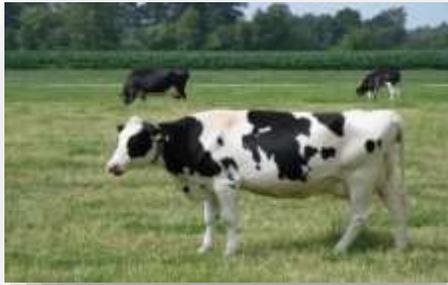


The History of The Valley Forge Church

Our Journey – 1955 to 2018

From Cow Pastures to Chapel with Reverend Phillippe



To Sanctuary



The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church

191 Town Center Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406
(610) 265-2420

<https://www.valleyforgepres.org>

**The Valley Forge Church (1955-1964)
That Became
The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church (1965-2018)
King of Prussia, PA**



Handmade wooden block replica of the Sanctuary
Courtesy of Lynda Schmitz

*Breathing in the word,
Exhaling the messages,
The spirit goes on
— Katelyn Klepacki*

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Rev 11/30/2019

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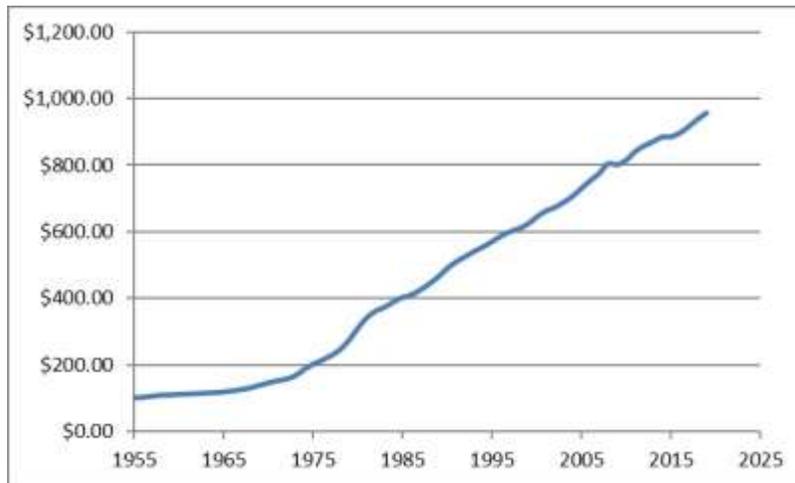
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Glossary

CCC	Church-Community Challenge
CCC	Congregational Care Committee
CE	Christian Education
CCL	Commission on Congregations and Leadership
CIF	Church Information Form
COM	Committee on Ministry
CRS	Caring Repairing Sharing
DCE	Director of Christian Education
FROGS	Friends Relying on God's Salvation
IPNC	Interim Pastor Nominating Committee
Inflation	(\$100 for base year 1955)



NMOW	Neighborhood Meals on Wheels
ONAT	One Night at a Time
PDA	Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
PNC	Pastor Nominating Committee
PYT	Presbyterian Youth Triennium
T/A	Transactional Analysis
UM	Upper Merion (township)
UMACC	Upper Merion Area Community Cupboard
UMASD	Upper Merion Area School District
UMEA	Upper Merion Emergency Aid
UPNA	United Presbyterian Church of North America
VBS	Vacation Bible School
VFPC	Valley Forge Presbyterian Church

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Acknowledgements

For nearly 65 years people of this church and community have collected photos, created numerous church directories, made a video and written parts of our history. This book would not have been possible without all of their contributions from which we richly borrowed. The photo collections contained in the church directories, many by Scott Blair, were invaluable, documenting the people, their missions, activities and work for the church. It is to these people, many unnamed, we humbly wish to offer our gratitude and appreciation for their time and their contributions.

This is a history and a story of the church and the community. It is also a story of the times that affected them. To the following people a heart-felt “thank you” for the materials they supplied, hours of conversations, and answering questions too numerous to count.

Barbara and Robert Beck, Scott Blair, Blake Brinegar, Nancy Brown, Martha Coleman, Betsy Develin, Michael Dunfee, Anne Egan, Augustus Feather, David Ford, Marian Friese, Ann Gross, Ejvind Hansen, Joanne Henry, William Hoffman, Kathy Knoebel, Marlene Iannuzzelli, Eiko Ikeda, Lynne Klepacki, Hope Lee, James MacDonald, Marty Meyer, Joanne Peel, William Phillippe, Billie Pifer, Ethel Reagan, Barbara Roback, Helen Roback, Sandy Rodman, Virginia Sale, Lynda Schmitz, Joyce Richardson Schoendorfer, Nancy Sellman, and Linda Spreeman.

Special thanks to Mike Henry for his guidance on theme and access to the Session Minutes; to charter church member and Deacon Margaret (Peg) Elliott who checked the first draft for names and events; to early church member and Deacon Arlene Osborne for many conversations and remembrances; to Indra Mahabir who read the initial and third drafts, provided photos, and suggested substantial style and grammar changes; and to John Moore, who made this book more visually reader-friendly.

Every effort was made to accurately report this history. The information provided was obtained from sources believed to be reliable, including a previous church history obtained from the late Jeanne Goodwin. However, documented reference material was not independently verified. The historic accuracy is neither guaranteed, nor is its completeness. Not all material gathered was included. Any omissions made, and what errors remain, are mine. I welcome corrections, clarifications, new historical material and, of course, the names of the “unnamed” in the photos.

Compiled by Gail McWhirter Moore, Elder
Fall 2019

Study the past if you would define the future.

— Confucius

Foreword

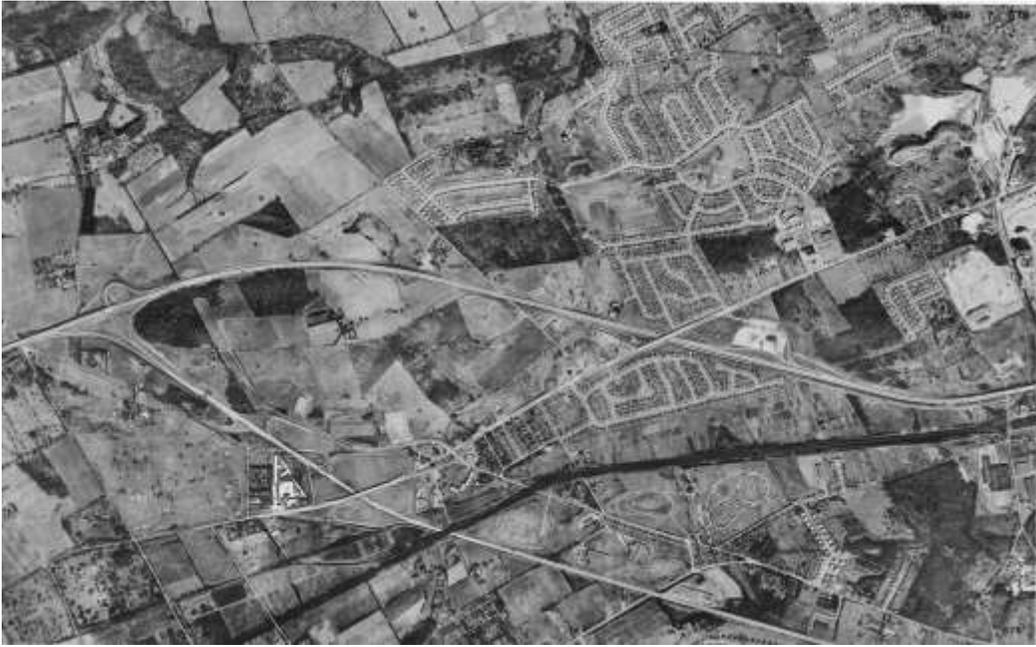
This history of The Valley Forge Church covers the period of 1954 through 2018. It is viewed through the lens of ministerial tenure because our members and contributors often remembered the name of the minister when they arrived, but not the date. We sectioned this history into several periods, each with its ministers and activities, and let history unfold through them. Our story reveals why the church was organized; who began the process; how the church was established and gathered members; why Upper Merion Township was called “Boomsville”; when and why the church’s corporate name was changed; how the church grew along with the surrounding community; what the impacts of the times and ministerial changes were; and where we, as a mission church, are heading into the future.

The early history utilized the writings of Reverend Phillippe (our founding minister), and drew from the recollections (and supplied materials) of some of our most senior members. Sometimes we were fortunate to obtain the writings of the ministers themselves, or those closest to them. Member recollections, commentaries, and writings represent the personal and subjective views of the individual, and inherently contain biases (and inaccuracies). Memories fade. Many members remember the same event differently. For later periods the Session Minutes and church annual reports provided a wealth of material. The Session Minutes provided documentation of important decisions, actions and events affecting the church. Church annual reports provided a collection of pastor and church committee views of activities and accomplishments deemed significant for that year. Taken together, all of the above may form an incomplete history, but the history tells a wonderful story of our church, its members, and the community.



King of Prussia 1942

Source: Penn Pilot pennpilot.psu.edu



King of Prussia 1959



King of Prussia 1980

Both photos from Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, dvrpc.org

Our Beginning

King of Prussia evolved from humble beginnings, from farmland, to a small village, and then growing into a thriving community. So too with evolution of The Valley Forge Church. Starting with a community's unmet need, a minister's mission vision, growing to a chapel, culminating with a sanctuary housing a congregation peaking at over a thousand members, this is a history of the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church.

The journey started long ago as Joan Shaw wrote in, First Families of U. M. [1], Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, encompassed some 20 square miles. It was originally settled circa 1681 by Welsh and the Swedes. The name "Merion" is a Welsh word. Those settlers would have encountered virtually virgin forest inhabited by a small population of Indians and larger species of wildlife, such as bear and panther.

Fast forwarding to 1893, a remote village near Norristown developed as described in Ed Dybicz's article [2], *Trolley Cars Were Familiar Scene in U. Merion*,

Red Arrow lines, formerly Philadelphia and Western, operated through the township with stations in Gulph Mills, Hughes Park and King Manor....The first street trolley cars were introduced in Upper Merion when electric power supplanted horses on the Norristown Street Car Lines. This line extended from Norristown....across the bridge, East on 4th Street in Bridgeport....and into Swedeland, the terminus.

On September 10, 1933, The Schuylkill Valley Lines took over the trolley route with the operation of buses in the Norristown, Conshohocken, Bridgeport.... areas. (Only) in recent years, (was) bus service extended to King of Prussia (as we know it today).

In the book, Historical Homes of Upper Merion: An Illustrated Tour of the Historic Upper Merion Township, #21, 1938 [4],

King of Prussia and adjoining territory extending to King Manor was only one of six main divisions in Upper Merion Township. The other divisions were: Gulph Mills and Rebel Hill; Swedeland and Swedesburg; King Manor and vicinity; Port Kennedy and Abrams; and Valley Forge.

However, change was coming to King of Prussia. Over a period of a few years many of the farm acres had been subdivided and developed into building lots. North of the crossing of

DeKalb Pike and the Turnpike is Brandywine Village consisting of 179 homes built in 1950. Adjoining Brandywine Village is the original Candlebrook development consisting of 120 houses built in the spring of 1954. On the southeast side of DeKalb Pike, are the Valley Forge Homes, a development consisting of 202 houses completed in 1951 and an additional 52 houses built in 1953. This phenomenal growth was attributed to the Schuylkill Expressway construction, which transits Southwestern Montgomery County, the City of Philadelphia and the eastern most segment of Interstate 76. It connected the Valley Forge Exit of the Pennsylvania Turnpike to Walt Whitman Bridge in South Philadelphia, which served as the primary corridor into Philadelphia and points west, enabling a large supply of labor to live in the suburbs.

By the mid-1950s this rural community had evolved into a high technology center. Rowland T. Moriarty of The Bulletin Staff wrote in *Officials Dub Upper Merion Twp. 'Boomsville' Because of Growth* [3], "Upper Merion officials indicated it was the fastest growing community in America in the 1950s, and was nicknamed, 'Boomsville, U.S.A.'"

According to the Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia [5], "The Boston developer Cabot, Cabot and Forbes acquired rights to 710 acres north of the turnpike interchange and 'signed-up' companies like Western Electric, Smith Kline and French, and Pennwalt to occupy warehouses, office buildings and factories."

In 1962 General Electric relocated its Re-entry Systems Division from West Philadelphia to King of Prussia, bringing in hundreds of engineers to the area to develop heat resistant materials that made it possible to put man-made objects, then men, into space and bring them back again through the earth's fiery atmosphere.

General Electric was not the only large employer looking to expand into Upper Merion Township. The June 24, 1965 Evening Bulletin article on *Upper Merion Township* [6] stated,

John Wanamaker will open a multimillion-dollar department store in the plaza soon. Gimbels will build there and there already are dozens of other stores. Those developers said the location attracted them, with the turnpike, the expressway, Route 202 and 23, the township is in an ideal location for industrialists, businessmen, and city workers who like to live in the suburbs and commute to work. To the industries and commercial organization, the location means the sources of supply and major markets are but hours away by truck. The boom has brought changes to the once-quiet township. The population exploded. Nearly three times as many persons live there today than did just 14 years ago.

Why a church in an empty field?

In June 1954, in anticipation of this expansion, the UPNA Presbytery of Philadelphia received a grant from the denomination's Board of Missions to begin a new church development in the then little-known town of King of Prussia, Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The specific location would be in the new Candlebrook development. In the winter of 1955, The Candlebrook Company* was acquiring property including the future campus of the church. The Chapel parcel was conveyed by deed ([Exhibit C](#)) from the Candlebrook Company to The Board of American Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPNA) on May 24, 1955. The Presbytery of Philadelphia, in cooperation with the Philadelphia and Norristown Council of Churches sent Reverend Bill Phillippe to canvas the area in the spring of 1955 to determine interest, and to start a congregation.

Rev. Phillippe's wrote in his 2017 book, [The Pastor's Diary – How a Conventional Conservative Became a Theological Liberal](#). [7]

The area had been invaded by developers—developers who were trying to create an instant community. So, they made space available for schools and churches. Of course, the church and schools had to buy the property that had been set aside by the developers.

There was sufficient interest in starting a congregation. The start-up funds would come from the sale of the "Old Second" United Presbyterian Church** at 16th and Race Streets, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Board of American Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America then chose the young seminary graduate, Reverend William R. Phillippe, to be the Mission Pastor of The Valley Forge Church.

***64-House Unit Is Under Way** [The Philadelphia Inquirer; May 13, 1955, page 44:]

A unit of 64 two-story single homes is under way on Crossfield Rd., Larkspur Lane, Meadowbrook Lane and Pleasant Valley Rd., Upper Merion township, Montgomery county, in the development of the Candlebrook Co. between Bridgeport and King Prussia, about a quarter of a mile north of Route 202. Houses in the operation have living room, dining room, powder room, kitchen, bedroom or den on the first floor, with two bedrooms and bath on the upper floor. They have full basement and are equipped with warm-air gas heat. The price of the basic house is \$12,990. Heritage, Inc., is the sales agent.

**During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Second Presbyterian Church experienced financial problems and, at times, had difficulty filling the pulpit. The Revs. John S. Macintosh (1881-1896), Charles Wood (1897-1908), and Alexander MacColl (1911-1949) served as pastors of the church during the remainder of its history as a separate congregation. Several attempts to merge the church with other congregations finally succeeded in 1950 with the consolidation of First Presbyterian Church and Second Presbyterian Church, retaining the name of the former and occupying the building of the latter. [<https://www.history.pcusa.org/collections/research-tools/guides-archival-collections/rg-33>]

An Aside:

With all the changes over 300 years, why was Upper Merion Township now more readily known as King of Prussia? In 1974 Nancy Peters wrote an article for the King of Prussia Courier, Why “King of Prussia”? Game of the Name: [8]. In the sidebar, “Historic Inn”, she stated,

The historic landmark, which had given its name to the expanding community around it was a flourishing inn, noted for its good cheer long before Washington and his army made Valley Forge famous by their visit.

What we know now as “King of Prussia” became a settlement in the early 1700s. It was originally named Reeseville, after the Reeses, a large Welsh family whose members then owned most of the land. It is believed that the inn, built about 1709, and was named by its owner, a native of Prussia, in honor of Frederick I, who had a short time before, established himself as King of Prussia, following his military successes.



As was the custom of that period, a sign was hung outside with a likeness of the King on horseback.

Dennis Daylor, King of Prussia Courier Editor [9], added more about the inn,

The pre-revolutionary inn, located at the crossroads now known as Route 202 and Gulph Road, gave its name to King of Prussia in 1851. It served as a voting place of the community until well into the 20th century. The one-time hostelry has played a large part in the life of the community since its earliest days. It served as a place of rest and relaxation for many years before the American Revolution as well as during the Revolution.

In the first part of last century, the Inn operated as a restaurant, closing its doors once and for all in 1952, when the new Route 202 firmly cut off all access to its hospitality.

The original Inn sign is not in the possession of the King of Prussia Historical Society. It now sits inside the original, relocated Inn on Bill Smith Boulevard, and in the hands of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce.

Our Pastors

Reverend William “Bill” Ralph Phillippe

(Mission Pastor: 1955-1958; Pastor: 1958-1962)

Reverend William (Bill) and Carolyn Phillippe stood at Prince Frederick Street and Town Center Road, in March 1955. Under the appointment of the Board of American Missions of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, Bill would begin to build a Church.



[Much](#) of this early history is taken from Rev. Phillippe’s book, *The Pastor’s Diary – How a Conventional Conservative Became a Theological Liberal* [7] with his permission, and which he graciously [donated](#) to the VFPC library.



Rev. Phillippe writes that “There were more registered cows in King of Prussia, than there were voters in the area in those days. I was just twenty-five years old and fresh out of seminary. The whole thing was an experiment to see if a kid right out of school with no baggage as to what a congregation should look like could develop one from scratch.” [7, p39]

On June 4, 1955, Rev. Phillippe inaugurated house-to-house visits in the surrounding neighborhoods (sometimes arriving at the same time as the local insurance salesman who later became a member, too). He would introduce himself to prospective members for the coming of one of the first new churches in the area. His job was to verify that there was enough interest to start a church. Because the response was very encouraging, it was decided a church could be built, and an architect was contacted.

Of the building, Rev. Phillippe wrote,

Jim Leach, who headed our New Church Development office, found an architect (Glenn Bickerstaff) in Pittsburgh, who agreed to draw plans for a church that could be built in modules. The first unit was a split level (much like the homes going up in King of Prussia) consisting of a small sanctuary, an overflow room/balcony, a half flight up in the rear, which could be closed off with a sliding partition and become a large classroom, a nursery, kitchen, small fellowship hall, three classrooms and an office for the pastor. [7, p43]

The church plans provided by Glen Bickerstaff were accepted. Ground breaking ceremonies began on June 29, 1955 and construction started on July 5th. Construction continued throughout the summer and fall on the first of two modules of what was to be known as *The Valley Forge Church*, located at the intersection of Town Center Road and Prince Frederick Street, King of Prussia, PA [see Exhibit C]. This construction consisted of a chapel and an educational wing. The families whom Rev. Phillippe contacted were young couples, many just starting families, with not much money, but had lots of energy and dedication.

Rev. Phillippe said about the project,

The congregation happened because a lot of men and women gave their time and talent to make it happen. They dug out, formed in, and poured all the concrete. They spread topsoil, graded, seeded, and landscaped the lot. They painted both interiors and exterior of the first two units.



We discovered that in the beginning years, we were ministering to people who had little church background. About 70 persons said they had had no adult church experience before this. They came from 19 different denominational backgrounds and represented a complete spectrum of occupational, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Each year we lost about one-third of our church-school teachers to pregnancy. My, oh my, what a wonderful group of persons created this congregation. [7, p69]



On October 10, 1955, Columbus Day, the steeple on the chapel was raised. The chapel was completed eight days later.



View of chapel with steeple, overlooking Candlebrook Housing Development



The new chapel seated 160 people, with an additional 40 people in the balcony “overflow room” above. The beautiful new building held its first service on December 18, 1955, with about 120 people in attendance.



On January 1, 1956, the first session of the church school was held with 98 people in attendance and 14 days later the first church unit was dedicated on January 15, 1956.



church unit was dedicated on January 15, 1956.



The nursery overflowed with babies and young children.

According to the [Session Minutes](#)*, the first baptisms were held on January 22, 1956, and included: Debra Lowry, Karen Straub, Carl McIlroy, Jr., Susan McIlroy, Linda Eckman, John Eckman, III, David Mayberry, Jacqueline Kehl, Gary Kehl, Keith Kehl, and Jeffrey Kehl [S: i, p4].

On March 7th, the [Provisional Session](#) conducted the election of the first Ecclesiastical Officers, the Elders and Deacons [S: i, p7]. The church was formally organized with 116 adults, who were received into membership. Mr. Robert Kline was elected Chairman of the Congregation. Mrs. Anne Eckman was elected Secretary of the Congregation. Ernest Blidan was elected Treasurer of the Congregation. On March 11th, offering envelopes were distributed to the members and were due back on Palm Sunday.

*All references herein to Session Minutes volumes are the multiple volumes available through the VFPC office. Notation is Session: Volume, Page number; i.e., [S: i to vi, page #].

[The first Elders and Deacons](#) were ordained and installed on March 18, 1956 [S: i, p9]. The elders were: Trustin Baldwin, Samuel Durant, Henry Hellyer, Edwin Lewis, Ridgely Davis and Robert Lowery. The ten Deacons were: Ernest Blidan, Samuel Britton, Horace Bowers, Frank Haswell, N. Woodward Johnson, Jr., Robert Jordan, Nelson Kehl, William Neff, Carlton Small, and Robert Manning [see [Exhibit F](#)].



The all-male Session determined that Elders and their wives would be responsible for baking the communion bread, washing the communion glasses, and laundering the communion linen. This was indeed a working congregation. All the work was done by volunteers of the church. Five women came forward to give one day a week of their time managing the church office and performing the necessary secretarial duties, until Mrs. George H. Ramsey and later Ruth Getty [[see Exhibit H](#)] were hired for secretarial duties [7, p41].



Early congregation in the chapel.

