baptist. After she was baptized in the late 1950's, Evelyn was elected a deaconess. This meant she helped prepare the communion elements, did visitation and assisted with baptisms. She attended the ladies circle and regularly worshipped as she could (she never drove a car so was at the mercy of getting rides to church).

Evelyn, the inveterate packrat she was, saved each drop of the leftover communion grape juice and made it into jelly. She then visited shut-ins and left them a jar. Years later I was an elder when the board discussed whether it was scriptural for women to serve communion. The elders did not know then that Evelyn had already unilaterally answered that question. "Why certainly."

In the mid-1950's Evelyn started catering. She got some Pill Hill business (including her first customer), the pipe-smoking bookstore-owner Lucy Wilder. She added wedding receptions and other soirees. Her earnings remained meager. Her lifestyle was frugal. Still, she she believed in tithing: "Tithing is important . . .when a person doesn't tithe he loses out."

Her former employer, Dr. Montgomery, gave her the down payment for a small home next to Al Given's Barber Shop on Eighth Street and Broadway northeast. She paid it off in six years as First Baptist's Mrs. John Hill gave her domestic work at her home to augment Evelyn's catering income. Occasionally FBC men made

repairs or installed a replacement roof. This modest home was her dwelling place until she briefly moved into a nursing home in her final year.

Eventually, Dr. Montgomery moved across the street into a modest apartment. It was a big step down from Pill Hill but that didn't matter to him. Evelyn did his laundry, cleaned his apartment and took him on walks. She refused pay because he was an old friend and now a neighbor.

In 1980, Evelyn was presented with the Rochester Exchange Club's *Book of Golden Deed's Award*. Her hometown newspaper, the *Faribault Daily News*, told why she earned the honor. The *News* then added "Most of all she ministers to him (Dr. Montgomery) spiritually." Her picture was posted in front of Rochester City Hall with other recipients and remained until City Hall moved to the Government Center. She visited others such as Carlos Ellis, the former Dodge dealer and, of course, cared for her dear friend, Helen, who had been sickly since she contracted influenza during the World War I epidemic.

Dr. Montgomery bought Evelyn an adult-sized, three-wheel bicycle to which she attached a small electric motor that kicked in once she peddled



Evelyn and her beloved bike, a common sight on Rochester's streets and avenues.

up to speed. While the bike wasn't quite "street legal," police winked at her petty misdemeanor. No cop wanted to bust the town's do-gooder. The bicycle enabled her to do ministry. Always Evelyn was a creative witness and faithful servant.

Before she died, First Baptist's children's ministries inherited her 1892 family Bible, complete with numerous lithographs. Not even a name is inscribed within. The pages have hardly been touched. Evelyn was a private person who talked freely only to close friends. Was this Grandma Lucy's Bible? Nobody knows, but it was surely a cherished heirloom.

Evelyn Wiley died February 3, 2002, at age 98. She was then FBC's senior member. Some years after my wife, Hope, was recovering from a blood clot. The church arranged meals to our house for a couple of days. Lela Lofgren brought a hot dish and a cheesecake. Lela's family had moved to Rochester from New York just after 9-11 and just before Evelyn died. I asked Lela if she had known Evelyn. Her in-laws, Karl and Jean Lofgren, had frequently driven Evelyn to church. Lela asked, "Was she a black lady?" I said, "Yes." Lela said, "I really didn't meet her but I got her microwave when she broke up housekeeping for the nursing home." Years after Evelyn was gone her oven was still cooking for people who needed help. Somewhere Evelyn was laughing at me like she did to so many others across her 98 years. She was a kind, pure-hearted, simple servant who lived from paycheck to paycheck. But she was a servant of distinction. Very few combined faith and practice as she did. And not many got the last laugh as often as she did either.

Chapter 11

What's next?

It is hard to predict Autumn Ridge's future. I have explained the past in the context of cause and effect for easier understanding. In some cases I might be faulted for ignoring the Holy Spirit's miraculous leading. Don't be misled. The past still has plenty of supernatural riddles left.