In the early years, women were not allowed to serve on church boards by the rules of The Valley Forge Church, so mission and volunteer projects were channeled through the Women's Associations. Starting in March 1956, Women's Circles were formed and meetings were generally held in members' homes in the evening, because there were so many young mothers, and daytime sitters were limited. All circle members were part of the Women's Association, under the leadership of the Presbyterian Church. Because the church was a young congregation (working mothers were the exception at that time) the Women's Association provided an opportunity for Bible study, service and social exchange. At one time we had nine circles involving 135 women. The women made quilts, bandages for lepers, tray favors and packets for Norristown Hospital residents. They also collected cancelled stamps, coupons, and used nylons (stockings) for the Korean widows' Back-Winding Program. The women also helped to provide and serve lunch to inner-city preschool children. Sometimes the food was purchased, and sometimes the women cooked the meals at home and took them to the school. After the closure of a local orchard, the women sought permission to pick the apples, and in turn, made applesauce for the children. While the Women's Association took turns helping to serve lunch, they also used the opportunity to discuss nutrition with a class of expectant teenage mothers, who at the time were not allowed to continue in public school.

The Emergency Aid Committee coordinated volunteers to assist members and friends in time of need, provided meals, transportation, baby-sitting, and housework. The Women's Association was also in charge of the church kitchen. They prepared and served dinners and refreshments for the meetings of the Presbytery whenever it met at The Valley Forge Church.

The Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons met on April 17, 1956, and approved \$10,000 to purchase three lots ([See Exhibit C](#)) adjoining the original property on Independence Road for a parking lot and playground. The Kiwanis Club donated playground equipment [S: i, p55].

On May 6, 1956, the legal services of William B. Koch, Esquire, were secured for the incorporation of the church [S: i, p19]. This was done free of charge, except for filing costs. On June 3rd, Dr. Leitch, wrote concerning an increase of our interest on our loan from the Board of American Missions from 1% to 3%, as of July 1, 1956. By July 29, 1956, the incorporation proceedings were completed [[See Exhibit A](#)]. The church's official name was The Valley Forge Church, which reflected that Upper Merion Township included the Valley Forge National Park, site of George Washington's encampment during the winter of 1777-1778. It would not be until January 15, 1964, that the church's name would change to The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

Rev. Phillippe continued,

The congregation grew rapidly and within the second year, we asked Mr. (Glenn) Bickerstaff for his second unit drawings. The second unit consisted of an extension of the small wing, double the size of the fellowship hall, added another set of toilets, and provided five more classrooms. [7, p43]

Church School Superintendent T. Baldwin reported severe overcrowding in all departments. [S: i, p25]. Within months of organizing as a church, the congregation had outgrown the church school facilities. Thus, construction began in August 1956, on the second unit of the Christian Education Building, at a cost of \$23,470; it would increase the seating capacity by 50%. The congregation was determined to pay off the mortgages as soon as possible, so all labor was done by volunteers.



The Second Unit of Christian Education Building was dedicated on March 10, 1957.



However, all was not hard work. This young congregation shared many joyful times. There was the first strawberry festival, annual church picnics,



peanut scrambles, and pie eating contests among other things. One member said the congregation lived the acronym, “CRS”, which meant Caring, Repairing, Sharing, something this young congregation did a lot of in the early years.



Another big part of this church’s worship was their music program. The first choir was organized under the direction of Mary Jones [[see Exhibit G](#)]. In those early years there were four youth choirs and two adult choirs. The youth choirs were directed by volunteers. The Chapel Choir with adults and high school members sang at the 9:30 a.m. Service. The Chancel Choir sang at the 11:00 a.m. Service.

The combined adult choirs cut a record [S: i, p166], which many members still have. It included an introit composed by [Thelma Atkinson](#), which was sung before every worship service. By August 1961, there was a place for every grade from 1st through adult in the choirs [S: i, p157].

Along with our church membership, the neighboring community continued to grow. The Valley Forge Shopping Center on DeKalb Pike in King of Prussia was being built, featuring a brand-new A & P Grocery Store (The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company), which was one of the largest grocery chains at that time. The Candlebrook Elementary School also opened its doors at 310 Prince Frederick Street.



The Deacons approved \$500 on July 14, 1957, for the installation of acoustical tile on the ceilings in the two social rooms, which were used by the kindergarten and two, first grade classes to reduce noise [S: i, p51]. Completed in September the acoustical tiles eliminated practically all the noise issues. Summer brought

Vacation Church School in June with 130 children preregistered [S: i, p77].

The attendance in church school was 277 in December. By January 1958, the average attendance in church school had increased to 316. Plans were made for two sessions of church school to start in February. A teacher training program was also established.



Rev. Phillippe was called by the congregation to be their regular full-time Pastor on October 19, 1958 [S: i, p88]. He had served as the Mission Pastor under the Board of American Missions of the Presbyterian Denomination since June 1955. He was officially installed as the first Pastor of The Valley Forge Church on December 10, 1958.

The new manse was built at 213 Prince Frederick Street, next to the main sanctuary, for Rev. Bill and Carolyn Phillippe, and their children.

In 1958, both Pastor Phillippe and this congregation, thought benevolence giving was an important aspect of their worship, so in addition to their regular 10% to missions, 2% was given for Synod Causes, and [\\$25](#) (\$250 in today's dollars) was donated to the Norristown Council of Churches [S: i, p111].

As a result of the volunteer labor by the congregation, the church was completely debt free. Continuing to increase in membership, the church commissioned a building committee for a new sanctuary naming Donald P. Reid as the chair. The Church Community Challenge was started to raise \$150,000 over a three-year period. [S: i, p63]. By March 1958,



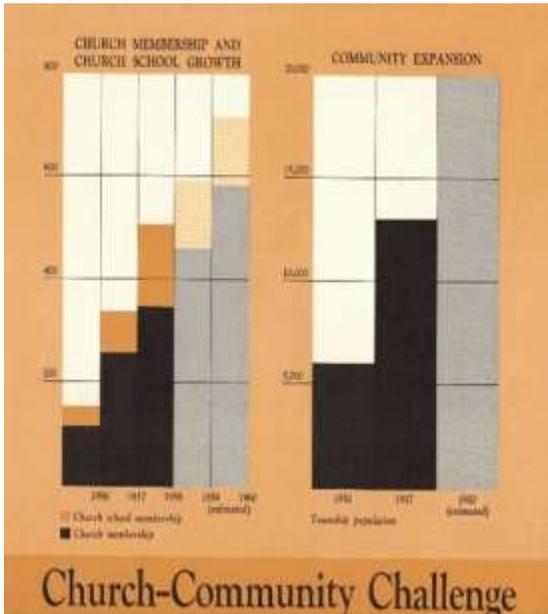
the total pledge was \$47,906 [S: i, p69]. On January 14, 1959, the committee brought the congregation its plans for a new sanctuary unit. The committee solicited bids. Philadelphia Architect H. Martyn Kneedler, of the firm Kneedler, Mirick and Zantzinger of Philadelphia, was chosen. The congregation continued to grow with Session voting on March 13, 1959, to conduct three morning services for Easter Sunday, March 29th.

Mr. Kneedler presented his preliminary plans on June 2, 1959, for a sanctuary seating 450 people and costing \$273,000. Session decided to proceed determining it would take a minimum of 15 years to repay [S: i, p104]. However, by September 5th, the Building

Committee had found ways to reduce the cost of the new sanctuary to \$248,000 (about \$2.5 million [today](#)).



CCC Booklet courtesy of Bob and Jeanne Manning, via Nancy Brown



1958 Church School

Sunday school classes were being held both inside and outside of the buildings.



Construction began on the new sanctuary by C. Raymond Lukens, of North Wales, Pennsylvania, on March 28, 1960. In order to meet the needs of this growing congregation, four months later on July 1, 1960, Session hired Reverend Omar Stephen Lantz as our first Assistant Pastor to help Rev. Phillippe with the children.

First Floor Construction



Foundation for the new sanctuary to seat 450 people



Lightning struck and damaged the steeple on the Chapel



Construction sometimes never goes smoothly. While building the main sanctuary, one of the problems faced was whether or not to remove the existing steeple on the chapel or let it remain. As the leaders debated the issue, the problem was solved by a lightning strike almost to the day the decision was to be made. A member of the church said, "The Lord sent the steeple to the ground and the insurance company paid for the removal".

Aerial View of the Sanctuary Under Construction. These beams are typical of churches built in the late 1950's through the 1970's. Ours were fabricated by the Rock Island Lumber Company (RILCO) and shipped from Rock Island, Illinois to our site.





Rev. Phillippe observed, “On my thirtieth birthday, we laid the cornerstone (1955-1960) of the main sanctuary. It was a beautiful, cool July 17, 1960. The church had grown to about one thousand members in the five years since I first saw that barren hillside next to the shopping center. By now the valley, which then was filled with cows, was filled with homes. What an exciting day it was for me.” [7, p44]



July 17, 1960, Cornerstone Laying Ceremony during worship service [S: i, p128].
Rev. Phillippe and Dignitaries.



1960 – Cross mounted signifying completion of the exterior of the building



As the interior neared completion, memorial funds were used to purchase the chancel appointments. Meanwhile men and women were digging and laying concrete for the sidewalks.



In gratitude for all that had happened, Rev. Phillippe and the congregation again felt that benevolence was important. On October 23, 1960, the 1961 Budget reflected a pledge of benevolence giving of 22% of current receipts (divided as 17% general missions and 5% for Presbytery causes.)



The first service held in the new sanctuary was on December 18, 1960, (which was five years to the date when we opened services in the chapel) even though the pews in the last quarter of the sanctuary were not bolted to the floor.

Why, you may ask?

The contractor and his workers were all members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and while the installation was scheduled for Saturday, that was their Sabbath and they would not work. Once again, a crew of volunteers from the church membership worked through the night to assemble the pews and get them in place and bolt the front pews to the floor. There was not enough time to anchor all of them to the floor; so, the first time the congregation stood up and sat down, there was quite a clatter.

On the national level, President Kennedy broke relations with Cuba on January 1, 1961 ramping up international tension. But on the local level, the new sanctuary was dedicated on January 15, 1961 [S: i, p137]. Our church life continued, with communion served to 316 people in February. Later, in May of 1961, Rev. Lantz requested and received a release from this congregation to accept a call to Ivyland United Presbyterian Church.

A special Session meeting [S: i, p151] was held on May 19th, to hear Mrs. Marion McCreary's proposal that a co-operative day nursery school be organized, using church facilities. It was



approved for her to proceed with the formation of the nursery school for three- and four-year old children. On September 3, 1961, Session approved the Constitution and Bylaws of The Valley Forge Church's Co-operative Day Nursery School (Tots' Co-op). Soon after, the nursery school opened its doors to their first class of 20, three- and four-year old children, and one teacher. On September 14, 1964, the nursery school became

licensed by the state of Pennsylvania, with Gwen Robinson as director. For 20 years the school operated as a cooperative preschool, meaning that the parents took turns being the aides in the classroom while serving as the school's executive board. In 1981, the school added its non-cooperative program to accommodate any parent unable to function as classroom aide; a paid aide was used as a substitute. In 2018, the Valley Forge Presbyterian Nursery School entered its 58th year of service.

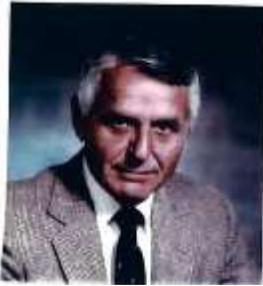
The congregation continued to grow under Rev. Phillippe's ministry. After seven years, in March 1962, Rev. Phillippe requested dissolution [S: i, p172] of his pastoral relationship with our church. He had received and accepted a call from the Second United Presbyterian Church in Monmouth, Warren County, Illinois. Rev. Phillippe left the Valley Forge Church for his new call on April 29, 1962. The congregation was sad to have Bill and Carolyn leave, but wished them well.

Rev. Dr. S. Carson Wasson became our Interim Pastor until Reverend Joseph L. Jensen, Jr. arrived in August.

William R. Phillippe is now a retired Presbyterian Minister. He has served as acting Head of Staff for National Capital Presbytery in the Washington, D.C. area; acting Executive Director of the General Assembly Council of the PC (U.S.A.); and Interim Senior Pastor at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City.

Reverend Phillippe was a graduate of Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio. He attended Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary from 1952-1955. Upon graduation, he was ordained on May 22, 1955, at the Brookline Boulevard United Presbyterian Church, his home church in Pittsburgh, PA. In 1971, he was awarded a DD from the Muskingum College.

Reverend Omar Stephen Lantz, Assistant Pastor (1960-1961)



Rev. Lantz was raised in Lancaster, PA, in the Amish tradition. When he left for college, he left the Amish community, but always respected them for their hard work and high ethical standards. He graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1960 and was ordained. Rev. Lantz was installed as The Valley Forge Church's First Assistant Pastor on July 12, 1960, to assist Rev. Phillippe with the rapidly growing congregation [S: i, p129]. In May of 1961, Rev. Lantz requested a release from this congregation to accept a call from the Ivyland United Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His contract was therefore terminated on June 30, 1961 [S: i, p151].

Rev. Lantz died on April 29, 2003, at age 77.

Rev. Phillippe and his wife, Carolyn
Rev. Lantz and his wife, Margaret
January 15, 1961



Reverend Doctor Samuel Carson Wasson, Interim Pastor (1962-1962)

Rev. Dr. S. Carson Wasson was a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1935. He was a Presbyterian Ministers' Fund President from 1963 until 1973, when he retired. He spent considerable time promoting the cause of church cooperation and union. He was a member of the Permanent Commission on Inter-church Relations of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. It merged, in 1958, with the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPNA) to form the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. In the summer of 1948, Dr. Wasson attended the founding assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam. In 1954, he attended the Second Assembly of the World Council at Evanston, IL.

He served, starting on April 30, 1962 [S: i, p176], as the first interim pastor at The Valley Forge Church. He filled in the interim between when Reverend William R. Phillippe departed and before Reverend Joseph L. Jensen, Jr. arrived.

Rev. Dr. Wasson died on March 28, 1976, at age 67.

The Phillippe era ended with the 116-member Valley Forge Church growing to 569 members as the surrounding housing developments were built. The church's property was located in the fastest growing section of Upper Merion, known as King of Prussia. So centrally located, that the United States Postal Service established their (19406) Post Office building across Town Center Road from the Sanctuary. Reverend Phillippe had founded the church, and then served as pastor for its first seven years. His ministry was embraced by a diverse congregation who had little church background, but wanted to learn. When those people were asked what first attracted them to The Valley Forge Church, the answers often included: location, preaching, music programs, and strong youth programs; The Valley Forge Church supplied them all.

Reverend Joseph “Joe” Lehigh Jensen, Jr., Pastor (1962-1984)



Rev. Joe and Ethel Jensen

Upon graduating from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1943, Rev. Joe enlisted in the Navy as an ensign, and was shipped overseas as commander of a PT Boat in support of the Normandy landings. It was not until 1946, when he accepted a call to his first church in Mason City, Illinois, that he was ordained. He had several subsequent calls before coming to Valley Forge from the Westminster Presbyterian Church, (125 N Wilkinson Street, Dayton, OH) which had a membership of 3,000, where he was co-pastor.

The congregation voted unanimously on July 2, 1962, to call Reverend Joseph L. Jensen, Jr. to be Pastor [S: i, p183]. He was installed as Pastor of The Valley Forge Church on October 7, 1962, and he, his wife, Ethel, and their four children (Daughter Mary, and 3 sons: Joe III, Lynn, and Mark) made their residence in the church’s manse. The Valley Forge Church was smaller than Westminster, serving communion to only 569 people the week before Rev. Joe arrived. However, the church would grow.

Our new pastor brought a vital, caring ministry to this church. He loved to play with the children and adults alike. In the summer of 1963, he was a counselor at Pennington Island, a Presbyterian retreat camp on the Delaware river, near Easton, PA. Later on, he was a counselor at Kirkwood Camp in the Poconos. He had a fantastic way with children. His first and longtime secretary, Dorothy “Dot” Lewis, said, “Children loved to sit on his lap at his desk or go to the playground to watch Duffy (the Jensen’s dog) go down the sliding board”.

This was a time when ‘God and Family’ took center stage in most people’s lives, as was exemplified in 1955, when Francis Scott Key’s words, “In God We Trust” were adopted as the national motto. People’s values were primarily shaped by a rise in inflation, civil rights and Vietnam; they were optimistic and open to change, but generally distrusted authority.

Rev. Joe always felt strongly about civil rights, and about supporting women in our church. In 1962, when he arrived, women were not allowed to serve on The Valley Forge Church boards. That local rule changed in 1964, and he was quick to encourage women to join the various boards. Helen Roback became our first female Elder [S: i, p231].

Valley Forge Church's First Female Elder, Helen Roback with Reverend Joe Jensen



Family units were growing rapidly as was reflected in the March 1992, Upper Merion Report, entitled *A Brief History*, "This was the period of greatest growth and the time when Roberts, Belmont, the Junior High School, the Senior High School and Caley School were planned and built. Caley was the last school to be built and was dedicated in 1966. By 1967, additions were made to both the Junior and Senior High school. Under state mandate in 1966, the schools in Upper Merion Township and the Borough of Bridgeport and West Conshohocken were joined; they became the Upper Merion Area School District (UMASD). 'Boomsville USA' continued. Early in 1971, the Department of Education notified the Board of School Directors that because the district's population exceeded 30,000 people, it was being reclassified as a second-class district, effective July 1, 1971." [10]

The growth in the schools was reflected in the growth of membership at our church. This young congregation felt music was a vital part of the worship service as many people came together and choirs were formed. Jeanne Fee said their choir robes were gray in 1960. The robes changed colors several times in the years that followed.



1962 Combined Choir

Besides the importance of music, Rev. Joe was committed to the practical application of his religious beliefs. He dedicated much of his efforts to pastoral counseling and social activism, particularly civil rights and international peace. Upon the Jensens' arrival in King of Prussia, Rev. Joe and Ethel joined the newly formed Upper Merion Fair Housing Council. On January 23, 1963, the Session voted to authorize Rev. Joe to make our church available to the next requestor for Fair Housing [S: i, p201]. The aim of this council was to ensure that property was sold at fair market value to qualified buyers, regardless of race. Tests were conducted in the area. A black couple and a white couple each would house-hunt the same house at different times. Nine times out of ten, the price quoted to the white couple was much less than that to the black couple. Under pressure from the council, the local real estate agents finally began selling to minorities. The end of housing discrimination in Upper Merion had begun.

On July 7, 1963, Reverend Augustus “Gus” S. Feather was installed [S: i, p215] and became our second Assistant Pastor. His focus was working with our youth, since the congregation continued to grow beyond the resources of one pastor.

During this time our country was experiencing a turbulent period of race relations [S: i, pp214-215] with civil unrest erupting from coast to coast. During the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, on August 28, 1963, Civil Rights Activist Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. In his speech, he called for an end to racism in the United States, and called for civil and economic rights. This speech would lead to profound changes in our country and for our church. Barb Beck recalls Ethel Jensen saying: “We went on a bus from King of Prussia. Joe and I sat under a tree as Dr. King began to speak -- I have a dream that one day ... -- Joe leaned over and whispered in my ear, I ‘believe that we are listening to history being made’.”

Locally, there was still evidence of discrimination. The Lafayette Swim Club on Valley Forge Road was then open for membership to whites only. Demonstrations were organized and the publicity brought an end to that restriction. It is believed that Rev. Joe made this statement: “I should have us look forward – determined by the Spirit of Christ within us – to build bridges across every gap that separates us from fulfilling the command of Christ to ‘love one another’.”

The church continued to grow. By June 19, 1963, there were 1,174 members [S: i, p215]. This sizeable congregation required three worship services to accommodate everyone: 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

In 1963, when Elder Ridgely Davis heard that the pipe organ at St. Andrews Roman Catholic Church in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania was about to be replaced, our church purchased it for \$500.00. Then Elder Ridgely and his father, Lisle Davis, an organ builder, dismantled it and rebuilt it. That organ was installed in our sanctuary by 18 members of the congregation under the direction of Elder Ridgely. The biggest challenge to installation, was cutting a hole through the very thick concrete floor to attach it to the blower, which was located downstairs in what is now a janitor’s closet. The organ was officially dedicated on November 17, 1963.

Dr. Robert (Bob) Wilde was the choir director for nearly 20 years and started a young people’s handbell choir. [Exhibit G](#) lists the choir directors and organists. Later an adult



handbell group was formed, and the resounding music became a familiar and integral part of the worship service; which is why a successful “The ‘Ring out the Old, Ring in the New’ Campaign” brought in funding for the new, expanded set of bells. Meanwhile the traditional choirs took on a new look when “The ‘It’s Not Easy Being Green’ Campaign” funded the

purchase of new choir robes to replace the existing well-worn green ones. At this time, the church was also fortunate to have a very talented member and composer, Nancy Petersen Inazu. For many years Nancy's folk style music was the backbone of the contemporary services that offered an alternative type of worship for many members.

At the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 15, 1964, the congregation voted to change the corporate name from The Valley Forge Church to The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church [S: i, p232]. May 20th, saw the total membership of the Church at 963 [S: i, p234]. Changes also occurred on a national level. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed major forms of discrimination against blacks and women, ending racial segregation in the United States. In April, 1965, with Session's permission [S: i, p264], Rev. Joe went to Selma, Alabama, to participate in literacy training and voter registration. He attended demonstrations in Washington, D.C., and was arrested for his actions. Rev. Joe recalled that he told the search committee "There were some issues burning inside me". He based his actions on the Old Testament words "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Rev. Joe was not the only person at church who had strong desires to serve. Elder Ridgely Davis was definitely a big part of this caring church family. The candlesticks, cup and plate on the communion table were designed and fabricated by Elder Ridgely, who was a charter member of this church. Two couples, Melissa and Robert Parrish, and Walter and Peg Kuhn, who had each lost a child around the time of completion of the current sanctuary, gave those items in their children's memory. In 1966, Elder Ridgely also designed and fabricated the "Alpha and Omega" on the lectern and the "Seal of the United Presbyterian Church" that hung on the pulpit. A number of years later vandals stole the seal, and Bob Manning commissioned Ridgely to re-create it. The paraments he designed in liturgical colors were made and maintained by Nancy Sellman for many years. Elder Betsy Develin took over that maintenance responsibility in 2017.

During Rev. Joe's first five years at Valley Forge, in addition to his local service and social activism, he was very active with the Philadelphia Presbytery. He acted as moderator of churches in Abington, Chester and Swarthmore, while they were in the process of seeking new pastors. Later he served on the Pension Committee.

In 1967, Rev. Joe attended a seminar on the book, I'm OK – You're OK by Thomas Anthony Harris. He decided that this book would be a useful tool in communicating and counseling. The Becks recalled that, "We were attendees to the I'm OK-You're OK parenting classes. With two young boys, we were eager to embrace new parenting skills." Later, he used that same book in other church classes. Rev. Joe also held many classes for inmates at Graterford State Correctional Institution in Skippack Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

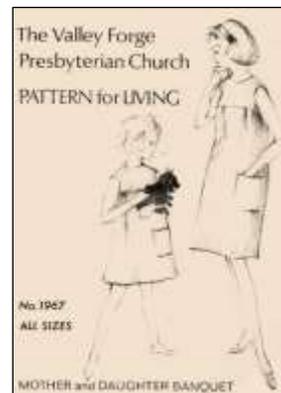
Rev. Joe's activism continued. As a result of the June 22, 1967, Church and Society Committee report [S: i, p310], which followed up on the Race Relations Study Guide, a meeting was held to formulate an Ecumenical Seminar on Race Relations. A motion was made, and passed by Session, to have The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church (VFPC) participate as sponsor of the Ecumenical Seminar on Race Relations. Seven other churches and one synagogue joined to sponsor the Ecumenical Seminar on Race Relations held on July 27, 1967 [S: i, p311].

Church school attendance remained high in September 1967, supported by 80 teachers and 12 helpers. Music was still vital to the congregation and integral to this church's worship services, with many styles of music offered. Elder Ridgely Davis built, and assembled, a harpsichord using a music kit purchased by another member, and hardwood obtained by Lee Sellman. The harpsichord was dedicated on December 3, 1967, and was played for the first time in the 1967 performance of Handel's *Messiah*. By now there were 55 members in the Chancel Choir, 40 members in the Cherub Choir, 35 members in the Carol Choir and 25 members in the Bell Choir [S: i, p313]. Church membership was 972 in December 1967 [S: i, p322].

However, by December 18, 1967, discord [S: i, pp317-318] was surfacing among some (nearly 20 family units) of the more conservative members of the congregation over the political action views of the church, and Rev. Joe's politically oriented sermons. A rift with the conservative, magnanimous congregants developed. In light of this discord, on January 10, 1968, Rev. Joe remarked in Session [S: i, p320] that the main work of the church was to preach the love of Christ. He elaborated on his interest in many of the social problems of the day, such as open housing. It was not always easy, and he lost many church members because of his social activism. He stated his awareness of disapproval of those activities by some members of the congregation, but expressed his belief that most members were with him in most areas of concern. Those members who stayed may not have agreed with Rev. Joe's controversial stands, but most accepted his views as genuine.

That year also brought the 1968 Civil Rights Acts, commonly known as the Fair Housing Act, which aligned closely with Rev. Joe's focus. Vietnam War opposition continued with the Session inviting Mr. Bruce Tischler to speak [S: i, p325]. Discord and strife also riddled this country when both Martin Luther King, Jr. (4-4-1968) and Senator Robert F. Kennedy (6-6-1968) were assassinated. In June 1968, the Church and Society Committee established an official position of the Church on conscientious objectors [S: i, p331].

Despite the seriousness of his life's work, Rev. Joe had a natural sparkle, good humor, optimism, and a fun-loving spirit. He initiated all-church roller skating and squash parties. Besides parties, there were also potluck dinners, Italian dinners, men's breakfasts, small discussion and sharing groups, the birth of the prayer chain, flea markets and country fairs. There was even a luau, where some male members danced in grass skirts. There were a lot of Adult Education programs offered at 9:30 a.m. One member of the congregation referred to these times as the "3-Fs", *Fun, Food and Fellowship*. It was a great program for many years. There were clubs and bowling leagues. Lorraine Hawk was often seen watching the under-school-aged children while their mothers bowled at Facenda Whitaker Lanes. The 1967 Mother and Daughter Banquet included a fashion show of clothes made from the Pattern for Living. The youth fellowships put on roast beef dinners and spaghetti dinners for the congregation and local community [S: ii, p9, p19, p272, p299].



Fellowship extended community-wide to include Brownies, Seniors, Wing, Mariner, Explorer, Girl, and Boy Scouts; all sponsored by our church at one time. Over the years the church's mission-focus developed extensive community outreach too: Norristown State Hospital, help to the Upper Merion Aid Society (now Upper Merion Emergency Aid); sponsorship of two Cuban refugees, church school participation in the Heifer Project, Neighborhood Meals on Wheels, and clothing drives. Members even reached out to inner city Philadelphia, providing lunches at Corinthian Church, dialogue with Berean Church members, and helped to set up a nursery school at Pattison Presbyterian Church.

During this time, Rev. "Gus" Feather, our Assistant Pastor, accepted a call from the Pleasantville Presbyterian Church in West Jersey Presbytery, effective April 15, 1969 [S: i, p347]. In June, Jim O'Brien was hired for youth work [S: i, p353]. On November 30, 1969, Rev. James O'Brien was ordained and installed as the third Assistant Pastor. Rev. Jim took over Reverend Feather's focus of working with our youth, even while attending classes at Princeton Seminary. He led discussions on various phases of faith, worship, the Bible, Jesus, communion, and the mission of the church. He also set up retreats for Session.

In December 1969, the 1970 budget projected a \$40,000 deficit [S: i, pp360-361]. Membership of the congregation had been declining for over three years. This was due, in part, to General Electric Company having a major layoff in King of Prussia, the changing age of the congregational member, the dissatisfaction of about 50 families with the lecture forum series, and the strong views of Rev. Joe on civil rights [S: i, pp364-365]. This was also the period when people were questioning authority figures, and were looking for "work life balance". Attendance for June and July averaged about 250. The Presbytery and General

Assembly had gone on record against the Vietnam War, and the Session approved sending a letter to the congregation dealing with this and other current topics [S: i, pp385-386] mid-July 1970. By October attendance rebounded to 404 [S: i, p390].

By 1970, an increasing number of women had joined the work force outside of the home, and the Women's Association was dissolved. The remaining circles were encouraged to continue and function through a committee of the Deacons. Many of the former Women's Association members and officers continued to be active in the life of this church. In 1973, there were eight women on boards; in 1984, there were sixteen women on those boards.

It was at this time that Rev. Joe encouraged his wife, Ethel, to return to college for her master's degree in Educational Counseling. She went on to become Director of Continuing Education at Eastern College, a position she held for ten years. During these years Ethel, along with Elder Sue Cummings, led several Assertiveness Training sessions for church members. Ethel took a leave of absence from Eastern College for a year of Peace Studies at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana.

Ethel Jensen wasn't the only person to take additional training. In 1971, from August 2nd to the 14th, Rev. Joe took a Study Leave for a course in Transactional Analysis (T/A) in Sacramento, California, taught by Dr. Harris, the book's author. Soon afterwards Session approved a six-week class for Rev. Joe to initiate several Transactional Analysis groups, in which he attempted to help people improve their relationships by more fully understanding themselves. In October 1971, Rev. Joe reported that 50 people had attended his recent session based on the T/A book he had previously used, I'm OK – You're OK. Rev. Joe requested and received permission to repeat the basic course and two additional courses: Applications in Marriage, and Applications for Individual Growth [S: ii, pp27-33]. These courses were met with mixed reviews. He caused great consternation within the congregation. However, Rev. Joe continued to hold several series of classes for the more liberal members and friends of the church.

While Ethel and Rev. Joe were continuing their education, the Session approved choirs: Cherub Choir for grades 1 to 3, directed by Jeanne Fee and Betty Wilde; Calvin Choir for grades 5 and 6, directed by Jane Wright; and the Bell Choir for grades 7 and 8, and optionally 9. The Adult and the Contemporary Choirs continued [S: ii, p25].

In September 1971, it was reported that the "Groups in Action" program, previously approved by Session, began on October 6th at 8 p.m. It was known as "House Church Groups" [S: ii, p27]. In Fall 1973 five families started a group with the goal of getting to know other members with children. These families did not have close relatives in the King of Prussia area, so the group was to serve as a replacement for the aunts, uncles, and cousins that others had close at hand. These parenting classes met twice per month rotating at families' homes;

while one meeting focused on parenting issues in a Christian setting, the other was a family outing.

Both Rev. Jensen and Rev. O'Brien told Session that they planned to demonstrate against the Vietnam War, in Washington, D.C., on December 20, 1971. Rev. Joe was definitely sympathetic to the request by the Vietnam Veterans' Against the War. At the Session Meeting on December 19, 1971, it was reported "That four members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War sent a letter to three elders of the Church and Community (Committee) requesting that they be permitted to prepare meals in the church kitchen for use during their encampment at the Valley Forge Park. They also requested that approximately 50-60 people be allowed to sleep in the church because of inability to camp out. The expected time of use was to be December 25th to December 31st." The motion was approved [S: ii, pp35-36].

A letter from Mr. Gerald Roberts, Upper Merion Township, indicated that "Under zoning regulations, we were granted an exception for religious use and that overnight housing of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War constituted an illegal use (of church premises)". Rev. Joe reported that he had discussed this situation with Mr. Roberts, Mr. Maneses (township solicitor), as well as with members of the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church and Community Committee, the Rev. Dean Lewis of the General Assembly Church and Society Committee, Otto Finkbeiner of the Stated Clerk's office, Mercer Tate (a lawyer active in civil liberty cases) and an assistant State Attorney General. It was generally conceded that the Session had an unquestionable right to define what constituted a religious service. Therefore, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (a national veteran's organization founded in New York City in 1967) was allowed to make meals in the church kitchen and to have 50-60 people sleep overnight in the church's fellowship hall from December 25th to 31st, 1971 [S: ii, pp36-37].

Rev. Joe wasn't the only person to impact this congregation. In 1972, Harold Potts joined this church, and immediately shared his expertise with handling money. With his help debts were consolidated and insurance policies were updated. He was full of fun and made the entire congregation his friend. He was dearly missed when he died in 1981. In the fall of 1975, Ethel Jensen (whose focus was on supporting all women) and Elder Sue Cummings also impacted the congregation by leading a 10-week seminar entitled, "Women in the New Creation" [S: ii, p146].

From 1973 through 1979, changes in the church continued. On February 4, 1973, Karen Gravengaard was installed as our fourth Assistant Pastor, working with our youth, and serving until 1974 [S: ii, p69]. The \$17,000 Allen Model 600 Electronic Organ was dedicated on March 18, 1973 [S: ii, p63]. In April of 1973, Session made a resolution to continue the contemporary (non-traditional) service as part of the regular worship schedule [S: ii, pp74-

75, p85]. The [Church's Bylaws](#) regarding officers' terms were changed on June 10, 1973: "The term shall be three (3) years and no Elder shall serve on the Session for consecutive terms, either full or partial aggregating more than six (6) years" [S: ii, p80]. By the fall of 1973, Rev. Joe recommended that one Sunday per month be designated as "Fun Sunday", for friendship and to accomplish any needed job or projects on church property. Because the congregation was so large, in excess of 650 members, there continued to be two Sunday morning church services, offered at 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. As a result, Session decided to replace the glass communion cups with disposable, plastic communion cups. This led to a big savings in time. As in the past, the December 1973, Christmas Eve services were well attended; both at the children's half-hour at 7:30 p.m. and the traditional candle light service at 11:00 p.m. The Christian Education Committee held a Juvenile Justice Workshop at 7:30 p.m. on the last three Sundays in January 1974, with leaders Mrs. Robbins and Mrs. Sylvia [S: ii, pp86-93].

In 1974, The Neighborhood Meals on Wheels Program came to reside on our campus. The Deacons regularly offered the congregation square dances, homecoming picnics, June picnics, talent shows, covered dish dinners with speakers, clothing drives, fondue dinners and spaghetti dinners [S: ii, pp127-138]. After Rev. Joe had preached a series of sermons dealing with death, Session decided to send "A Guide for Christians in Time of Death" to all 672 members of the congregation in April 1974 [S: ii, pp105, 126]. On a lighter note, fellowship included families socializing and camping at Kirkwood Camp in early May of 1974 [S: ii, p99]. Handel's *Messiah* was performed on December 8, 1974, at 4:00 p.m. in the church sanctuary [S: ii, p118]. January 1975 saw 287 children enrolled in Sunday school. In May 1975, Rev. Joe suggested setting up a Bicentennial Committee to work on several presentations related to the upcoming Bicentennial Celebration in 1976 [S: ii, p137]. On May 23, 1976, the "Burning of the Mortgage" ceremony took place during the service, and the King of Prussia Players presented a program on the Bicentennial [S: II, pp161, 162]. On July 4, 1976, The Bicentennial Wagon Train Pilgrimage, which began in Blaine, Washington on June 8, 1975, ended at Valley Forge National Park. The wagon train had spent a year traveling across the United States.



Traveling through Hummelstown, PA

https://www.pennlive.com/life/2017/02/bicentennial_wagon_train_pass.html

(Norman Arnold, Allied Pix for The Patriot-News)

In 1976, Rev. Joe and Ethel Jensen expressed a desire to own their own home, and requested other living arrangements. A special meeting of the congregation was called for November 28, 1976, to approve the sale of the manse for \$47,000. The sale was finalized in December [S: ii, p176]. (The property later sold for \$200,000 on September 23, 2015. MLS# 1002668748.)



Rev. James “Jim” MacDonald became the fifth Assistant Pastor to work with the youth of the church in December 1976. To assist Rev. Joe with meeting the needs of the 659-member congregation, Rev. Dr. James Tanis became the first Associate Pastor in 1978 [S: ii, pp182-203], as a volunteer (Parish Associate).

Dr. Robert Wilde, VFPC Choir Director, sought and received Session’s approval to have The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church enter into a Joint Music Program with Combs College of Music in Philadelphia in the Summer of 1977. Under supervision of the college representatives (Dr. Wilde and the Worship Committee of Session), the student (intern) would learn and assume the responsibilities of a church music program. The student would be involved in an internship with the church in his/her Junior or Senior year or as a graduate student [S: ii, p190].

At the September 19, 1977 Session meeting, C. Martin made a presentation to Session on the responsibilities of the Session to a candidate for the ministry who we had taken under care. He indicated his committee had interviewed Meg Barnhouse. Elder Julie Robinson volunteered to be on a committee with Pastor Jensen for the care of Meg Barnhouse. Meg was the first of several church members to be guided to the ministry [S: ii, pp190-191].

Rev. Jim was busy in 1978, scheduling activities from January through June, which included: A Senior Fellowship retreat at Kirkwood Camp; ski trips for the Junior and Senior Fellowships; a serendipity workshop; teacher training; family camping trips to Camp Donegal (Airville, York Co., PA); and a Lenten family night. He also brought in new leaders, Pat and Bruce Barker for 9th Grade Fellowship, and Sue Votta as a Senior High Fellowship leader. Session also approved Betty Brown as an advisor to the Junior and Senior High Fellowships. Rev. Joe expressed a concern for the lack of family-oriented church sponsored activities. He requested all boards to suggest possible programs. Ethel Reagan became Director of Vacation Church School from June 21-29, 1978. By September 1979, Ed Braswell and Paul Little became Senior High Fellowship leaders. Barbara and Tom Spreeman were already Junior High Fellowship leaders. Helen Kemple joined the Junior High Fellowship as a leader in 1979. Thirty, or more, students attended both fellowships. Now, as Rev. Joe had requested, there were more family-oriented activities at VFPC [S: ii, pp201-230].

In 1979, with the church buildings approaching 25 years old, there was a need for some major maintenance. Therefore, Session created the Major Mission and Major Maintenance Campaign with a goal to raise \$70,000. It began on May 1, 1979, and ran through May 1, 1983. It was decided that \$35,000. would go for Mission and \$35,000. for Maintenance. To save money, Session voted to have hymnals cleaned, trimmed and rebound at a cost not to exceed \$3.00 per book. By December 1979, \$92,627 had been pledged for 1980. However, 15 families who had pledged in 1979, did not pledge again in 1980, creating a \$6,000 shortfall in the 1981 budget [S: ii, pp226-236].

1979-84 brought other changes and challenges to the congregation. On the national level, there was the Iranian hostage crisis, and a second energy crisis, sending gasoline prices from \$0.86 to over \$1.00 per gallon for the first time. While, at the local level, the sense of family remained strong within our church throughout the 1980s, with a willingness to help each other in their time of need. When Rick Spaulding was injured and paralyzed, many members helped with the frequent “patterning” sessions used in his rehabilitation. That was a true demonstration of how our local church came together as a close-knit family.

The Board of Deacons supported many community organizations such as the Fortnighters Club. The club hosted weekly dinners and activities for people who had been released from the Norristown State Hospital and helped them develop a sense of community and well-being while adjusting to society. The Deacons also sent “We Care” packages to college students and service personnel from our church [S: ii, pp313, 347], which continues today.

In 1980, Junior High Fellowship leader Barbara Spreeman accepted the paid position of Integrator of Christian Education and Youth Programs, to assist Rev. Jim MacDonald. For several years Rev MacDonald pursued studies to become a clinical member of The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists [S: ii, p249] while directing the Christian education and youth programs for the church and surrounding community. The summer activities for both fellowships continued with day trips to Ocean City, N.J. and Great Adventure. There was a combined camping trip with new incoming 10th graders to Muddy Run Park [S: ii, p253]. The church’s 25th Anniversary ([Exhibit J-25th Anniversary](#)) was started on April 25, 1980, when Founding Pastor, Reverend William Phillippe preached, and continued throughout the year with Reverend Feathers preaching on June 15th [S: ii, p245].

In March 1982, Barbara Spreeman became Assistant Director of Christian Education. Tom Spreeman was Trustee [S: ii, p303]. Barbara Spreeman resigned effective June 15, 1982 [S: ii, p308]. Rev. Jim MacDonald continued his work with church and community youth and served the needs of the church until his retirement in 1994.

On June 30, 1982, Rev. Anne Egan was installed as the sixth Assistant Pastor [S: ii, p381]. The Presbyterian Church changed its structure on the national level. The PC(USA) was established

by the 1983 merger of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, (whose churches were located in the southern and border states), and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, (whose congregations could be found in every state).

Toward the end of Rev. Joe's tenure, social justice and peace initiatives continued to be present and controversial at VFPC. "Following a lengthy discussion on how best to use our influence to become aware of what was really going on and to influence the government to change their policies, the Session passed a motion (7 to 4) that allowed the Brandywine Peace Community to meet in our parking lot on April 5, 1983, before their march to General Electric." The Session stated they agreed with their efforts to attain peace, but not with the manner in which they were going about it. Therefore, our facilities would not be open to them [S: II, p336].

Rev. Joe retired in 1984. He preached his last sermon on June 24th, and retired from VFPC on June 30, 1984. Rev. Joe said, "I want a new life experience outside the institutional church, but in a related field. Ethel and I have been told we've been role models for many people. We want to show that you can start a new life at any age." So, he and Ethel left their King of Prussia home of 22 years and "headed off to college" together. They thrived on their "new life experience".

Rev. Joe Jensen and Elder Michael Henry
"Squash Partners"
at Reverend Jensen's Retirement Party



Reverend Kenneth V. Brown became the interim Pastor who served from 1984, until 1986.

Hallmarks of Rev. Joe were his energy, enthusiasm and deeply-felt concern for all, which helped make him an effective minister and leader. When he left King of Prussia, he was honored at a meeting of the Upper Merion Board of Supervisors, with a framed proclamation noting his achievements, as pastor of the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church and as a member of the Upper Merion Community. Three years later, in 1987, he was also awarded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award at the community celebration of the civil rights leader's birthday. His impact on both our church and our community will never be forgotten. Rev. Joe once said, "Happiness for me is the ability to solve problems. That's fun -- there's never a situation that you can't be of some help". He played competitive squash with college students until he was 88 years old. His love of adventure was something he had kept all his life. The Session named Reverend Jensen, "Pastor Emeritus". He died on October 10, 2010, at the age of 94.

Church members remembered Reverend Jensen's tenure:

Barbara Beck said that "In 1971, girls who were pregnant were not allowed to attend school." She also remembered that "Ethel Jensen offered a mission opportunity for the women in the church. On a weekly basis volunteers would drive to a house in West Philadelphia where pregnant teenagers gathered to complete high school requirements and to socialize. Our women took lunch for the girls, taught lessons on infant care, and helped in whatever way was needed."

Barbara Beck also remembered a time around 1972, when she was home with her two young sons and Joe came to her door. She became flustered thinking, "Oh no, something bad must have happened to Bob (her husband) and he is coming to tell me." She opened the door and Joe said, "Can I play with your children?" He was on his way home from doing a pastoral visit at Graterford Prison.

Barbara Thomas remembered that Ethel Jensen showed her how to reupholster furniture by taking the old cover off and using it as a pattern for the new cover.

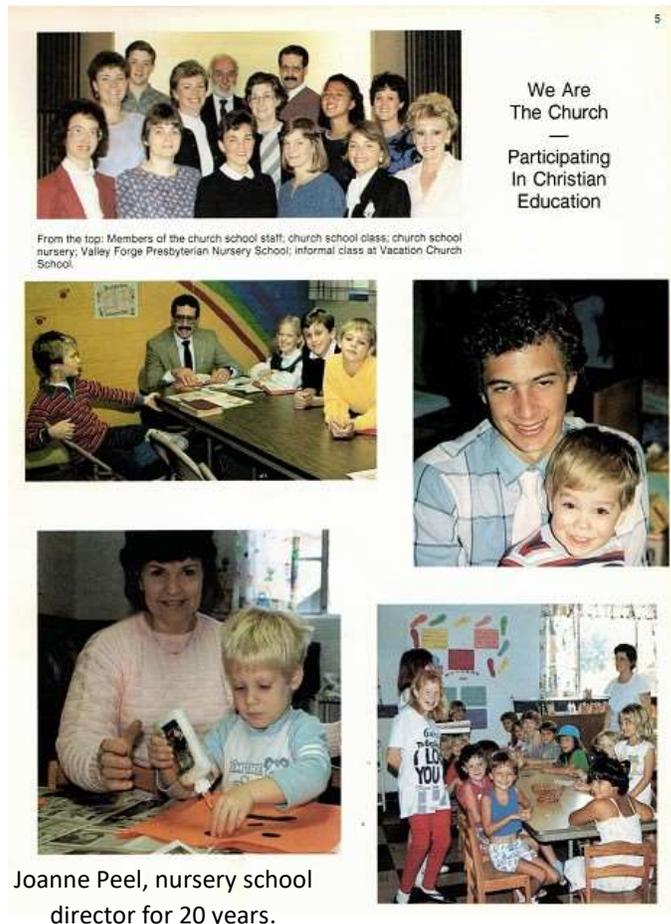
Arlene Osborne said, "Reverend Joe served the longest. He was very involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Onetime, Reverend Joe had a member of the Black Panther Party speak at our early church service. Reverend Joe had a connection with women from a black church, and he served lunch to black children at a temple in the area." Arlene also said, "he (Reverend Joe) had strong feelings about the Vietnam War, and he counseled young men who did not wish to serve. He even participated in protests against the Vietnam War. This was a sore point with of some of our congregation." On a lighter note, Arlene said: "Reverend Joe was the first minister to use an Acme grocery bag to hold items to discuss in his sermon. He was athletic and played handball."