We should never take our proud history for granted. Is Sunday becoming like any other day? The Sabbath has changed incredibly since I was a boy. In the face of this, churches of all stripes have stood silent. Fifty years ago it was almost impossible to buy milk on Sunday. It was nearly heresy to miss church. Now Sunday can be the week's biggest retail day and Super Sunday is an event with Roman numerals instead of Roman soldiers.

When I wrote the first edition of FBC's history, in 1982, casino gambling, state lotteries and pull tabs were just emerging. Now Minnesotans are among the nation's most inveterate gamblers. Will the internet accelerate this trend and ensnare the young? It was a gambling scandal that threatened the congressional majority in 2006. Who in the church is sounding the alarm? Wagering is a moral issue of greed. Gambling is now called a disease. But the real disease may be our apathy toward it.

A third trend is the increasing international makeup of the church. Until Pastor Steer became an American citizen in 2008, Autumn Ridge Church had not had an American citizen as senior pastor since 1976. Paul Siewert was a Canadian. John Steer was British. Cheri Hart was a Canadian citizen when she became head of

children's ministries. Our elder board has been ably led by the Korean-born, Cheolsu Shin, an expert on epilepsy. Jonathan Holmes, from England, wonderfully corrected my double visions. Without his care I couldn't have written this history.

Many ARC members have adopted children from other lands, including Micah Garmers from Korea, my former Sunday school student to whom this project is dedicated. Each Sunday some of our people attend in colorful native dress. The Autumn Ridge Chinese Church is passionate about outreach. We are blessed by this diversity. Certainly our creator is a staunch internationalist. Christianity has a positive, worldwide, people-centered outlook.

Chapter 12

Words from Pastor Steer

Dan Carlson invested a great deal of time and effort researching and writing the original and this updated edition of our congregation's lengthy and colorful history. His unique personality and perspective as a child of the church shine through in his writing style and the dedication he brought to this challenge. In addition to his abilities as church historian and author, Dan is a longtime Sunday School teacher and a former member of our Elder Board. On behalf of the congregation and Elder Board we express our deep appreciation to Dan for telling the story of our church.



C. John Steer

What conclusions might we offer after reading about the first hundred-and-a-half-plus years of our congregation's history?

First a reminder that God is good. All along the way, from dusty trails of the horse-and-buggy era to today's speedy, sophisticated pace, God has had a plan for us. In the words of the hymn writer, "God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year." The journey has not always been easy, but God has been faithful.

I believe Autumn Ridge has a bright future. Never before have we experienced the growth and vitality we've seen in recent years. Never before have we shared the "good news" so widely and productively. Never before have we been able to help so many people through our home and foreign mission initiatives. A larger

congregation offers an expanded pool of able and willing volunteers with skills and abilities God can use.

And the march onward continues. In 2008 we welcomed 116 new members. Seventy four people were baptized.

Fifty were baptized in July in the lake at the home of Lowell and Sharon Penz. The same day we dedicated a beautiful, new, Retreat Center at Elizabeth Lodge. The spacious facility is situated on the Zumbro River in Zumbro Falls, Minnesota. It will be used as a

Christian retreat center, offering adults a place for quiet reflection, solitude, prayer, meditation and teaching in an atmosphere of Christ-centered growth and refreshment. The center is the result of a

generous gift of land and facilities to commemorate the life of Elizabeth Schultz, the daughter of Sharon Penz. Elizabeth died in 1980 at age 11. The lodge was dedicated on July 27, 2008. Only God knows what our future holds. But we can rest in the knowledge that God's continued faithfulness is certain.



Following Christ in baptism.



Retreat Center at Elizabeth Lodge

Appendix A

Our pastors

Erastus Westcott—1857-1860
J. Mendel (interim pastor)—1860
D. N. Mason—1860-1868
Levi A. Abbott—1868-1873
R. Telford—1873-1874
C.H. Remington—1874-1877
R.W. Arnold—1877-1886
D.D. Reed—1883-1886
J.A. Heritage—1887-1887
E.R. Pope—1887-1894
W.H. Davenport—1894-1895
O.A. Stevens—1896-1897
W.S. Abernathy (interim)—1897
Frank Leach—1897-1900
F.C. Whitney—1900-1907
George H. Gamble—1907-1915
R.A. MacMullen—1915-1920
Joseph H. Beaven—1920-1924
Ingram Bill—1924-1931
Harold Nelson—1931-1939
George L. Edstrom—1939-1948
Arthur C. Lambourne—1948-1953
Roger L. Richards—1953-1955
Kenneth A. Muck—1955-1962
Lyle Eckelberry (interim)—1962-1963