Reverend James MacDonald said, "Reverend Joe was a fine man to work with, beloved by the congregation, sincere in his beliefs and causes, and dedicated to the church and its place in the community. This man was sheer energy, strength and enthusiasm. Reverend Joe was always aware and appreciative of my work, both in managing the Christian Education department, as well as in my ministry to the Junior and Senior High youth. The church sanctuary was Reverend Joe's castle. Preparing for our shared services usually left me both amused and bemused, since he would never define our parts until about an hour before the service was to start, despite my questions during the week. I always entered slightly off base, except for the children's sermon (for) that was my turf."

Gail Moore remembered Ethel Jensen saying, "Life is a do-it-yourself job." Gail took that to mean, don't take your identity from your husband. Stay focused on your goals and not on who others want you to be or what they want you to achieve.

Ethel Reagan said: "It (Valley Forge Presbyterian Church) was an active church with lots of activities for young children. The Vacation Bible School was fun in the summer and the children enjoyed meeting their Sunday school friends for one week of learning, singing, crafts and games. We even had an afternoon activity with middle schoolers for fun games and crafts in the church atmosphere." Linda Spreeman said, "My grandmother, Florence Trythall Brooks Miller, taught Sunday school for many years in the 1960s." Barbara Spreeman, remembers that Marge Markley used to do all the "gym" aspects of Vacation Bible School, when it was during the day, and Linda recalls teaching there."

Ethel Reagan continues, "Pastor Jensen was always very active with the children. He had a summer picnic at a pool, afternoon ice skating, and squash nights for families. His best sermon was when he returned from vacation. No one wanted to miss that one! Joe had a way of making his adventures and tribulations sound like a fun time for all."



Reverend Augustus “Gus” S. Feather, Assistant Pastor (1963-1969)



Rev. Gus and Nancy Feather

Reverend Feather had a scientific bent to his practice of religion, since his undergraduate degree was in Electrical Engineering. He graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1963, and was ordained on June 19, 1963, at Cedar Park Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania [S: i, p214]. Rev. Gus was installed as The Valley Forge Church’s second Assistant Pastor on June 24, 1963. He and his wife Nancy settled into life in King of Prussia. Their two daughters, Eleanor and Marjorie, were born shortly thereafter. Rev. Gus said, “I’m just Gus, always have been to parishioners and friends alike.” Upon arriving at The Valley Forge Church, Gus said, “My role was to develop the educational programs, train teachers, plan retreats, conduct Confirmation classes, and provide small group leadership. I endeavored to create structure for the future.”

Gus was committed to both God and science. He said, “Religious traditions call for a higher awareness. Jesus upset the status quo and conventional morality by his call to a higher allegiance. One theologian described Jesus’ ministry as ‘afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted’. Reverend Joe Jensen followed that model as have I”.

Gus said about Jesus “He makes my ethical choices much more difficult whether it be about the poor or refugees. Sometimes common sense is not enough and that is difficult for a prudent person like myself.”

After working with Reverend Joe Jensen for three years, Reverend Gus said, “I held (Reverend) Joe Jensen in highest regards. He had a passion for social justice, but first and foremost he was a pastor, regularly visited members of the congregation. His children’s sermons were creative, interactive and memorable. He liked to play handball and squash, often exercising on a high bar in the backyard of the manse on the way to his office. He was passionate, caring and deeply involved in people’s lives.”

Membership approached 1,000 and 705 people were enrolled in Sunday school during the six years Gus was at our church. He said “There were 10 Junior High Classes, and 6 Senior High Classes. There were a number of monthly, topical discussion groups. Reverend Joe started a program with 100 children, and 25 adult leaders, who would go for a weekend at

Pennington Island. Senior Highs students regularly went to Kirkwood Camp in the Poconos; there were usually about 35 youths and 6 leaders.”

Gus believed that your neighbor was anyone in need. He referred to theologian Karl Barth, who wrote *“Jesus is man’s idea of God and God’s idea of man.”* Gus believed that religious faith was always a mixture of belief and disbelief, much as Leslie Weatherhead wrote in, The Christian Agnostic [11], “In which he acknowledges three drawers of the mind: 1) I believe. 2) I disbelieve. 3) Awaiting further light.” Gus went on to say, “I think Faith takes shape for me in Jesus Christ, his compassion and self-sacrifice. He is my call to faith”.

Member Linda Spreeman remembered that Gus led her Communicant’s Class, during the time when they were held on Saturday mornings. “There was instruction, discussions, a one-on-one meeting with the minister, passing a final written exam, and declaring their faith in Jesus before they were accepted into church membership.”

Arlene Osborne said, “This was the time when children learned the books of the Bible and Bible verses before receiving their own Bible. Gus had a more scientific outlook than most pastors. For example, he didn’t believe there was an actual parting of the Red Sea, but that it was a marshy spot that became flooded after the Israelites got through. Gus said, ‘Most Biblical scholars in the 1960s had the same understanding about the ‘Red’ Sea Crossing. The Hebrews actually call the body of water the Sea of Reeds.’”

In 1969, Gus accepted a call from the Presbyterian Church of Pleasantville, New Jersey, where he served as pastor for 20 years.

Reverend James “Jim” Douglas O’Brien, Assistant Pastor (1969-1972)

Reverend James O’Brien, along with his wife, Libby, and their young child arrived at Valley Forge Presbyterian Church in 1969. He was ordained by the Philadelphia Presbytery on November 13, 1969, and installed as the third Assistant Pastor of Valley Forge Presbyterian Church on November 30, 1969. Rev. Jim’s focus was on our youth, as had Rev. Gus Feather’s been before him.

Rev. Jim set up retreats for the youth fellowships and Session. He led the communicant’s classes [S: ii, p12] which involved discussions on various phases of faith, worship, the Bible, Jesus, Communion, and the mission of the church. After the Christian Education Series by Dr. Eugene Fee in March of 1971, Session approved a small group program, titled “Groups in Action”. Rev. Jim monitored these groups. On October 18, 1971, “Rev. Jim reported that one ‘Group of Six’ was in action” [S: ii, p30].

Rev. Jim served until June 28, 1972, when he returned to school [S: ii, p38].

Church members remembered Rev. Jim O’Brien:

Arlene Osborne recalled that Reverend O’Brien was a nice young man, who played the guitar in Sunday school classes.

Linda Spreeman said, “I know that Reverend Jim was there when I graduated high school, because he was awesome in Senior High Fellowship! Reverend Jim was someone who identified very well with teenagers during the later 1960s and early 1970s. That was not an easy task at that time, because it was in the middle of the unpopular Vietnam War and it was generally everything the ‘60s and ‘70s came to represent. Reverend Jim had a dynamic personality that allowed for easy bonding with youth. In fact, our fellowship had grown to include our friends from other denominations. I even recall one young man, who participated, was in college. Reverend Jim had excellent ideas, provoked wonderful thought, engaged in meaningful games of ‘trust’, all in the spirit of Christian love and acceptance. Our fellowship met every Sunday, even in summer. We had some good adventures, fun parties, all with Christian fellowship and friendship being the central core. He was a very special man to the youth of that era at Valley Forge Presbyterian Church. In 1982, he was invited back to preach.”

Reverend O’Brien died on November 7, 2000. He was 56 years old.

Reverend Karen Louise Gravengaard, Assistant Pastor (1973-1974)

Reverend Gravengaard, a graduate of The Princeton Theological Seminary, was installed as the fourth Assistant Pastor for youth on February 4, 1973, and served until January 31, 1974.

During her short tenure, there was much activity:

Rev. Karen was in charge of the Confirmation class of 31 students. The class was divided into three smaller groups for discussions. She took 25 members of the Senior High Fellowship to Rehoboth Beach for a weekend retreat, February 23-25, 1973. Rev. Karen arranged for the family camping in May, 1973 [S: ii, pp71-73].

The Confirmation class was received into church membership during the worship service on May 20, 1973. She was married the week of June 3, 1973, to Wayne R. Whitelock in Burlington, New Jersey. The Confirmation class led the worship service on June 17, 1973. Their class retreat was held August 7-9, 1973 [S: ii, p77-88].

The Junior High Fellowship Coffee House program began September 15, 1973, and ran every Saturday night. Their retreat was held on October 19-21, 1973.

The Senior High Fellowship began on Sunday, September 16, 1973, with Pat and Sam Cole, as advisors. The Senior High Retreat was held on October 5-7, 1973 [S: ii, pp77-83].

Reverend James “Jim” R. Mac Donald, Assistant Pastor (1977-1994)



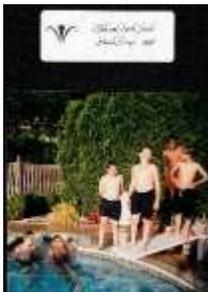
Reverend James “Jim” MacDonald
and
Junior High Youth Fellowship Leader,
Peter Heinz

Reverend MacDonald graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1976, and was ordained by Donegal Presbytery on December 12, 1976. On January 30, 1977, he was installed as the fifth Assistant Pastor and served until 1994. Rev. Jim’s focus was working with our youth.

He started his career as an engineer working on robotics design with The General Electric Company. Then, in mid-life, he felt called to change careers. His General Electric co-worker, Elder Paul Gaskins, encouraged him to apply to our church. Thus, started his 17-year journey working with several ministers at our church.

Rev. Jim provided the following material:

(My) primary theme of ministry was focused on bringing the message of Jesus Christ to the youth of our church and Christian values to the youth of the community at large. I managed the Christian Education Department, taught Junior and Senior High kids during the morning and conducted youth fellowships for 6-8 grades from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and grades 10-12 from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. The 9th graders were taught separately and were our Confirmation class.



In all of my work with youth, I was blessed with teachers and leaders who stayed with me through the years. In fellowships, some of those followed me from the Junior High Group, right over to the Senior High Group, and we all went home tired at evening’s end. We were all on first name basis with our kids. Barbara (Mom) and Tom (Moose) Spreeman, Faith and Peter Heinz, Sue Votta (MacDonald), Patty Garner, Chip Magdamo, Sandy

Rodman, Indra Mahabir, Brian Reagan, Jen Thorpe, Rob and Debby Fox, and my co-pilot Jeff Gatter, and myself (Jim, Jimbo, ancient one, old man) formed a family for our youth that brought continuity for our kids from ages 12 through about 18 [Note: Jim revised the list of leaders, and added Sam Cole, Fran Terry, Steve Robinson, Elaine and Bill Burnett, and Betty Brown]. On Sundays I taught Junior and Senior High church school classes and the children's' sermons in the morning, and conducted the youth fellowships during the evening. Our evening youth programs were unique and drew not only the youth of the church, but also a wide audience from the community, including Jewish, Baptist, Catholic and non-Christian kids. The focus for all was that we are all children of God, and 'God does not make junk'. We established a deep foundation of trust between the youth and older folks, of positive thinking, which made it uplifting to everyone – both the leaders and the young people who came every week. There was no generation gap. It was amazing how we as adult leaders could relate to the high school youth, who came week after week. If you could relate, maybe even tell a personal story of a similar experience in your own life, then you are the rarest of friends - one who cared enough to listen, patient enough to listen for a long time, and (was) always willing to be there. And it works both ways – the youth taught us so much about themselves and about ourselves as well: about honesty, and about mutual respect. Quite simply, we trusted each other.

I designed evening programs that explored personal boundaries, handling of anger, running your life (or someone will run it for you), the gift of compassion, what is empathy, and so many more topics. Through so many years of so many evenings and weekend retreats, Jeff Gatter had been a constant wise presence with a deep concern for the welfare of the kids in our care. Jeff, I discovered later, had written detailed accounts of every program we ever conducted during the evenings and on retreats with the Senior High 'families'. He and I are now turning it into a journal for the diaspora of our alumni, who now live in countries around the world.

Over the years I have conducted about 100 weekend retreats for Junior Highs and Senior Highs, and the 9th grades. I have been chased down ski slopes, tossed into the ocean and thrown into lakes. I have been treated with affection and respect by a few hundred of God's other children. What more could I ask for? I have been blessed.

--- Reverend James MacDonald

Our church members remembered Rev. Jim:

Jean Friedman said, "I think that he made a very positive impact on our church, as a youth minister and as a preacher." Gail Moore recalls, "Rev. Jim was a great resource for books on games, and as a sounding board on how to run youth fellowships, when I was co-leader of the Youth Club for third, fourth and fifth graders." Ethel Reagan said, "He was very involved with the teenagers. Sunday night at church was a great way to make new friends. Many are still friends today.



The Sunday night group took a weekend to the shore every year. They also took ski trips in the winter and many other exciting activities and some with other churches. Both (Pastor) Jim and Pastor Joe let the college students do many readings on Christmas Eve. Before every Christmas Eve service Jim would invite the congregation (kids, college students, adults) to his home before the late Christmas Eve service."

Rev Jim MacDonald used to have a senior high class and would use a biblical example and relate it to the young persons' lives. He brought in donuts and the young people came.

Peter Heinz remembers:

We joined Valley Forge Presbyterian Church in 1976, having heard that Jim MacDonald was the Youth Minister. Faith knew Jim from 32nd Street, (Philadelphia, PA) at General Electric. (Reverend) Joe Jensen was the caring Valley Forge minister at that time that welcomed and engaged us in the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church community. Our daughter, Krista, had reached junior high age, so we were looking for a youth fellowship for her. We joined Valley Forge and became active in the church and in the Junior High Fellowship.



Jim, organized and developed an interesting program for Junior and Senior High School students for that time. Those programs were implemented by assistant leaders consisting of the



Junior High Group of Tom and Barbara

Spreeman, Dave and Donna Ray, Faith and Peter Heinz, occasionally Jeff Gatter and some others from time to time. Jeff Gatter was the primary Assistant Leader for the Senior High Fellowship. The Junior High program consisted of games, personal life story telling, spring and fall weekend retreats, sledding in the winter, and a combined spaghetti dinner fundraiser.

The Senior High program consisted of some games, personal life story telling, trust exercises, and group counseling. Rev. Jim was and is an imaginative, caring, leader, teacher, minister and friend that is remembered by all who crossed his path.



As a result of Reverend MacDonald's impact on our youth, five young people from this church went on to become Presbyterian Ministers: Bruce Tischler, Meg Barnhouse, Maggie Tanis, Philip Beck, and Kevin Hershey.

Arlene Osborne said, "Reverend MacDonald's primary focus was on the young people. When we had concerns about our grandson, we talked and he gave me some advice."

Dale and Linda Mabry replaced Dan and Cella Merle as adult leaders for the youth fellowship on December 15, 1980. The Junior High fellowship presented skits for the Rosemont Retirement Village. The addition of the (school) bus really added to the fellowship groups. Funds from the church's general operating expense were used to buy the bus whose primary mission was to support Jim MacDonald's youth activities [S: ii, p 263, pp267-268]. Having a bus to support junior and senior high fellowships, and later the Deacon's activities, enhanced the mission of the church.

Indra Mahabir recalls, "Our family joined the church in 1982, as we lived on the same street. As a Hindu woman, I attended church to help raise our small children in my husband's Christian faith. We truly became better parents because of a weekly seminar Jim presented on parenting in 1984. In 1986, Jim asked me to join him as a youth leader, and I reminded him that I was a Hindu! Weeks later, he said the church approved me being a leader. Sunday night's 7-9 p.m. were magical with Jim for he was the glue which held us together. Very early on, Jimbo taught us all that 'Sarcasm was Out!' Eight years with Jimbo, Jeff Gatter, Sandy Rodman on retreats and Sunday nights with so many young teens have left us all with deep, cherishable memories! All the Youth Leaders felt respected, loved and appreciated because Jim was such an amazing and excellent leader to follow -- he is loved by all. During my time as a Youth Leader serving beside Rev. Jim MacDonald (Jimbo), has been one of the most rewarding and enriching times of my life as a parent and as a friend to all the kids in Senior High Fellowship. Fellowship was never the same after he left!"

Amanda Cox wrote in "Lessons and Memories at the time of Jim MacDonald's retirement":

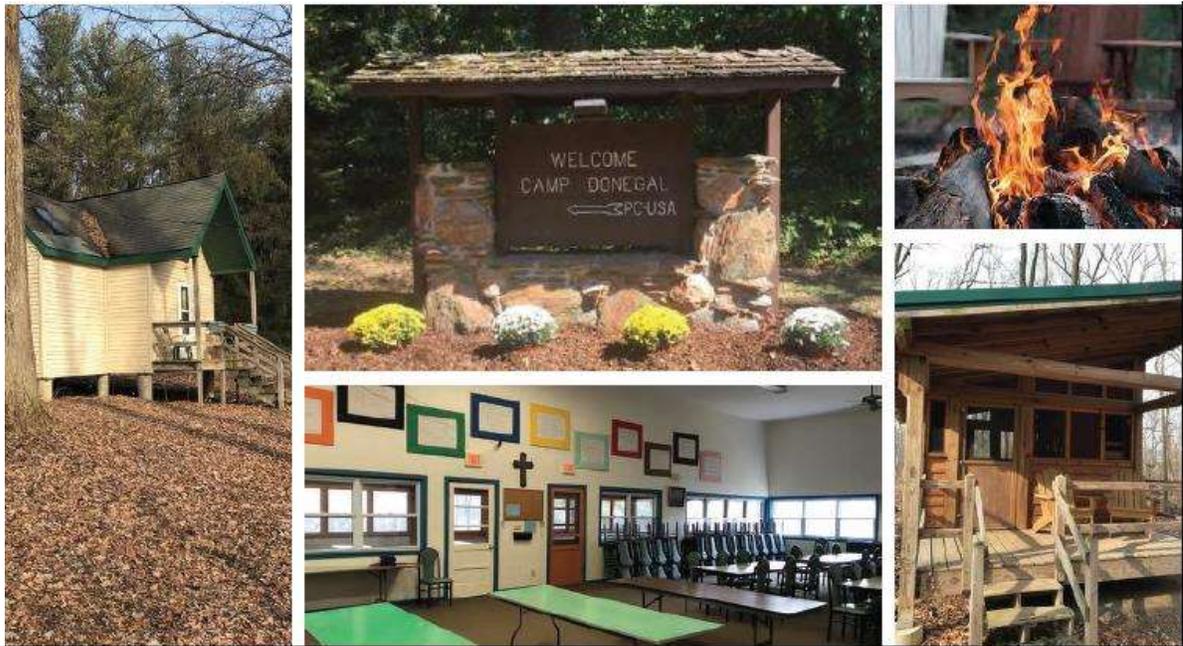
There were two major things that I became aware of through our lessons. The first of which were boundaries. We spent a lot of time on defining our personal limits and how to enforce them. For example, I would give a person all of the trust that I have, but if they broke it, I needed to establish a boundary that I would not allow that person to cross.

We've also learned a lot about families: about being a parent, a sister, how to see things from others' points of view, and about legacies. Legacies are continuing how your mother and father act towards you, to how you act towards your children. Legacies can be good and bad, and I've learned how to carry the good legacy without the bad.

As with boundaries, I have also learned to stand for myself. Once upon a time, I kept my true beliefs hidden and revealed them only when absolutely necessary. Now, even if I am siding for myself, I can express my beliefs, my opinion. Not that I am arrogant, I merely stand firmly. As Psalm 26 reads, "Vindicate me, O lord, for I have walked in my integrity."

Because of Rev. Jim's contributions to the youth of VFPC, Session wanted to extend the designation of Pastor Emeritus to him. However, he was not the Installed Pastor of The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, so he could not be designated Pastor Emeritus [S: iv, p133].

Camp Donegal



Youth Club

Our first formal “Youth Club”, a fellowship for third, fourth and fifth graders was started in 1983. As seen below, on the left, their T-Shirt was yellow. Leaders included: Gail Moore, Ethel



Reagan, Rich Hjorth, Royal McGeorge, Marilyn and Dennis Peters, and many others. There were weekly meetings that started on Thursday afternoon and later moved to Sunday afternoons [S: ii, p380]. Their meeting time followed a format of circle time with prayer, an activity, a snack, games, and a benediction. The church year, 1987-1988, was typical of most years and included a hay ride, a Halloween party, birthday party, puppets, parables, and games like Pictionary and the Good Friend Game. There was a parents and youth dinner, a

sleepover, Bible comedy skits, roller skating at Radnor Rolls, and a valentine party. Also, ‘Bring a Friend & a Favorite Board Game’ day, and a picnic.” There were discussions on the various religious traditions, and they even had a Seder (Jewish ritual service and ceremonial dinner for the first night or first two nights of Passover). They learned to talk from the “I” position; “I said”, “I did”, “I felt”, rather than story telling through, “he said” or “she did”. In June, there was a joint meeting with the Junior High School Fellowship. In January 1992, the Youth Group and Junior Fellowship were combined [S: iv, p8].

Reverend Doctor (Sir) James Robert Tanis, Parish Associate (1978-1992) Ministerial Consultant (1992-2005)



In 1978, Reverend Dr. James Tanis, and his wife, Flossie, arrived in King of Prussia. Soon after settling in King of Prussia and choosing to attend VFPC, Joe Jensen invited him to become a Parish Associate. Clergy are members of Presbytery rather than members of a particular congregation, so the Parish Associate relationship provided Reverend Tanis an opportunity to share more closely in the life and ministry of our church. Parish Associates earn their living outside the church.