Robert A. Featherstone—1964-1966
Herbert McDonald (interim)—1966
William Pencille—1966-1970
Clarence Anderson—1970-1976
David Jamison (interim)—1976-1977
Paul Siewert—1977-1988
C. John Steer—1989 to present

Appendix B

Our membership and budgets

<i>Year</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Budget</i>
1857—	17 members	
1860—	52	
1870—	161	
1880—	241	
1890—	169	
1900—	167	
1907—	321	
1910—	359	\$1,695
1920—	361	\$4,610
1930—	393	\$4,610
1940—	460*	\$5,970
1950—	600*	\$14,116
1957—	729	\$50,000
1960—	759	\$56,000
1970—	543	\$79,495
1980—	574	\$289,000
1992—	685	\$858,952
2000—	794	\$1,470,922
2006—	1,170	\$2,690,000
2008—	1,248	\$3,388,605

* *Estimate*

Note: Budget information for the first 50 years was lost, probably in the fire of 1912. Our membership roll is not updated annually. Some members may have moved out of town or become inactive. With respect to both membership and the budget, numbers are mostly helpful to establish trends and benchmarks.

Appendix C

Historic dates

1832—American Baptist Home Mission Society begins.

1854—First Rochester settler arrives.

August 22, 1857—First Baptist Church organized.

October 13, 1858—Building one. First Baptist holds first service in Rochester's first church building. (See page 12.)

August 27, 1861—Minnesota Education Association organized at First Baptist.

1863—Dr. William Worrall Mayo comes to Rochester.

1870—Building two. First Baptist's second church building is dedicated. (See page 14.)

1883—Rochester hit by tornado; 25 die from twister.

January, 1906—Evangelist Billy Sunday holds Rochester campaign in cooperation with several local churches.

1906—First Baptist in Rochester has more baptisms (72) than any other Baptist church in Minnesota.

1907—Northern Baptist Convention is founded.

March 9, 1912—Fire of unknown origins destroys First Baptist building.

April 26, 1914—Building three. Third building on Fourth Avenue and Second Street is dedicated. (See page 22.)

February 12, 1915—Pastor George Gamble dies at age 53.

September 30, 1935—First Baptist begins its KROC radio ministry.

1937—The Frank Johnsons go to Africa and become First Baptist's first foreign missionaries.

1941—FBC erects a JESUS SAVES neon sign atop its roof.

March 30, 1944—Rev. Bill and Harriet Pencille go to Bolivia as FBC missionaries.

November 3, 1944—First Baptist leaves the Northern Baptist Convention and joins the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches.

May 2, 1948—Evangelist Billy Graham preaches at First Baptist.

June 22-26, 1959—National Regular Baptist Convention held in Rochester.

October 9, 1960—\$150,000 Sunday school edition dedicated.

September 23, 1964—First Baptist leaves the Regular Baptists and becomes an unaffiliated Baptist fellowship.

November 17, 1969—Building four. FBC moved into another new home on Fourth Street and Third Avenue SW. (See page 26.)

May 5, 1976—Church buys 10 acres at 415 Sixteenth Street SW.

June 8, 1980—Building five. \$1.6 million structure dedicated at above site. (See page 29.)

1990—First Baptist buys additional land including present HyVee site.

1991—Mortgage on the Sixteenth Street building is paid off and burned.

1992—A one million dollar expansion doubles Sunday school space, increases worship capacity and beautifies the building.

1996—A portion of land purchased in 1990 is sold to HyVee.

November 2001—Church votes to purchase 60 acres at the present site near the Olmsted Historical Society. Regular worship attendance is 1,000.

2002—Annual budget exceeds \$2 million.

August, 2004—Church breaks ground on a \$14.3-million facility.

August, 2005—Church adopts the name Autumn Ridge.

December, 2005—Building six. Autumn Ridge worships for first time in present site. (See page 40.)

August, 2007—Autumn Ridge celebrates its 150th anniversary.