Reverend Tanis was an internationally well-respected scholar, historian and author. He was also a curator of rare books and manuscripts at Union Theological Seminary. Doctor Tanis was the librarian and lecturer at Harvard Divinity School, and Yale University in the mid-1960s. From 1977 until 1992, he was Bryn Mawr College's *Rufus M. Jones Professor of Philosophy and Religion*. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands conferred the honor of the "Order of Orange-Nassau" on Dr. Tanis in 1993.

Parish Associates serve in as many roles as there are Parish Associates. By definition, they serve at the discretion of the pastor, trying to be helpful as time and ability permit. As such, he officiated at weddings and preached when the senior pastor was away. "He's just so smart and has so much rolling around in his head, people really looked forward to this, (his sermons)" his friend, Reverend Dr. Michael Dunfee told *The Inquirer* in 2001. While Marian Friese said, "James and Flossie started the annual Flea Market during Reverend Jensen's tenure."

Reverend James knew his fine art and often appraised pieces to be used in the church's yearly Silent Auction. Flossie and he organized the wildly successful Christmas Bazaar and Community Dinner which was held in our Fellowship Hall for a number of years. Ethel Reagan said, "Pastor Tanis served Valley Forge Presbyterian Church in many ways. He was always available to substitute for any of the pastors who were on vacation. He and Flossie were very active in groups. I remember she (Flossie) was a great help to me, as a new mother. They were a lovely couple."



“Do I Believe” Class with
Reverend James Tanis

Rev. James Tanis served VFPC for over 30 years as Parish Associate, serving under Pastors and interim Pastors. On June 22, 1992, Session changed his title to “Ministerial Consultant” [S: iv, p34]. His last worship and communion services were on November 6, 2005.

Reverend James MacDonald said, “I also worked with Reverend Doctor Sir James Tanis. This gentle and wise gentleman, was one of the very few ‘pure’ people I have met. He was something of a steady backbone for the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church. Always present, filling any need as it arrived in conducting and participating in services, tending the needs of members and providing wise counsel to all of us in the church. This man was a true gift from God.”

Session and the congregation extended their deep appreciation for his dedication and love shown to VFPC over many years. He was greatly missed [S: v, p323].



Reverend Tanis died on July 19, 2015.

Reverend Dr. Anne Hayes Egan, Assistant Pastor (1982-1984)



Reverend Anne Egan graduated Princeton Theological Seminary and was ordained by Cincinnati Presbytery on June 6, 1982. She was installed on June 20, 1982, as our sixth Assistant Pastor, and focused on working with our youth, Junior High Fellowship and Senior High Fellowship. She resigned on September 30, 1984, to take a new position with the General Assembly [S: ii, p381].

Reverend Anne Hayes Egan provided the following summary of her tenure:

It was delightful to serve the church for the short time I was there. Joe Jensen was the Senior Pastor and he gave me three 'take-aways' which I treasure to this day. (1) Your primary focus is The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church Congregation, and its work comes before Presbytery committee work, and other things. (2) Whenever you are in charge of worship, ensure that you are well prepared, start on time and end two minutes early. (3) Whenever anyone is sick or in need, visiting them right away is a top priority. Joe left an amazing legacy; I believe, for the church and those of us who had the privilege of working with him. Jim [MacDonald] who had been the much-loved part-time youth pastor who was retiring, also provided sound advice about how to work with youth, as a model, a safe person, a pastor, who could help them learn in ways that were fun, and someone who helped them grow in Christ. The volunteers at Valley Forge Presbyterian Church were amazing in their dedication, skills, and love for the church community. From the Sunday School Superintendent, Bobbie [Fiorito], to the Youth Fellowship Volunteers like: Faith and her husband [Peter Heinz], Donna and her husband [Dave Ray], Chuck and his wife, and many more. These people built and maintained the church community. Volunteers and parents like: Gail [Moore], the Becks, Linda Hanson, the Jordans, Chris and Charles, and [many others].

One of the saddest and most deeply moving experiences at Valley Forge was seeing Richard Jordan pass away from cancer in his early twenties, right before he was to get married. Richard and Marilyn gave so much to the church, as did Richard's parents. It was a very difficult time for many trying to understand how a family could be so faithful, and still lose two children to cancer. There were and are no easy answers to suffering, except knowing that God is with us directly and through friends, which I tried to do and be for them. The practical things I could do were visit, sit with family members, and

ask Peter Seeger to dedicate a song to Richard and Marilyn at his concert a short time after Richard's death, which Marilyn and I attended. I still have the little macaroni angel ornament that Richard made for the church flea market, and it's on my tree each Christmas.... Valley Forge taught me how to have fun, build community, learn to serve God in practical ways, and I've carried that with me. I hope I provided the church community with helpful and fun Sunday school experiential education, and gave the youth, opportunities to look at what it meant to serve and learn about the larger world.... Some of VFPC's greatest gifts, in my opinion, were its capacity for building a faith community that had a great deal of joy. God bless you and keep you always.

--- Reverend Anne Egan

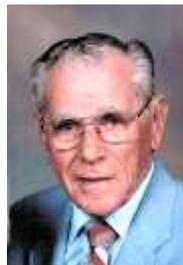
Reverend Jensen's era ended in the spring of 1984, spanning 22 years, and supported by six assistant and associate ministers. Reverend Jensen brought a vital caring ministry with him in 1962. This was a time when 'God and Family' took center stage in most people's lives. It was a time of building. The church continued to grow, and in 1963, membership peaked near 1174, requiring three worship services. Youth Fellowships and clubs had been added under Reverends Feather and O'Brien. There were also scouting activities, Vacation Bible School every summer, and family camping retreats.

In the mid-1960s, the church's mission changed under Reverend Jensen becoming focused on social justice, the Civil Rights, and the Anti-Vietnam War movements.

Despite the seriousness of his life's work, Rev. Joe had a natural sparkle, good humor, and a fun-loving spirit. He and his assistant ministers (Gravengaard, MacDonald, Tanis and Egan) and the youth leaders, enhanced fellowships, Sunday schools, youth ministries throughout the 70s until his retirement in 1984. Then the church continued with Interim Pastor Kenneth Brown, until 1986, when Reverend J. Edward Sale became Pastor.

Reverend Kenneth Vincent Brown, Interim Pastor (1984-1986)

Reverend Kenneth Brown served as our second Interim Pastor from October 14, 1984, until 1986.



Rev. Brown's daughter-in-law, Nancy Brown provided the following narrative:

Ken was born on January 17, 1911, and was raised in Norristown, Pennsylvania. He worked for a number of years after high school before going to college. He married Anne in 1940, and together, they raised five children (Ken Jr., Peggy, Fred, Bob and Betty). After college he attended Princeton Theological Seminary. So, although, there's a bit of a difference in age, Ken Brown and Joe Jensen attended Princeton at (almost) the same time, with Joe graduating in '43 and Ken in '44. They (Joe Jensen and Kenneth Brown) WERE at Princeton at the same time, but two different classes!

After graduating from Princeton Theological Seminary, Rev. Brown served as a Navy Chaplain in WWII. He was a member of the Naval Ready Reserve until 1971, when he retired with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Following the war, he was installed as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Hyde Park, New York, where he served as Pastor for thirty-two years. Rev. Brown retired in 1979, and returned to his hometown in Pennsylvania where he served as interim Pastor at a number of area Presbyterian churches including the First Presbyterian Church of Port Kennedy, the Jeffersonville Presbyterian Church, and from 1984-1986, the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church.

During his tenure, Handel's *Messiah* was once again presented to the congregation on December 16, 1984 [S: ii, p387].

The congregation remembered Rev. Brown fondly. Gail Moore said, "Reverend Brown was easy to approach, supportive of the congregation, thoughtful in his manner, and a good transitional minister for us."

Arlene Osborne added, "Reverend Brown was a good man, who gave "old-fashioned sermons".

Ethel Reagan said, "Pastor Brown had a great rapport with the congregation. He was the father, and grandfather, to one of our families. We enjoyed his participation in all of our activities."

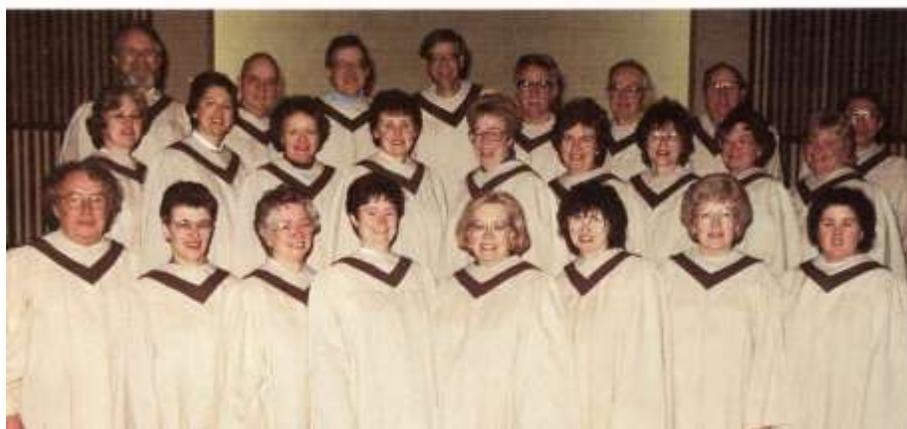
Reverend Brown died on May 19, 2009, at age 98.

Bell Choir
c. 1986



Back (L-R): Bob Wilde, Jo Klopp, Marcia Barber, Jeanne Fee, Nancy Sellman, Betsy Cheney

Front: Robin Henry, Joanne Henry, Jim Barber, Cheri Ehrensberger, Hannah Dring



Adult Choir
c. 1986

Back (L-R): Royal McGeorge, Gene Hall, William Kriner, John Weaber, Bob Edgar, Bill Eckman, Johnson Chen.

Middle: Sandy Lammey, Emmy Boyer, Judy Edgar, Nancy Sellman, Lynn Eckman, Eileen McFalls, Carol Hansen, Jo Klopp, Sue Hoffman.

Front: Bob Wilde, Betsy Cheney, Hannah Dring, Darla Nagy, Sue Brickley, Jeanne Fee, Ruth Edes, Cheri Ehrensberger Wilde.

Reverend J. Edward “Ed” Sale, Pastor (1986-1992)



Our third pastor, Reverend Edward Sale, and his wife, Virginia, (also an ordained minister) arrived at The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church in December 1985, and made their home in the Sweetbriar section of Upper Merion Township. On February 4, 1986, Rev. Sale was installed, and served until May 31, 1992.

Since Rev. Sale had died in 2015, Marian Friese contacted Virginia Sale on our behalf In January 2018. Virginia wrote the following notes about their time at The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church:



(Reverend) Ed was initially attracted to the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church’s congregation during a Face-to-Face (meeting) when he met with members of the Pastoral Search Committee. His first impression of the church was that the congregation was diverse, and comfortably so. He had grown up in a suburb of San Francisco with a mix of races, nationalities and cultures, all through elementary school and high school and then (at) the university. He knew it was possible for people who represent many different points of view, and even lifestyles, to live together, and have respect for one another.

In his previous ministry with new church development and an older, established, all-white congregation during the country’s struggle for civil right of minorities, he was committed to the struggle for equality. His understanding of Jesus’ life and work, I believe, was that God’s love has no barriers, and inclusion of those outside the walls was a quest for all Christians, especially for ministers. So, he was drawn to Valley Forge Presbyterian Church and its members, who shared that vision.

He was aware of the difficulty of following a pastor (Reverend Jensen) with a long pastorate, but never pretended to be other than who he was. Accepting others and their concerns was important to him, and over time he believed that even those who disagreed with him, would come to trust him. In fact, the trust became mutual. His ministry at our church was a time of growth and gratification to him, and he left with a confidence that the Holy Spirit would continue to lead those who were to follow in leadership.

Both Ed and I were grateful for the love and friendship of this special congregation of people. --- Virginia Sale



Above: Reverend Edward Sale and the Kerygma Class. Kerygma is a Greek word used in the New Testament for "preaching" (see Luke 4:18-19, Romans 10:14, Matthew 3:1). Rev. Sale thought this had been a good experience for all.

Each spring the Communicant Class comes to clearly understand the gospel, their relationship to God, and what God is doing in our world through His Church. After completing the class, children profess their faith in Christ before the elders and declare this faith by participating in communion with the church. They then become full "communing members" of our church. It is a deeply sacred and meaningful rite of passage in the life of the child.

During Rev. Sale's tenure, our communicants were each presented with a silver, Celtic cross, resembling the cross found on the front wall of our sanctuary. The original crosses were designed and made by Helen Roback for her children, Craig and Barbara. They were about 1-3/16 long with a 17" silver chain. In 1996, she showed the Young Women's group, led by Joan Hagerman, how to make them as gifts to the communicant's class graduates. Later she provided the specs to a jeweler who made them.

1986 Celtic Cross

Photo courtesy of Barbara Roback



1987 Communicant Class

Amachie K. Ackah
Leanne C. Beers
Lori A. Chopka
Tara E. Hamblen
Suzanne M. Hoffman
Kimberly Janoski
Gretchen A. Kriner
Bonnie S. Nemphos
Wendy R. Oliver

1988 Communicant Class

Chris John Burnett
Jennifer Lynne Eckman
Robin Anne Henry
Erick Steven Hershey
Loc Kim Nguyen
Todd William Pearce
Ron A. Peel
Ashlee Margaret Raiser
Scott Edward Ruckman
Hillary Lynne Thomas
Jennifer Ann VanVoorhis

1989 Communicant Class

Laurel Selgreaves Beers
Alvin Un-Teh Chen
Daniel Walter Christian
Matthew Jared DeVos
Erik Norman Hjorth
Melissa Ann Huber
Kristina Florence Leonard
Wendy Lynn Moore
Sharon Elaine Newell
Kirk Lee Reagan
Gerald Steward Votta

1991 Communicant Class

Photo courtesy of Indra Mahabir



With all these new youth church members, Session agreed with the Deacons to introduce a new concept: adding a Junior Deacon to their board. They made it official on June 12, 1989 [S: iii, pp176-178].

In March 1989, the lack of the recently sold school bus impacted the Deacons' support for their Norristown Ministry Outreach and for the various fellowships, to travel together as a group. The original church school bus, and a second one, were both an expense and a liability [S: iii, p158]. Upon investigation by the Trustees, Session determined it was more economical to contract for transportation needs with the Romano Bus Company. The cost was \$20.00 an hour, and included gas, a driver and insurance [S: iii, pp172-178].



Board of Deacons
ca. 1986-1990

Back: Alan Schreur, Ralph Duey, Rev. Sale.
Front: Cheri Ehrensberger, Paul Friese, Charlotte Krustick, Barbara Keen, Nancy Devos, Dorothy Vandergrift.

The 1989, Fall Country Fair was a time of good fellowship, and raised money for charity. The Advent dinner was held on December 3rd, and was enjoyed by both the congregation and the community. Our guests had a choice of roast turkey or ham for dinner, with all the trimmings. The Fellowship Hall was warm and inviting, gaily decorated for Christmas.



Senior High brunch



Senior High election



Christmas Pageant
Directed by Barbara and Robert Beck

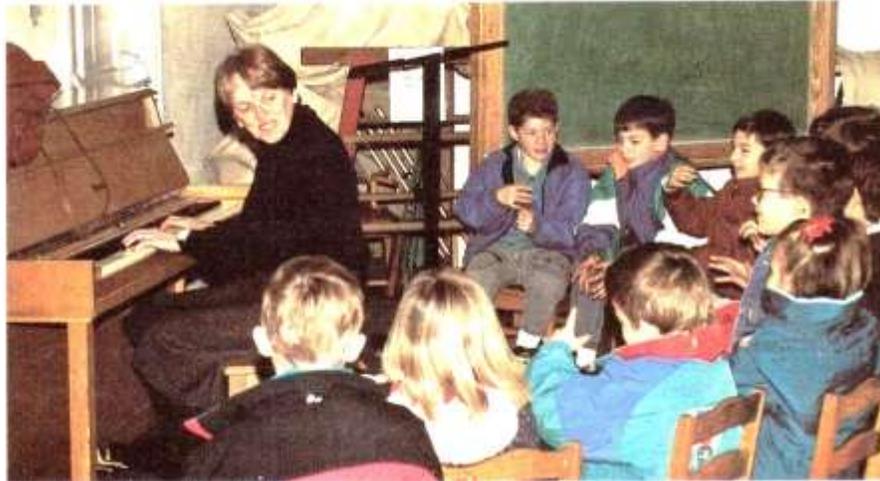


Junior High Fellowship



Junior High Fellowship

Sunday
Church
School



Nancy McQuiston playing, "This Little Light of Mine".



Nursery School



Vacation Bible School
Teacher: Jean Hjorth



David Dutcher Usher at Sunday service



Joanne and Robert Peel Greeter



Coffee Hour fellowship

Robert Enoch with
Shirley and Walter Richmond



Coffee Hour hostess

Gwen Schreur



Session – ca. 1986-1988

Back (L-R): William Fender, Michael Henry, Robert Beck, Rev. James MacDonald, Jane Robinson, Robert Enoch, Charlotte Jordan.

Front: Harriet Barringer, Barbara Roback, Rev. Ed. Sale, Micki Albini, Lou Ann Lewis.

Deacons – ca. 1986-1988

Back (L-R): Reverend Sale, Gail Moore, Bob Peel, Micki Albini, William Fender

Front: Margaret Markley, Jeanne Gardner, Becky Sullivan, Lu Eadeh.





Session - 1990

Back: Don Kreamer, Robert Enoch, Michael Henry, Harriet Barringer, Anita Burgher, James Workman, Rev. Sale.

Center: Barbara Beck, Flossie Tanis, Sarah Witherspoon, Tad Hershey, Walter Richmond.

Front: Robert Schuettler, John Wiley, Lois Blair, Joan Hagerman, Linda Heuser.

Times changed, and so did the church's needs. After a year-long study, The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church combined the Session and the Board of Trustees to become a Unicameral Board on May 20, 1990. The decision required that the [Church's Bylaws](#) be changed [S: iii, p203].

Another change occurred in 1990, when the name of the national church, "The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);" was substituted for "The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." This resulted in a change to the Bylaws in May 1990, to reflect the new name, PC(USA) [S: iii, pp223-224].

On October 15, 1990, Session approved a joint 3-year Bicentennial Fund and Capital Fund Campaign, with a goal of \$322,000. The Capital Financial Campaign Service was contracted to guide and direct this campaign [S: iii, p205-245]. There were many capital improvements needed: make our facilities handicap accessible, renovate the lavatories, re-shingle all the roofs, address lighting in the CE classrooms, and fix flooring issues in the sanctuary. Dagit Associates was the architectural firm chosen for the renovation program for our church. The funds came from the Reserve Fund and a capital "CRS" Campaign [S: iii, pp261-287]. In August 1992, the church also borrowed money for these improvements, some of which came from the General Assembly.

The 1990 Country Fair was a great success; \$5,850 was raised for benevolence. Session passed a motion making the Alternate Gift Market part of the 1991 Holiday Country Fair which became a regular, yearly event [S: iii, p249]. The spring Crop Walk raised about \$1,100, which was the fourth highest dollar amount of all groups who participated [S: iii, p256].

The Deacons accomplished a successful clothing drive in the fall of 1990, to benefit the John Gloucester House. This house was part of the Presbytery of Philadelphia's Community Ministries of Delaware Valley, which served as the host for Rearing Successful Sons. In November, the Deacons held an ice cream social for the patients at Norristown State Hospital [S: iii, p270]. Since outreach to these patients was an ongoing project, this was followed with Christmas Gift Packages at their Christmas Party on December 16, 1990. Deacons continued their support of the Fortnighters, an organization supporting former Norristown State Hospital patients. The yearly tradition of sending "We Care" packages to college students and service personnel from our church continued [S: iii, pp244-255].

While our congregation was diverse in nature, we found a way to worship together and unify around a common mission. We as Christians were encouraged to serve our Lord and express our love for Him by serving as He did, by helping the poor and oppressed through service-based activity, financial gifts, and peacemaking activities.



In 1980, the 182nd General Assembly adopted the guidelines known as the "The Commitment to Peacemaking". Three years later, our church session made "The Commitment" and created the Peacemaking Committee as a subcommittee of Session's Mission Committee. A candle dedicated to world peace was first placed in our sanctuary in 1991. It is lit before, and burns throughout, each of our worship services [S: iii, p263]. The Peace Candle was meant to serve as a symbol of the desire for world peace. Other peacemaking activities continued throughout the coming years.

The years 1991-1992 saw many activities, corporate actions, and happenings. Philip Arthur Beck, Candidate Inquirer, was examined on August 12, 1991. Session voted unanimously to endorse his application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer. Phil planned to attend Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Joanne Henry was unanimously elected to serve as liaison between Session and Phil, as he prepared for the ministry [S: iii, p272]. Phil remembered that Reverend Sale was very friendly and helpful as he prepared to enter the seminary.

Communion was served monthly and in December 1991, was served to 197 people; Church membership had increased to 542 [S: iv, pp6-7]. According to Elder Alan Schreur, Youth Club and Junior High Fellowship were combined in January 1992 [S: iv, p8]. The Mother and Daughter Banquet was held on May 12, 1992 [S: iv, p17].

Around 1987, Barbara Beck and Joanne Henry received the approval of session to have costumes for a Christmas pageant made by many women in the church. Fabrics and patterns were secured, given to sewers who created the costumes. The stable was built by Lee Sellman. For 18 years, Robert and Barbara Beck led the Christmas pageant with the help of many church members. Below, children of all ages filled the front of the church in a joyful representation of the Christmas Story.

The 1991 Christmas Pageant with Costumes



Reverend Sale and the Elders, during a dinner meeting, examined the 1992 communicants regarding their faith in Jesus and their willingness to become church members by confession of faith. The 1992 Communicant class included: Phyllis Hwete Chen, Amanda Cox, Robert Charles Faix, Jr., Kevin Christopher Hershey, Laurie Elizabeth Higgins, Tracy Sarah Krutsick, Dorothy Marie McGeorge, and Douglas McWhirter Moore. The Session voted to receive all communicants into full membership of The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church at the worship service on April 28, 1992.

Mission surfaces in all shapes and sizes. When the Peacemaking Committee reported that our own Jenn Beck was selected to spend four weeks in Alaska in the summer of 1992 on a mission program, the Session voted to subsidize her trip in the amount of \$500

There was a great deal of change in our church staff during the summer of 1992. Rev. Sale resigned, effective June 7th. On the recommendation of the Administration Committee, Session voted to change Rev. Dr. James Tanis' title to "Ministerial Consultant" in June [S: iv, pp25-34]. Dr. Wilde, organist and choir director, resigned effective August 31st. Finally, Reverend Walter Funk was selected as interim Pastor on September 28, 1992.

Church members remembered Rev. Sale's tenure. Arlene Osborne said, "Reverend Sale set up teams to visit all the members, to get their opinions and to encourage giving. The Sales invited various couples to dinner and encouraged them to do the same with other people. Reverend Sale was reserved, but kind. I called him when my mother died, and he helped me to know how to proceed. He also visited me at home later, just to talk. Reverend Sale visited Israel with his wife, and then gave sermons about it. Virginia also preached occasionally."

Rev. Jim MacDonald indicated he had a good working relationship with Rev. Sale, in both ministry to the congregation and in his work with the youth of our church. "I missed his presence when he left The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church."

**1990 Holiday Country Fair and Dinner, Gregory and Patricia Henning,
Co-Chairs with the Alternate Christmas Market [S: iii, p226]**



Chef Greg Henning



Silent Auction



Pat Wiley & others at
Country Fair



Organizer Flossie Tanis of
Country Fair

The Alternate Christmas Market raised \$6,300, and the sale of Third World Crafts raised \$1,125.



Lou Ann Lewis and Lu Eadeh

Reverend Walter Burton Funk, Sr., Interim Pastor (1992-1994)

Reverend Funk was ordained on June 26, 1966, at the Central Texas Presbytery. He was installed on September 1, 1992, at the Presbytery of Philadelphia, which allowed him to serve as The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church's third interim Pastor from September 28, 1992, until January 30, 1994. Rev. Funk practiced an "Open Door Policy" in his office, and could be found there Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. He shared his home telephone number, and accepted calls up to 10 p.m. [S: iv, pp41-45].

One of the funding sources for benevolence was the annual clothing sale. In 1992, it was held on October 17th, chaired by Barbara Little and Gail Moore; it earned \$500. Another source was the 1992 Crop Walk, organized by Dave Dutcher, delivered \$194 for benevolence [S: iv, pp22-48]. A Bake Sale was held also on October 17th hosted by the various youth groups; all \$300 from the sale was designated toward the youth groups' activities [S: iv, p48].

The Alternative Gift Market, co-chaired by the Markleys and the Hennings, was held on November 14-15, 1992. The next year there was a smaller, less elaborate Alternative Gift Market during Fellowship hours, from November 21st through December 19th. The Christmas pageant took place on December 19, 1993 [S: iv, p90]. On May 1-2, 1993 the Flea Market was co-chaired by the original founders, Flossie and James Tanis.



Sandy Rodman and Jean Friedman



Lois Blair, James and Flossie Tanis



Lilly Chen, Gloria Barber, Eloise Workman, Doris Hastings, Carol Jewitt



Joyce Richardson, Arlene Osborne



Front: Dom Iannuzzelli, Dave Wilkie and
Marlene Iannuzzelli
Rear: Jean Fee

The year 1993 continued with many activities and events. The old set of two octave hand bells were sold to Schulmerich Carillons, Inc. of Bucks County, PA, in May 1993, for \$600 [S: iv, p78]. Ten communicants completed the Communicants class in 1993: David M. Irish, Kingston C. Ko, Shawn M. Leonard, Brian D. Peters, Scott Ray, Janet I. Shaw, Chad Shook, Rebecca E. Weaver, Eric Wilson, and Marjorie T. Aiken. Brian Ray served a one-year term as Youth Deacon in 1993.

The Peacemaking Committee sponsored a program after worship on June 20, 1993, featuring Jenn and Chris Beck, who presented a slide program on their trips to Alaska and Ghana, respectively. Seventy-five people enjoyed their presentation [S: iv, p82].

By July 1993, Rev. Funk was becoming more and more involved in the lives of the members of the congregation and sensed their growing trust and confidence. He represented members of VFPC at the July 14, 1993, memorial service for Ridgely Davis, a charter member who had been deeply involved with the design of our main sanctuary [S: iv, p86].

Rev. Jim MacDonald said that “Rev. Funk worked within the general congregation. I worked with my staff and leaders within the Christian Education Department, the youth of the church, and the surrounding neighborhood.”

In September, the Christian Education Committee felt strongly that the Sunday Church School should run concurrently with the Sunday worship service (10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.) because the teachers had noticed a significant attendance decline since the current practice was children attending church for the children’s sermon, then attending Sunday school. Teachers wanted adequate time to conduct a meaningful class lesson. They sought a reduction in class disruptions, and wanted full attention by the children for their entire lesson [S: iv, p87].

In October 1993, Pastor Emeritus Joe Jensen was invited back to preach for World Wide Communion Sunday. The Board of Missions sponsored a Crop Walk for Church World

Services on October 17, 1993. The Peacemaking Committee presented “Earth in the Balance” by Al Gore. Wylie Thomas led those discussions over three consecutive weeks in October [S: iv, p90].

The Board of Deacons sponsored two Blood Drives each year: one in July and another in December. Deacons again included parties for the Fortnighters, sponsored the All Church Workdays, and sent “We Care” packages to college students and service personnel from our church [S: iv, pp97-98]. In November, Jack Schumacher laid bricks around the memorial benches next to the Quad [S: iv, p97].

1993 Vacation Bible School Pool Party



Courrine and Courrise Knight

On November 28, 1993, the Advent potluck dinner was held with musical entertainment by Betty and Paul Leander. The Children’s Christmas Pageant was presented on December 19th, followed on December 24th, by the Family Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m., and the traditional Candlelight service at 11 p.m. [S: iv, pp94-97].

In January 1994, Rev. Funk resigned, as required of an interim pastor, when the new pastor was chosen. Session acknowledged his steady, enthusiastic, helpful, and caring leadership during that interim year [S: iv, p104].

On March 20th, Reverend Michael Dunfee was installed as Pastor.

Arlene Osborne remembered, "Pastor Funk was very outgoing, yet forthright. He would remind the congregation of their financial obligations to the church. On Christmas Eve he would stand in back of the church, and as we left, he would say: 'Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!'"

Reverend Funk died on February 26, 2012, at age 79, in Delran, New Jersey.

VFPC Library

Shirley Richmond was our church librarian for many years. She supported study groups and special programs of the church. Our main library, located on the second floor of the Christian Education Building housed Christian oriented non-fiction, fiction, reference books and children's material (Grade 4 and up). New materials and special interest books for children and adults were available outside the church office. Hard back books were on racks in the Narthex. The loan period was three weeks.

Over the years many library angels assisted Shirley. They included Barbara and Russ Keen, Arlene Osborne, Marge Markley, Barbara Spreeman, Jean Bryant, Chip Magdamo, Don Higgins, Eiko Ikeda, Betty Wittington, Lynne Klepacki, Linda Heuser and many others. She and the library angels wrote reviews of donated books which were published in *The Link* and *Connection*.

Reverend Doctor Michael “Mike” A. Dunfee (1994-2003)



On March 20, 1994, Reverend Michael “Mike” A. Dunfee was installed as the fourth pastor of The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church; a potluck dinner followed his installation service. Like Reverend Sale, Reverend Dunfee was drawn to our church because of the diversity of our congregation. To become acquainted with the congregation, Rev. Mike asked the Session members to arrange and invite small groups of members to their homes for informal get-togethers to meet and greet one another [S: iv, pp110-112].

Rev. Mike was a divorced father of three children (Christina, James, and Kathryn) when he arrived. He married Reverend Helen Nablo in 1995, and became stepfather to young Benjamin Mackall. In 1999, they adopted Amy Ruth Nablo, who began her life in China; she was 14 months old when she joined their family.

Former VFPC member Marian Friese said, “I was a member of the search committee when we received Reverend Mike Dunfee’s dossier. We were immediately excited and intrigued by it. The nine years that Mike was with us, he led with energy and imagination. Mike was a gifted writer and preacher. His message was usually affirming, positive, easy to follow, and remember. His own words, written during the years he was at Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, and now offered with his permission, speak more eloquently about his ministry than anything I can offer.”

The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church was a moderate sized congregation of middle-class people. In the nine years (1994-2003) I served; it saw a significant increase in the ethnic and racial diversity of our church, which was a source of pride. Not only do we have African American members, we had people with origins from China, Korea, Taiwan, Canada, India, Cuba, Philippines, Borneo, Trinidad and Jamaica. World communion had become a great celebration for us!

Accomplishments that were important to me were worship revitalization and increased mission commitment. As part of the worship service, prayer was important; the art of opening wide the ears of our souls. It was tuning in, with deep listening. Under my ministry, I encouraged people to grow, to pray, to be quiet and to be attentive to the word of God. True religion wasn’t about

religion at all; it's about kindness. To take communion correctly was to be bound together, to become one people in spite of our dramatic differences, and in so doing, we actually became the living body of Christ in the world. A good sermon was a dance, which caught hold of the imagination, gave wings to our leaden feet, renewed our spirits and challenged us to live the word of God. Music was also central to worship and a crucial component of church growth. We became a congregation that sang both traditional and new hymns well, every Sunday morning, and we enjoyed lay participation in worship. The congregation looked forward to our special services during the holiday seasons and throughout the year. Laughter and celebration were a regular part of our worship life. We committed ourselves to having periodic 'child friendly' worship service, the first of which was world communion. It was successful beyond our expectations.

Marian Friese continued, "Rev. Mike had wonderful music programs. He was imaginative and creative." Also, VFPC Member Marty Meyer said, "Co-Organists/Choir-Directors Amabelle Follett and I worked long and hard to help Pastor Mike produce those services, which included short plays, creative dance and guitar at times."

Marian felt there was an easy give and take to church life. "The primary focus was attending Sunday worship service and reaching out to help others in need. A high point in the year was the annual Tenebrae service, which was particularly moving. It was held during the three days preceding Easter, and characterized by gradual extinguishing of candles, and by a "strepitus" or "loud noise" that took place in total darkness, near the end of the service."

Eiko Ikeda said, "I served as an Elder for a term during Reverend Mike's tenure. Music was one of his major interests. He played the trumpet and had a good singing voice."

Nine communicants completed the Communicants class in 1994: Linda Christian, Kira Hjorth, Dennis Holden, Courrise Knight, Michael Kontra, Rajendra Mahabir, Kristine McGeorge, Kathleen Schmitz, and Donald Tiegs.

1996 Communicant Class

Lauren Barcaro, Elizabeth Guardiani, Julie Mabry, Joe Schmitz, Courrine Knight, and Johnny Fennell watch while Karen Faix receives her Celtic cross from Helen Roback.



Another high point was the children's annual Christmas pageants that Barbara and Robert Beck organized and directed for many, many years. Those were always anticipated and enjoyed by the congregation.



1994 Christmas Pageant
Barbara Beck, Director



1995 Christmas Pageant,
Directed by Barbara Beck



Rev. Mike Dunfee
presiding over the
Christmas Pageant



Back: Jarrett Fennell
Front: Max Fennell

It was during Rev. Mike's tenure [S: iv, p233] that Session stated the Mission of the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church which encompassed these tenets:

1. Bring God into the community.
2. Support one another.
3. Follow the examples of Christ in contemporary society.
4. Provide an environment to pursue a spiritual journey.
5. Become role models and good examples to those around us.
6. Don't give up on people who need help.
7. Worship and share the word for our living and spiritual growth.
8. Keep our religion alive.

Marian also remembered, “Rev. Mike changed the order of worship to the Traditional Reformed service; the sermon was put in the middle and not at the end. He also introduced individual Taizé style worship and Iona Music, where meditative songs and 2 to 3-minute silent prayers occur; where we were taught to listen to God’s word to us.” According to Marian, it became such a valued part of the congregation’s worship that we (the congregation) insisted that the minister who followed Pastor Mike, would also (must) incorporate that into the service each Sunday.



Session – 1995

Back (L-R): Richard McFalls, Gwen Schreur, Tad Hershey, Robert Enoch, Rev. Michael Dunfee, Harriet Barringer, Lou Ann Lewis, Robert Beck.

Middle: Nancy Devos, Jeanne Manning, Pat Henning, Kathy Knoebel.

Front: Lois Blair, Joanne Henry, Janet Barcaro, Douglas Ripley, Robert Faix.



Board of Deacons

Back: Scott Blair, Mary-Lynn Gullette, June Adams, Carroll Williar, Lena Aiken, Joyce Richardson.

Front: Phyllis Chen, Nellie Aiken.



1995 Bell Choir

Back (L-R): Jeanne Fee, Caroline Wilde, Harriet Barringer, Bill Hoffman, Joanne Henry, Nancy Sellman. **Front:** Barbara Ann Douglas, Ilcedes Faro, Erik Faro, Sandy Rodman, Phyllis Chen, Carol Friese.

Rev. Mike remarked, “Grace is the divine comedy of flawed, leaking, half-broken vessels being entrusted with the Water of Life. No matter how hard we try, we can’t plug all the holes. The miracle lies in the continuing presence of the water. It occurred to me that the divine comedy may point toward the core meaning of the sacrament of Holy Communion: to be astounded by the ongoing presence of God.”

VFPC Mission Outreach was done locally, nationally and internationally. Local outreach included hosting the Cookie Sampler Sunday, and the yearly baby shower for theVillage®. There was the annual Crop Walk, spring “We Care” packages to college students and military personnel from our congregation, and the semi-annual Blood Drives. One Great Hour of Sharing was in the spring. There were get-togethers and parties for patients and alumni (Fortnighters) of the Norristown State Hospital. Mission Outreach held Clothing Sales and Alternative Gift Markets, the Holiday Country Fairs and the Martin Luther King Day activities [S: iv, pp113-124, p277]. In addition, the Deacons collected used durable medical equipment for their “Helping Hands Project” [S: iv, p231]. All of these activities supported the local community.

Mission Outreach was also directed to educate our congregation. There were several adult education programs, e.g., Joseph Campbell’s Series “The Power of Myth”; Rev. Tanis’ series on the “Birth Narratives” from Matthew, Mark and John; Rev. Mike’s series on “Spiritual Development”.

In May 1996, the Mission Committee recommended that the congregation write to J. C. Penney & Co., and the Walt Disney Co., expressing the congregation’s concern for the low level of wages being paid to Haitian workers [S: iv, p227].

Barbara Beck started the first Women’s Retreat. Ten [Women’s Retreats](#) were held during the Rev. Dunfee’s tenure. There were also the Lenten dinner series, and discussion groups which met in private homes. One example was Flynn-Robbins’ on Thomas Moore’s [Care of the Soul](#) [S: iv, p173, p236]. There was a series on Human Sexuality, “Experiencing the Roles of Faith in the Real World” (1997-1998) [S: iv, p125]. Rev. Mike led a program about American Indian

and guided meditation techniques; many members continue with those prayer techniques even today [S: iv, p279]. A multipart informational presentation on Islam, including a brief background on Muhammad and the beginnings of Islam, the connections with Judaism and Christianity, and Islam in America, was offered after coffee hour on Sundays. Fifty-two people attended these sessions [S: v, p64].



“Peace Like a River”

Women’s Retreat in Poconos
September 30 to October 2,
1994

The Spiritual Leader was Gayle
Kerr (took photo)

Back (L-R): Dot Spaulding, Barb Beck, Hope MacDougall, Donna McGeorge, Nancy Devos, Marg Markley, Sue Shaw, Joanne Henry, Pat Wiley.

Middle: Jeanne Goodwin, Nancy Gilbert, Shirley Richmond, Ann Campbell, Joyce Richardson.

Front: Betty Thompson, Marian Friese, Nora Schumacher, Helen Roback.

We Are the Church, Whether at Work or At Play



Bill Hoffman at Work Day, 1995



Water Balloons Anyone? 1995

A well-rounded congregation also took time for social activities: roller skating, bowling, potluck suppers, Fun-Flick Nights and summer picnics. From Men’s breakfasts at Michaels Deli, volleyball games in the quad, golf outings, family camping, summer hymn festivals, Mother-Daughter banquets in May, to creating an over-50 Fellowship, to be known as the Nifty Fifties [S: iv, pp132-133, p136, p165, p190, p201, p209]. Chef Greg Henning managed and supervised many VFPC dinners, some of which were served during the Alternative Gift Markets [S: iv, p129].

In the fall of 1995, Lorraine Hawk planted a rock garden celebrating the area of the memorial benches, outside the auditorium doors, and the Roback Family donated the ‘Red Oak Tree’ in memory of Sam Roback. The tree is located to the left of our sign on Town Center Road, (see rear cover) [S: iv, p186, p196].



Members of the congregation funded the purchase of 293 new hymnals. A [book plate](#) was placed inside each cover with the name of the person they were honoring, along with the donor’s name. The hymnals were dedicated on March 17, 1996. The old hymnals were given away [S: iv, p211].



Rev. Dunfee and Gail Moore with Becky Sullivan and Frank Clark in line behind



Coffee Hour
L: Bert Lee
R: Charlotte Jordan

Youth activities saw some changes during Rev. Dunfee's tenure.

From 1992, until mid-1993 when their baby was born, Doug and Marsha Ripkey were the main leaders of the Junior High Fellowship. From May 1993, until the end of 1994, there were no Junior High Fellowship leaders. The much loved, long-termed leader, Rev. Jim MacDonald had left our church in 1994 and some of the then current Senior High Fellowship leaders were not much older than the students. The new leaders were Brian Reagan, Jen Thorp, Amanda Cox, Indra Mahabir, Jeff Gatter, and Sandy Rodman. The fellowship held together, though it dwindled in size to 4-6 youths throughout the year. It started to surge toward 8-9 by the end of the year. The fellowship drew from Mother Divine Providence Church, and Upper Merion High School. The leaders struggled through the inevitable transition period after a strong leader leaves, to find their own strengths and footing. According to Jeff Gatter, there was a steep learning curve in 1995. The winter retreat went well, and they did issues of boundaries and the baggage you carry. Summer day trips included Dorney Park and Wildwood, NJ. The leaders came up with topics, and Jeff created the programs. The fellowship lacked consistency and the focus of one, key leader; none of the leaders were there all the time.

In 1995, John Shaw and Joyce Lee said that Rev. Jim MacDonald sat with all the leaders prior to their restarting the Junior Fellowship. He gave them a list of age appropriate activities and games. The leaders were: Dick and Ellen Irish, Frank Williar, Elissa Gibbons, John Shaw and Joyce Lee. John Shaw noted that ten to twenty 7th and 8th graders were active in Junior Fellowship in 1995 [S: iv, p137].

In January 1996, the Youth Club was restarted; this time for 5th and 6th graders, and was once again a stand-alone fellowship under the leadership of Carol Frieese and others. The fellowship met on Sundays from 7:00-8:30 p.m. They followed a format of: Prayer, sharing, an activity e.g., "T-shirt-Who You Are", or "the Pickle Jar", with trips to Franklin Institute, the African America History Museum, and Radnor Rolls. Games included: 4-Square, Artist's Folly, Nerf Elimination, Sardines, and Trash Ball. October found them pumpkin-pitching, decorating pumpkins, and enjoying the Haunted Ghost Trail. They supported the Special Olympics, and spent two weeks watching the movie, "Jesus Christ Superstar", which led to spirited discussions [S: iv, pp239, 255]. By this time, the Junior and Senior High fellowships were taking joint ski trips. Thus, the Senior High Forum was organized, and began meeting every Sunday morning at 11:30 a.m. [S: iv, p252].

On March 17, 1996, Rev. Mike led Valley Forge Presbyterian Church's Sanctuary Rededication Sunday service. The original Sanctuary dedication service had been held on January 18, 1960. Reverend William R. Phillippe, the Founding Mission Pastor, joined in the

celebration and offered A Brief Church History, ([see Exhibit J, 40th Anniversary](#)). Reverend Joseph L. Jensen, Jr., Pastor Emeritus, offered the sermon, *On Holy Ground*.

The Peacemaking Committee worked jointly with the Adult Education Committee to make the 1996-1997 church year a "Year of Living Less Violently." In January 1997, church families and friends were invited to spend a Sunday afternoon constructing a Peaceful City on the auditorium stage. The next Sunday, there was a "Souper" Bowl Party. The youth had collected food and monetary donations to feed the hungry leading up to the Super Bowl game. On game Sunday, our youth came to the church with their donations and were rewarded; they saw the football game while enjoying snacks and sandwiches. The Peace Candle stand was dedicated to Robert and Charlotte Jordan in November 1997, for all they did for the church. Charlotte had taken care of the fresh flowers in church for years. The Peace Candle was lit during the Sunday worship services [S: iv, p289].

The Peacemaking Committee also worked to promote peace by contributing to Upper Merion Township's celebration of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday. The Peacemaking Committee hosted the play (through family services of Norristown) "War of the Words" to promote harmony within families, and contributed to the Norristown Peace Camp, sponsored by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Additional peace activities included distributing Advent devotional booklets, sponsoring a booth at the Alternative Gift Market, and writing letters to legislators regarding civil rights, religious liberties, global security, the environment, and healthcare issues.

Other activities were happening, too. Elder Bill Hoffman, of the Finance Committee, gave a light hearted explanation for understanding the balance sheet: "**ALICE**". **A**: Assets. **L**: Liabilities. **I**: Income. **C**: Capital (Net Worth). **E**: Expenses. September also brought an approved fifteen minute, informal hymn sing prior to the worship service, once a month [S: iv, p283]. Elder Sarah Witherspoon spearheaded the creation of our Child Abuse Prevention Policy. The 5th and 6th graders of Youth Club went to Dorney Park, had bowling parties, held game days at church and took day trips to Hershey Park in 1998 [S: v, p21].

In May of 1997, the question had been, "Would financing a Habitat House conflict with our quest for a Christian Education Director?" The following assumptions were made: (1) All funding would come from within VFPC. (2) Session would be (should be) the first group of volunteer leadership and gifts. (3) If money were not an issue, we would adopt a house. (4) If talent and energy were not an issue, we would adopt a house. (5) There would be a time limit for completion. Did Session believe adopting a house was the right thing for our congregation to do this time assuming the work would occur during the next twelve to eighteen months? After much discussion, Session decided to adopt a house. Mission undertook the rehab of a house, and the project was underway [S: iv, p267].

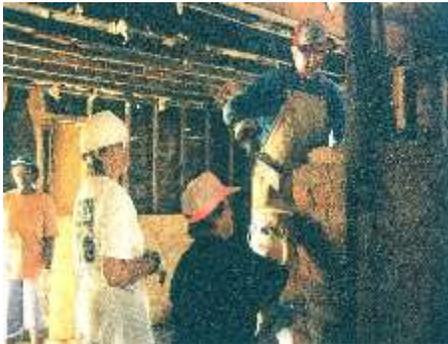
The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church was the first congregation to sponsor an entire house for Montgomery County Habitat for Humanity. We not only raised over \$32,000. Our church members did all the renovation work during an eighteen-month period. Billie Pifer remembered, "This effort was led by Crew Chief Lee Sellman, accompanied by his two trusty sidekicks, Ernie Blidan and Ben Magdamo. These three were the best leaders we could have asked for. They were very knowledgeable of construction and willing to teach others the various techniques needed to renovate the house."



Habitat for Humanity House
1040 Cherry St.,
Norristown, PA



Ben Magdamo



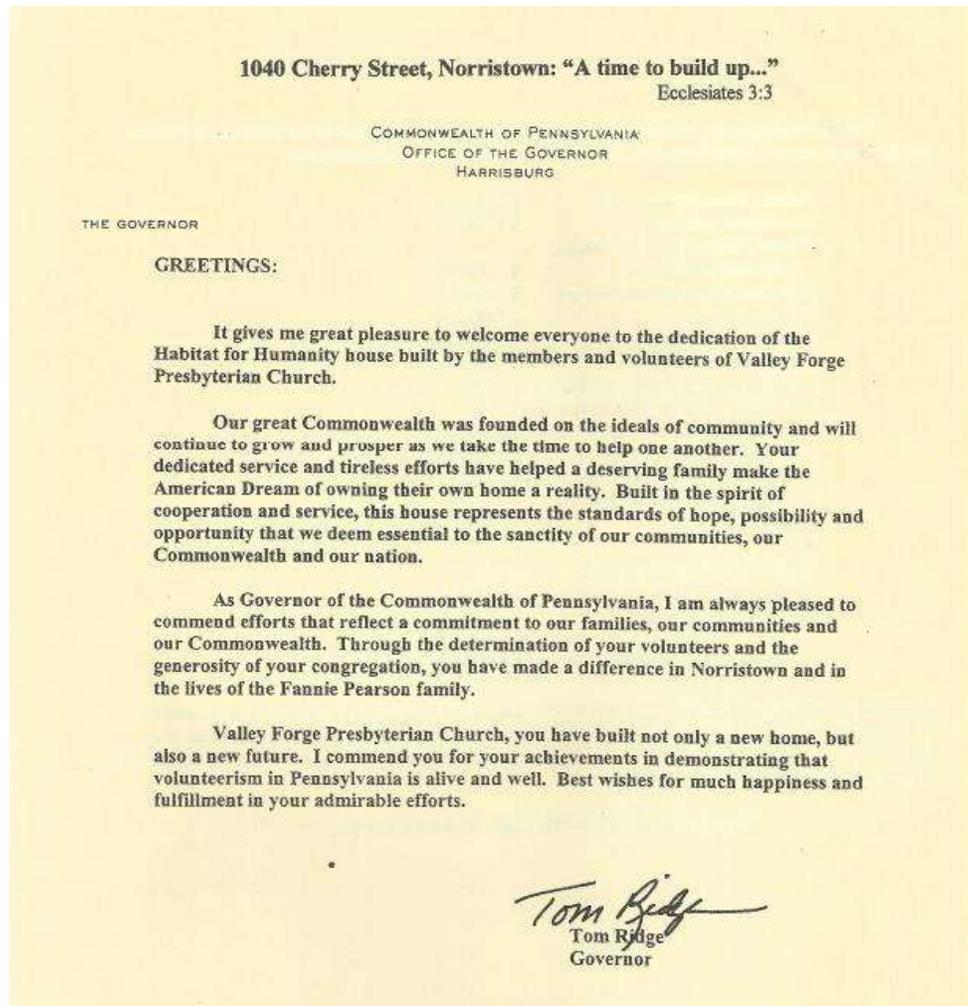
Lee Sellman



In April 1998, our church was recognized as "Congregation of the Year" by Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County for our sponsorship of 1040 Cherry Street. Newt Gingrich, a long-time Habitat supporter, presented the award. Here were some highlights from our 1998 efforts. More than 85 people spent over 3,600 hours working at the house. Another 40 people prepared/delivered over 500 meals to these laborers. A Junior Girl Scout troop, with food from Amedeo's restaurant, provided lunches on four occasions. Twenty-five people spent more than 600 hours doing "exciting" administrative work, with forms donated by Salters Printing Services. Over 160 donors contributed more than \$27,000 (including \$3,000 in materials) toward our goal of \$32,000. A furnace was donated by Jay Gress, Inc, A friend of the church donated the kitchen cabinets. Large monetary gifts were made by the Deacons and the Wm. L. Elkins Lodge #646 F&AM. Dozens of people showed their support by purchasing several hundred Habitat House pins [AR 1998].

Finishing out the year, the long-awaited Habitat for Humanity dedication of 1040 Cherry Street, Norristown, Pennsylvania occurred on Saturday, December 11, 1999, at 1:00 p.m. A

shower was held on Sunday after worship for the new homeowner [S: v, pp95-97]. The project was now finished after 11,000 hours; 200 church members and church friends had participated. VFPC received a commendation from Gov. Tom Ridge.



As noted earlier, in 1997, a Director of Christian Education was needed. Rev. Mike wanted the Senior High Fellowship Program to include thoughtfulness, evangelism and drama. Both Rev. Mike and Jeff Gatter felt the main leader should be 40 years old or older, and have the maturity to mold the group. Pastor Dunfee started meeting with the Senior High Fellowship once a month in 1997. They went bowling, rock climbing, doing service projects, and even had a Christmas Party at Mark's (Hawke) home [S: v, p44].

The need for a CE leader was fulfilled on February 9, 1998, when Mark Hawke became Director of Christian Education (DCE) under a "time contract" for an initial period through July 1, 1999; this contract was to be renewable annually by March 31st. Mark's wife, Rev. Elise Hawke, also supported our congregation by preaching on Sunday, March 29, 1998, for a special service entitled "Celebration of Women".

Every three summers, high school students from all over the world gather on a college campus for the Presbyterian Youth Triennium (PYT) to create a community of young Presbyterians committed to strengthening their relationships with God and the church. Courrine Knight attended PYT at Purdue University in July of 1998 [S: v, p25].

It wasn't just women's activities and fellowships receiving attention at this time. At the January 1998 Presbytery meeting, the controversial amendment regarding ordination standards, known as the "Fidelity and Chastity" amendment, was discussed at great length and adopted. The Session provided the congregation a study paper, in September 1998, that discussed the issue. The Session arranged an ad hoc Committee on Constitutional Change for 1999 to discern their position. The Session and Rev. Dunfee became amendment advocates. The amendment was adopted with 255 people (50%) in favor and 197 (42%) against, with two abstentions [S: iv, p253]. Rev. Dunfee said, "A few folks found me too liberal and left the congregation, while some folks found me a fresh breeze and joined." However, it would not be until 2011 that the General Assembly would pass this amendment and change the Book of Order.

Church Activities Included Youth And Adults Alike



Halloween Fun



Greeters: Becky and Frank Clark
Bill Burnett entering

Eiko Ikeda recalled more about Reverend Dunfee and the church's activities:

He was instrumental in getting us to go on mission trips: adults and the youth.
In August 5-10, 2001, our church sent a team to Stony Point, N.Y.



The trip I've remembered the most was the one to renovate one of the conference rooms of the Presbytery. We completely renovated a conference room and brought that idea back to our church. Our team included: Faith and Peter Heinz, Eiko Ikeda, Joyce and Bert Lee, Pat Magdamo, Gwen Schreur, Sarah Witherspoon, and others.



Stony Point, N.Y.
Mission Trip



We used the same color scheme with our chapel, and that was a domestic mission in our church. But the best quality he (Rev. Dunfee) had was to get more members to do what they never thought they could do, in this way he got more and more people involved!

Besides the local chapel and building renovations, there were other projects. In 1998, the elevator project got under way, obtained approvals in 1999, and was completed in 2000. Marian Friese said "For several years we (our church) hosted the homeless each March. We fed them their evening meal and had them sleep over. Pastor Mike (Dunfee) called it a sizeable battle pulling this off."

Rev. Mike also recalled this about mission trips, renovations, and One Night at a Time,

I remember the sanctuary renovation and the new carpet that was added. The elevator was installed in 2000. The baby grand piano was purchased by several members of our congregation, although June Adams' estate purchased most of it; that is why the plaque has her name on it. New lighting and a new sound system were installed. Lee Sellman refinished the pews, made much of the wooden furniture, including the memory box under the mail boxes, removed the front row of pews and made the inserts, halfway back, required by the American with Disabilities Act. He made those vertical wooden candle stands that we used during the holidays. Lee's wife, Nancy, made the paraments and hangings. She also made the communion cloth. Member Barbara Spreeman made some of the hangings too. The chapel was renovated through the help of many of the church members. I helped paint the walls. After the chapel was renovated, we held beautiful candlelight services there. The other important accomplishment was leading the congregation through a time of conflict with the township over hosting a program allowing up to 50 homeless people to sleep in our auditorium each night for one month. It was called "One Night at a Time". Our church received local notoriety when the newspaper picked up the story. The congregation came together, in spite of some tension, and decided it was our duty, as followers of Christ, to serve some of God's most vulnerable people.

During Rev. Mike's tenure, Al Ikeda built a 15-foot, 3-dimensional, wooden cross with a crown of thorns for the Good Friday Tenebrae service. It was draped with a black cloth on Good Friday and a white cloth on Easter Sunday. It was quite awe inspiring!



1996 Sunday School Classes



1996 Mother-Daughter Banquet



1997 Breakfast



Much happened with Christian education, congregational care, and other member-oriented church missions starting in 1999. Rev. Mike remarked, “I worked closely with our Parish Associate, Reverend Dr. Sir James Tanis, especially in Adult Education and visitation. I also worked to give at least ten percent of our earnings to Mission. I enjoyed an extraordinarily high level of trust and respect in my years there, which made it possible for me to lead well.”

In January of 1999, in addition to now having a Director of Christian Education, Session approved an Associate Pastor position. This sizeable congregation of 473 people [S: v, p53] called Rev. Jeffrey Clinton Quinn. The Valley Forge Presbyterian Nursery School began a two-day program for two-year old children. To better keep in touch with the congregation, Rev. Mike said, “Plans were in the works for a webpage on the Internet. The youth group already had a webpage. Their address was *valleyforgepresb.org*”.

The Lenten season brought the Bread and Soup Meals, along with a contemplative program for the five Wednesday nights of Lent. This started a tradition, and was a key activity of Reverend Brinegar (2013-16) who held Wednesday night Soup and Bread services for our congregation in the fellowship hall. The Bread and Soup Meals continued up to Easter of 2018.

The Congregation Care Committee (CCC), with Marian Friese, Arlene Osborne, Lynda Schmidt, Barbara Finnegan, Ilene Cororiti, and Joyce Richardson collected used durable medical supplies, such as walkers and wheel chairs, to loan to those who needed them. They offered blood pressure screening during Sunday’s coffee hour [S: v, p59, p217]. In May of 1999, CCC distributed emergency medical information cards to Session [S: v, p79].

In June of 1999, Director of Christian Education, Mark Hawke accepted a position as co-pastor with his wife, Elise, at Concord Liberty Presbyterian Church in Yakima, Washington. He was (to be) ordained on October 10, 1999 [S: v, p84]. With Mark Hawke leaving in October, we hired part-time helpers from the Lutheran Theological Seminary to work with our youth. They were Bonnie Fackre-Cochise and Lisa Barnes. The Communicants were

Robert Klepacki, Jr., Blair Develin, John Guardani, Max Fennell, Noelle Bucha, Noel Padilla, Kristin Lopez, Brandon Shearer, Al Aiken, and Sherri Dean.

The Clothing Sale with Nora Knight and Gwen Schreur, the special 'Evening of Song' music program at Christmas time with Sandy Rodman, and the Children's Christmas pageant became regular offerings [S: v, p127, p169]. Membership and adult education activities included a potluck dinner with discussion on C. S. Lewis' "Screw Tape Letters" in June, at Faith and Peter Heinz' home [S: v, p80], a Presbys Halloween Party (Presbys are the former 'Nifty-Fifties' social and service group, which later became Forever Young), a senior driving course, and the Shriners dinner dance. In the fall of 1999, the Clothing Sale and the Holiday Fair were held. The Alternative Gift Market occurred during coffee hours on November 14, 21, 28 and December 5th. A 'Parents Morning Out' was offered in December with free child care from 8 a.m. until noon [S: v, pp90-92]. Also offered by the Congregational Care Committee were luncheon programs on arthritis and depression [S: v, p136, p145].

The year 2000 activities continued with the Congregational Care Committee preparing a booklet that included the names of persons needing services, together with names of persons willing to provide those services [S: v, p119]. CCC produced and mailed their "Yellow Pages" booklet to the congregation in April 2001 [S: v, p153]. The Gladwyne, Port Kennedy, and Bridgeport Presbyterian churches joined with VFPC for Good Friday service in 2000 [S: v, p103]. The Annual Meeting of the Covenant Network (local chapter) was held at Mike Henry's home on August 27, 2000. The Covenant Network of Presbyterians is a broad-based, national group of clergy and lay leaders working for a church that is simultaneously faithful, just, and whole. It sought to support the mission and unity of the Presbyterian Church (USA) [S: v, p127]. Being a mission church ourselves, Session voted in October 2000, to donate \$6,000, over a period of three years, to the Crossroads Presbyterian Church in Limerick, PA, to help build their church [S: v, p139].

In September 2000, Rebecca Watkins, a seminarian at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, was hired to work with youth. She was a former flight attendant who was changing careers. She worked under contract with VFPC to fulfill her field placement requirement for education. Pastor Mike was Rebecca's Field of Education Supervisor. She developed a curriculum, and worked with Pastor Mike and the Confirmation class [S: v, pp132, 135]. Rebecca continued her requirements for the church year 2001-2002. While here she wrote a research paper on "Evangelism for Valley Forge Presbyterian Church and Church Renewal and Evangelism ECM 514", and led a class on being a lay leader. Reverend Rebecca was called to be the pastor of the Lee Vining Community Presbyterian Church in Lee Vining, California [S: v, p152].

From September through the beginning of 2001, children in grades 1 through 6 attended the first fifteen minutes of worship, and then went to their classroom for Sunday school. The Middle School youth had an activity once a month [S: v, p130]. In 2000-2001, the Youth Fellowships spent an overnight at the Philadelphia Zoo and visited a nursing home [S: v, p111].

Acting on their 1999 observation that an Associate Pastor was needed, Session approved and, at a Special Congregational Meeting, the congregation unanimously extended a call to Jeffrey Clinton Quinn to fill the position. Jeffrey Quinn accepted the call effective October 1, 2001. He was ordained on November 21, 2001, with a reception afterwards. In 2001, Youth Fellowship activities with Rev. Jeff Quinn included a Halloween lock-in, haunted hayride in Bucks County, games and a movie at church during October 25-26th. Rev. Quinn scheduled and led other fellowships activities including going to the indoor climbing at the Philadelphia Rock Gym, watching movies, playing paint ball games, going to Woodies to play miniature golf, bowling and enjoying go-carts racing at Arnolds. There were also retreats to Harvey Cedars, and Kirkwood Camp (Phila. Presbytery camp in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. [S: v, p178].

There was a mission trip for the youth from June 23-29, 2002 [S: v, p203]. A change occurred for Vacation Bible School in August. Instead of being held in the mornings, it was now held in the evenings from 5:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. [S: v, p203]. Other monthly get togethers included Sixers Game in November, a Christmas party in December, and planned a "Souper" Bowl party in January of 2003 [S: v, p212]; our youth collected donations for the Hospitality Center on Superbowl Sunday through the Souper Bowl of Caring program. They had a meal replete with projection TV of the game as well.

The year 2002 was very busy for our church. In January Session approved an In-House Mission Project for the first two weeks of August, to renovate the auditorium and the Peace Chapel [S: v, p195]. In June, Billie Pifer coordinated the sale of tables and chairs from the auditorium. Lee Sellman was construction supervisor of the renovations that started August 12-16, 2002 [S: v, p205], though it wasn't until August 2003, that the In-House Mission Project was realized [S: v, p223]. On the very same day that VFPC member Wallis Brooks took her seat in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 2002, Reverend Dunfee was the Chaplain of the House of Representatives for the 186th Session of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As noted earlier, for several years our church hosted the homeless each March. We fed them their evening meal and sheltered them for the night in the fellowship hall. We also made lunches for them for the next day. Brook Baldwin and Nora Knight fulfilled their clothing

needs. This major outreach program was started at our church as the result of Ms. Sue DeFeo's discussion on "One Night at a Time" (ONAT) in December 2001. ONAT was a program of Mental Health of Southeastern Pennsylvania. This program involved homeless people who were registered with Montgomery County. The program picked up homeless people from certain areas, (e.g., Norristown), and took them to a "hospitality" church for the night - 9:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. Each church committed to one month at a time. The homeless people were accompanied by three staff members. Session voted to extend an invitation to the "One Night at a Time" Program for the month of March 2002. A team of six people were hosts for March. Elder Brooke Baldwin headed the team and Elders Jocelyn Barr, Joyce Lee, Eileen McFalls, Joyce Richardson and Sarah Witherspoon co-hosted with her [S: v, p182]. This was an exciting, new way for us to reach out to those in need in the Norristown area. On February 10, 2002, a Special Congregational Meeting was held to discuss Upper Merion Township's objection to "One Night at a Time". Congregational input was sought following the morning worship. Elders were invited to present their opinions, and those of other church members. A motion was passed to open the floor to comments from guests. Although there were several concerns related to particular aspects of either the ONAT program itself, or the Township's objections, there was uniform and strong support for VFPC hosting ONAT. It was noted that there would be an article on VFPC-ONAT and the Township's objections, in the next day's *Times Herald* newspaper. Session voted unanimously to continue to support VFPC's intention to host ONAT for the month of March 2002. Pastor Dunfee sought input from the Presbytery of Philadelphia's legal counsel, before any other communications were made on the subject outside the church [S: v, p188]. Upper Merion Township's Zoning Hearing was held on March 13, 2002 [S: v, p192]. The struggle with the Zoning Hearing Board was about whether or not we were allowed to serve the homeless in the ONAT program. Ultimately, the township board agreed we could behave like a church as long as we did so only in the month of March. There were conditions imposed by the board: There shall (were) not be more than 50 guests at any time. Out-of-doors supervision was critical [S: v, p216]. After the first ONAT was held in March 2002, Session voted to host ONAT in March 2003, and again in March 2004 [S: v, p243]. It would continue for many more years.



In June 2002, Session voted to send a letter to Central Presbyterian Church, West Airy and Stanbridge Streets, Norristown, PA, inviting them to explore the possibility of a "Sister Church" relationship [S: v, p204]. By September 2nd, Session proceeded with this mission partnership creating a committee to organize this outreach endeavor. It included Elders Brooke Baldwin, Chair Sarah Witherspoon, Zandra Fennell, and Alan and Gwen Schreur [S: v, p213]. Session discussed what it meant to have a sister church. Central Presbyterian Church became our "Sister Church" around Christmastime, just when

their new pastor was hired [S: v, p215]. Central requested our help to feed their food insufficient neighbors, once every eight weeks. Session voted to serve Saturday night dinners every two months through the end of 2003 [S: v, p231]. According to Billie Pifer, an organizer of the activity, dinners for their food insufficient neighbors at our sister church were very successful. Pastor Frank Amalfitano and his church's small group of volunteers were always so very helpful. They gave us directions about their facility, and made sure we had what we needed to serve their community.

Outreach efforts also included occasionally helping to prepare and serve dinners to the food insufficient neighbors of our sister church. Left to right we see Joanne Henry, Ralph Duey, Dave Wilkie, Eileen Wilkie and Nora Schumacher in the kitchen.



Significant youth activity occurred. VFPC member, Kevin Hershey achieved the status of an Inquirer to the Presbytery of Philadelphia in his quest to become a minister. Elder Mike Henry was the liaison between Kevin and Presbytery as he prepared for the ministry. This step led him to becoming a minister [S: v, p210]. On Sunday, April 20, 2003, the youth group conducted the Easter sunrise service under the leadership of Rev. Quinn and assisted by Max Fennell. Thirty-seven people attended this service and enjoyed a delicious breakfast hosted by Eileen and Dick McFalls [S: v, p226-231].

As part of the August 2003 renovations of the old auditorium and Peace Chapel (formerly the multi-purpose room), new lights were installed. Rev. Dunfee's Taizé services resumed in September. A Young Adult Group, for adults under 40 years of age, started in October with dinner, to discuss their goals. Starting in November, this group met twice a month, and went Christmas caroling in December [S: v, pp248-251]. Brooke Baldwin of the Mission Committee held the Alternative Gift Market on Sundays in November. On market days, they also sold Fair Trade Coffee* [S: v, p242]. As was the Deacon's custom, "We Care" packages were sent to college students and service personnel from our church in October. The Christmas Wish Tree was put up in November, and Cookie Sampler Sunday was held in December for theVillage® [S: v, p248]. Our sister church requested more assistance for financial upkeep. Session voted to send them \$2,000 of Mission Funds [S: v, p264].

A Special Congregational Meeting was held in November to dissolve Pastor Dunfee's relationship with VFPC at his request, because his wife, Rev. Helen Nablo, had taken a pastoral call to a church in Boston. It was to take effect on December 6, 2003 [S: v, p254]. In December 2003, Reverend Dunfee moved to Hingham, Massachusetts, with his family.

***Fair Trade coffee** is coffee that is certified as having been produced to fair trade standards. These partnerships contribute to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to coffee bean farmers. Fair trade organizations are engaged actively in supporting producers and sustainable environmental farming practices. Fair trade practices prohibit child or forced labor. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_trade_coffee

First, Associate Pastor Jeff Quinn then became acting pastor, to the great satisfaction and delight of the congregation. However, he later decided to return to active duty for a 3-year term in the Marines. Sunday, March 14, 2004, was Rev. Quinn's last Sunday.



****Women's Retreat at Temenos**
1564 Telegraph Road, West Chester, PA
October 16, 2003

Back (L-R): Barbara Beck, Yiping Hwang, Joanne Henry, Joyce Kleiber
Middle: Denise Lee, Nancy Devos, Aleta Duey, Jean Friedman, Mary Lou Fite
Front: Marty Meyer, Shirley Bliden, Dorothy Vandergrift, Eiko Ikeda, Shirley Richmond

In November 2003, an Interim Pastor Search Committee had been elected to find an interim pastor for the church. Rev. Paul Toms, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Norristown was assigned as Session's Moderator until an interim pastor was hired. Rev. Andrew Rosencrans was appointed as Moderator for the Interim Pastor Search Committee.

In February 2004, Rev. Paul Tuttle became our Interim Pastor [S: v, p257-265].

Church members remember Rev. Mike Dunfee:

Marian Friese said, "Reverend Mike (Dunfee) made such a (good) difference in the ten years he was here! He was remembered fondly for his humor and engaging sermons. I think Mike's note to the congregation in his goodbye letter in December 2003, sums up his ministry as well as anything:"

The best years of my ministry have been these years of being your pastor. Some of the things I have loved about you are the way you worked together, so well; the way people are allowed to be different and are still appreciated; the way grace has been offered and received and offered again; the ready laughter and joyful spirit of our gatherings. I think the last three or four years had been the best. This was when, in addition to many other things, the Habitat House was done, the Mission trip was taken, the “One Night at a Time Program” (was) embraced, and a huge number of renovations (were) completed. On top of that, our worship life had great energy, ever enriched by youthful music, times of silence, and the willing participation of the congregation. Words cannot express how privileged I feel to have been invited into your lives for so many years. The presence of Christ be with you!

--Reverend Michael Dunfee

Arlene Osborne said, “Reverend Dunfee, was her ‘gentle giant’, and of all the pastors, I knew him the best. He was a good friend of Reverend Dr. Tanis. Reverend Dunfee joined us in our auction, and called for our Bingo. He was a very active participant for Homes (Habitat) for Humanity. He had asked Marian Frieese to start a Congregational Care group. We, nurses, took bi-monthly blood pressures, had an information table, a column in the church paper, a “Helping Hands” booklet listing helpful aids, and arranged some visitations to those who needed some respite, like the Jordans, and the Halls.” On a personal note Arlene said, “Rev. Dunfee offered advice and comfort regarding our elderly aunt for her end of life issues.”

David Ford said, “Mike was my minister and my friend. As pastor he showed me how to live a Christ-like life. Not only that, he introduced me to American Indian and guided meditation. As a friend, Mike came to my aid when I was most afraid. Twenty-two years ago, Mike drove me to Sommer’s Point, New Jersey, to help me face a judge at my trial for drunk driving. Now that I am sober that many years, I admit that he helped me when I was most vulnerable. Mike will always have a place in my heart.”

Rev. MacDonald said, “Reverend Mike Dunfee was a dedicated associate. Our short time together was always dynamic and inclusive, before I retired and returned to the engineering world.”

Rev. Michael Dunfee, their daughter Amy, Rev. Helen Nablo, and her son Ben, ca. 2012



Reverend Jeffrey “Jeff” Clinton Quinn, Associate Pastor (2001-2004)



Reverend Jeffrey Quinn was our second Associate Pastor who arrived in October 2001, to work with our youth and to assist Reverend Michael Dunfee. Rev. Quinn was a recent graduate of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Following his ordination on November 21, 2001, Rev. Quinn remained active in the U.S. Navy Reserves as Chaplain [S: v, pp173-176].

Rev. Quinn was endorsed as a Chaplain in the U.S. Navy Reserves in April 2002 [S: v, p198], and his file was forwarded to New Orleans Navy Reserve Center for assignment to active reserve status. This entailed duty one weekend per month, two weeks per year, plus subject to active duty in case of war [S: v, p214].

In October, he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion 4th Marines on Long Island [S: v, p216]. He voluntarily returned to active duty. Sunday, March 14, 2004, was Rev. Quinn’s last Sunday before reporting to Bridgeport, California for a 3-year term in the Marines [S: v, p264].

Rev. Dunfee commented, having the addition of Jeff Quinn's energies and gifts had a very positive impact upon all of us.

Rev. Quinn described his position as follows in the 2001 Annual Report:

My focus since coming on board has been twofold. First, I sought to build relationships with the youth, their families, the church staff, and all the membership. Toward this end I attended various committee meetings, held special meetings with parents and youth members, met almost daily with Mike and other staff, and attended a few youth athletic events. This focus continued, as I learned names and associations. My second focus was re-establishing youth programming. This involved recruiting volunteers, setting meeting times, and doing some advance planning. At this point, we had a basic structure in place with monthly events planned through September 2002. My hope was that this structure was a temporary one, and that we could build a more comprehensive program in the coming year. Youth attendance at weekly meetings averaged about 5. My various other activities in these months included regular presbytery meetings and related work, limited pastoral duties including assistance with two funerals and hospital calls during Mike's vacation, leadership in worship, and regular church governance activities.

Rev. Quinn was active in the church community and the Presbytery. He was elected to serve as Moderator of the Peacemaking Committee for the Philadelphia Presbytery [S: v, p216], and continued to serve on the Board of Directors of Kirkwood Camp, as well as the Congregational Mission and Ministry Committee.

Elder Gail Moore remembered that Reverend Quinn was quick to offer his help after a clothing sale, when he joined other volunteers packing up all the unsold clothes to be donated to various charities.

Elder Donald Higgins said, "He was great and focused on the kids. One thing I remembered about my last Session meeting was when he and Mike (Dunfee) needed to make an announcement, and kept deferring to each other to go first. They each then announced they would be leaving."

In May of 2004, Session voted to delete the position of Associate Pastor [S: v, p277].

Reverend Paul Tuttle, Interim Pastor (2004-2004)



Reverend Paul Tuttle was a North Jersey native who attended Roanoke College, Virginia, and was a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary. He served the Presbyterian Church (USA) for nearly 40 years in 14 local churches. Rev. Tuttle was a history buff, a genealogist, and played the acoustic guitar most of his life.

After Rev. Dunfee's departure, Rev. Jeff Quinn and Rev. James Tanis provided our leadership at the start of 2004. Rev. Paul Tuttle was called to serve as our Interim Pastor and was installed as in February. In March, Rev. Quinn was activated into military service in California. Rev. Tuttle then served through most of October. Upon his departure, Rev. Tanis again filled in as our spiritual leader; he and guest pastors led Sunday worship services. The end of the year saw two search committees operating: one to find a new interim pastor, and the other working to find the new permanent pastor for our church. We were thankful for the dedication of these search committees and they knew they had the support of the congregation [AR 2004].

In the 2004 Annual Report, Rev. Tanis wrote that "Special thanks go to our Administrative Assistant, Arline Salas, who kept a steady hand in the church office through all the vicissitudes of 2004. A deep word of thanks to all those church officers and other members who stepped in to provide such devoted leadership throughout this unexpected, demanding year. The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) and the Interim PNC had been hard at work in the search for our church's future pastoral leadership. We hoped that, in the course of the year, new leaders would join us and come to know the satisfaction and joy that I have known, working with the congregation of Valley Forge Presbyterian Church."

Tad Hershey wrote about worship, "Special thanks were hardly enough for the services of Rev. James Tanis to this church in our year of change and challenge. He coordinated all the worship services since October, as well as called on the sick, counseled the bereaved, officiated at funerals, and preached often. He led our Advent services on Wednesday evenings and special services such as Christmas Eve. All this and more, in addition to his work with Adult Education, and the many small tasks that normally would have fallen on the shoulders of a full-time senior pastor. As we moved from two full-time pastors to none, Rev. James Tanis truly held the church together with his tireless efforts. (Probably "tiring" would have been a more apt description.) Thank you, James, for your faithful dedication in the Lord's service."

From the Clerk of Session in the Annual Report, "Of importance, throughout these changes, our congregation supported the church and its normal activities. In March we again hosted One Night at a Time, and we ran very successful benevolence fund-raising activities: The Flea Market, Clothing Drive and Alternative Gift Market. VFPC continued its tradition of active service. We were blessed by the continued dedication of our members who worked as

Sunday school teachers, committee leaders and members, choir members, lay leaders and all who helped VFPC serve -- this was critical in providing continuity in a time of change.”

Every three summers, high school students from all over the world gathered on a college campus for the Presbyterian Youth Triennium (PYT) to create a community of young Presbyterians committed to strengthening their relationships with God and the church. Robert (“Bobby”) Klepacki, Jr. attended the Presbyterian Church (USA) Youth Triennium with Session covering the \$350 cost [S: v, p279].

During 2004, the Mission Committee continued, once every eight weeks, to prepare and serve Saturday evening suppers at our sister church, Central Presbyterian in Norristown. Near the end of the year, Pastor Frank Amalfitano asked if we could begin to serve one meal a month to help fill the gap left by a church that could no longer contribute. With the start of 2005, we began this more ambitious schedule.

Regular church activities, worship and children's programs continued in 2005 because of our dedicated leaders. We observed Good Friday with Hal Hopsons' "Tenebrae" (A Service of Darkness). Palm Sunday and Easter were celebrated with special music by the vocal and handbell choirs, soloists and instrumentalists. A group of eight children sang on Pentecost Sunday.

Session, in the Annual Report stated, “2005 was a continued time of change for the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church. It was also a time of consistency and service to our Lord. The year started with VFPC still searching for an interim pastor. In early May, the Interim Search Committee presented Anne Park to the Session, and she was accepted as our Interim Pastor. Anne started with us in early June, and proved to be a loving, calming influence in her stay at VFPC. We wish to thank the Interim Search Committee: Linda Acerba, Betsy Develin, Joan Hagerman, Marco Magdamo and Bob Schuettler, for their work in finding Anne.”

Reverend Anne Park, Interim Pastor (2005-2005)

Reverend Anne Park earned a master of divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2002. Rev. Anne started serving The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church as our Interim Pastor on June 6, 2005 [S: v, p303]. The group of eight children sang again on Rev. Anne Park's first Sunday. As always it was a joy to have our children participate in Worship.



Rev. Anne brought a sense of identity, and our worship experience was enriched. A sense of direction and hope prevailed. She assisted the Christian Education and Personnel Committees in writing job descriptions, and office administration. One instance, in particular, was for the church Sunday morning nursery attendant, placing the ad

for that position, and hiring Theresa Bokoski [S: v, p315]. Rev. Anne Park's last Sunday as VFPC's Interim Pastor was on October 30, 2005 [S: v, p323].

After leaving VFPC, Rev. Park served as interim minister for a number of regional churches. Prior to her retirement, she was Minister for Executive Leadership at Arch Street Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA. The Presbytery of Philadelphia granted the status of Honorably Retired to the Rev. Anne Park effective March 6, 2017.

The Session's 2005 report continued, "VFPC began celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2005, including an unprecedented fundraising effort to show our appreciation for all the Lord had given to us in our first half century. That effort resulted in our being able to donate \$1,000 to each of 18 local charities. What a wonderful expression of thanksgiving by the congregation. Special thanks to Peg Elliot as chair of the 50th Anniversary Celebration, and Bill Hoffman for managing the '50/50' fundraising.... We remained consistent in our other benevolence efforts, including hosting One Night at a Time, and our traditional benevolence fund-raising activities: The Flea Market, the Clothing Drive, the Alternative Gift Market and this year, the Country Fair. One of our own young members, Kevin Hershey, was studying for the ministry. Kevin met with Session in May seeking Session's approval for him to change his status from Inquirer, to a Candidate for the Ministry. Kevin was subsequently approved as a Candidate for the Ministry at the Presbytery meeting in November. He would continue to be supported by VFPC."

Session also reported that, "The big news for the congregation was that the search for a pastor was completed during the year. The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) had presented the Church Information Form (CIF) to Session in February, and the subsequent search was very successful. We wish to thank the members of the PNC for their work: Barb Beck, Lois Blair, Matt Glidden, Joanne Henry, Lynne Klepacki, Dick McFalls, Mike McQuate, Florence Sangster and Dave Wilkie."

On September 18th, the congregation called Rev. Hope Lee as pastor of VFPC. Rev. Lee began her service in November.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, Rev. James Tanis continued his service to VFPC, as Parish Associate and moderator of Session before Rev. Park came to us. With the calling of Reverend Hope Lee, Reverend Tanis resigned his position as Parish Associate, according the rules of the Presbyterian Church.

This completed more than 30 years of Reverend Dr. Sir James Tanis' service to Valley Forge. He was recognized for his wonderful, loving dedication to our church during the worship service on November 6th.

Connected to One Another



Summer Youth Trip



Dorney Park



Confirmation Class



Forever Young



Winter Youth Trip



Adult Forum

Photos from the 2007 Directory

Reverend Dr. Victoria Hope Italiano Lee, Pastor (2005-2009)

Reverend Hope Lee was an Associate Pastor at The First Presbyterian Church in Fernandina Beach, Florida, before her husband, Sung Lee, was called as an Associate Pastor of Lower Providence Presbyterian Church in Norristown, Pennsylvania. Reverend Lee came to The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church on November 15, 2005, the year of our [50th Anniversary](#).



She was our fifth pastor. It was the nominating committee's number one expectation that she would attract many families with young children, as that seemed to be her focus. Reverend Lee was installed on January 15, 2006, and served through January 3, 2010 [S: v, p328].

In 2006, Rev. Lee started implementing that number one requirement by revamping the Sunday school program. Recognizing children as young as two years old could become young disciples, she created the "Toddlers & Jesus" and "Preschoolers & Jesus" ministries, where our youngest children spent invaluable time learning the Gospel. At the same time, the Sunday school program went in a new direction with our older children. Pastor Hope established KidMo, an interactive Sunday morning ministry for 1st through 4th graders. The Wave, a Sunday Night Youth Ministry for grades 5 through 8 with support from our high schoolers, was created, too. Other Middle and High School programs were established.

Vacation Bible School was a very fun-filled event. The CE building halls were transformed into **Son Treasure Island**. The children enjoyed the island theme. However, there was another adventure in store for them, the story of the power outage that hit the church during VBS. The July evening that lightning hit the pole on Deep Hollow Road, power was abruptly shut off to our Church and the Christian education buildings, plunging 57 children and their supervising adults into darkness. Although there was no immediate danger (Pastor Hope kept everything calm with stories and songs until the parents arrived) our church buildings would be affected for the next four months. After PECO replaced the transformer, additional problems throughout the buildings were discovered. Exit signs, outdoor flood lights, the hot water heater, the elevator, and random wall outlets had failed. The surge was so powerful that it blew right through the many surge protectors that were in place. A positive result was that a complete check of the electrical system resulted in bringing some old wiring and breaker boxes up to code, making our buildings safer and more functional. Later, in September 2006, the Presbytery of Philadelphia requested Pastor Lee moderate the Session at Port Kennedy while they searched for a new pastor [S: v, p251]. The pastor had an exciting first year at VFPC.

During the years Reverend Lee was at The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, she had three pastoral candidates to assist in her ministry. They were Pastoral Resident Oscar Clavel (2006), Pastoral Resident Cathy Chang (2006), and Pastoral Resident Corey Alleman (2007). Pastoral Resident Clavel's responsibilities focused on the youth group and liturgical planning for Sunday and special services. Pastoral Resident Chang was a resident during her fall semester of seminary. Her responsibilities focused on worship, leadership and building relationships. Pastoral Resident Alleman's responsibilities began on September 16, 2007, and concluded on May 1, 2008. While Reverend Lee supervised, there was also feedback and support received from a site team of four members of The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church chaired by Bob Faix, Jr. The fall of 2007 provided Pastoral Resident Alleman with his first opportunity at preaching. He made regular visits to people in homes, hospitals and managed-care facilities. In addition, Corey's service participation included attending committee meetings, preparing for the weekly Sunday service, and special services such as an internment, a memorial service, and an Advent service.

The year 2006 included the congregation's first major mission trip. Peg Elliott remembers, "Pastor Lee organized two, adult trips to Pearlinton, Mississippi." The 2006 mission trip was the congregation's first trip to Pearlinton, to aid our brothers and sisters there who were so devastated by Hurricane Katrina. That trip allowed everyone to participate, either by physical work or by financial support. Thirteen members participated in a work team experience with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and other mission volunteers to serve as God's hands in Pearlinton. Those members helped bring hope to families whose homes had been destroyed. In February 2007, another committed mission team went to Pearlinton. Several members of the first congregation team also took part in the second mission trip, where they were able to experience the growth taking place since their first trip in 2006. However, they soon discovered much more work was still needed for the ongoing recovery due to the devastating effects from the hurricane.

VFPC continued our benevolence efforts, including hosting One Night at a Time, and our traditional benevolence fund-raising activities: The Flea Market, the Clothing Drive, and the Alternative Gift Market. In addition, Peacemaking gifts were designated for Latin American Fellowship (LAF) at Central Presbyterian Church, and the Upper Merion Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday program. The Worship Committee also reported positive changes. VFPC welcomed Marty Meyer as Music Director, and looked forward to her continued leadership in the musical aspect of weekly worship with the Choir, Handbell Choir, and children's music. Thanks also to Matthew Klepacki, who provided contemporary music prior to each weekly worship service. Interns, Cathy Chang and Oscar Clavel added to our worship experience by their participation in our weekly services, especially with children's sermons, and assistance to the Pastor as directed. Through the dedication of Pastor Hope, Marty, Cathy, and Oscar, our worship experience continued strongly.

Over our choir's 63-year history, the choir robes have been gray, green, beige and then in 2008 or 2009, they switched to burgundy, which is the color of the pew cushions and carpet.



2007 Choir in their beige gowns.

Back (L-R): Marty Meyers, Aleta Duey, Al Ikeda, Cathy Higgins, Bob Schuettler, Dick Brickley

Front: Lynne Kolodinsky, Martha Coleman, Sue Hoffman, Sue Brickley, Sandy Rodman, Jeanne Fee, Eileen McFalls.

New burgundy choir robes, ca.2008-2009 (per Cheryl Faix,)

Back, (L-R): Corrine Weaber, Mike Henry, John Weaber, Dick McFalls, Royal McGeorge, Al Ikeda.

Front: Martha Coleman, Marty Meyer, Sandra Lammey, Aleta Duey, Joanne Henry, Jeanne Fee, Eileen McFalls, Cheryl Faix, Sandy Rodman.



The second full year for Pastor Hope at Valley Forge was as exciting and full as 2006 had been. Pastor Lee began serving in March 2007 as an (on-call) chaplain for Upper Merion Township [S: v, p368].

In the 2007 Church Directory, Pastor Hope wrote – *From the Pastor's Heart:*

Here we are, face to face, all of us are here in this special place! As you look through our family photo album, I encourage you to look beyond the smiles, the laughter, the joy, and to seek out the face of Jesus Christ in one another. The church is called to be a place set apart so that believers might encourage one another as they walk hand-in-hand towards the cross. Here at Valley Forge, we're working hard to be more than just folks who pass each other on Sundays. We're family ... brothers and sisters in the Lord! So, I encourage you to use this album daily. Use it in your prayers so that you might pray for each of your sisters and brothers by face and name, and to reach out to one another in times of joy and sorrow. I'm so glad to be your pastor. And, I'm so blessed to have you as family! In the Grip of Grace, --Hope.

Lynne Klepacki was now the Director of Children's Ministry, as well as Director of the VFPC Nursery School. Sue Swinty became the new teacher for the weekly Nursery School, with Eva Bajzath and Andrea Lucaiova serving as the Sunday School Nursery Staff. Christian Education reported that 2007 began with a Confirmation class in February. In April, those youth met with Session to present statements of faith and were confirmed during a subsequent worship service. The congregation warm-heartedly welcomed the confirmands, who continued throughout the year to contribute to the life of VFPC.

Ejvind Hansen remembered the first major youth mission trip to Rutland Vermont, June 18-21, 2007 where he served as one of the chaperones.

It was funded mainly by a budget item set aside for mission expenditures, but also by donations from the congregation and out of pocket support by the participants. The chaperones for the trip were Betsy Develin, Linda Acerba, and Ejvind Hansen. The youth in our church group that journeyed with us to Vermont in two rented Vans were, Mathew Klepacki, Corey Develin, Kelly Ann Acerba, Courtney Wilkinson, and two brothers. They worked on teams together with other youth from other churches from mainly the eastern USA. The youth teams worked on several projects including outside renovation to an Elder Women's home, helped to build a walking/bike path for future community use, taught Bible school to the local children, supported a swim class for local youth, and had fellowship with the local residents in their community-in-need facility. All the participants ate breakfast and an evening meal together in the Vermont sponsoring church's basement and were sent out to their work assignments with a small lunch. After the work day, everyone gathered in that basement fellowship hall for discussion and spiritual insight to their mission efforts.



A walking / Bike path in progress



Entertainment support for in-need residents



Courtney, Hope, Betsy, Kelly and Linda



Communicating home.

Session reported in their section of the 2007 Annual Report that the year had much growth in activities for all including: fellowship dinners/special theme programs, family retreats, Forever Young (fellowship group for VFPC seniors, previously aka, Presbys or Nifty-Fifties), Below-40, Adult Sunday school and choir, as well as Bell Choir. The youth groups had grown by leaps and bounds with The Wave, FROGS (Friends Relying on God's Salvation) and Sunday school classes. In the fall, VFPC kicked off the fall schedule with an overwhelming attendance to the first annual Big Sky Sunday outside service followed by a large attendance at Mandarach Park for fun, food and fellowship. VFPC was experiencing the largest growth in participation and ministry in the last 15 years.

Session recognized the need to clarify the church's membership rolls in 2007. While not an exciting activity, clarification was incredibly important. Carrying (and paying for) a significant number of individuals who were still considered active, but for various reasons, were not, diverted valuable church funds from its mission. Through Session's and staff efforts, an accurate membership count was obtained then, and periodically thereafter. PC(USA) updated its membership, and published summaries [14]. VFPC's results are in [Exhibit D](#), and [15].

In 2008, the second major youth mission trip took place as youths and their leaders travelled to Wind River, Wyoming, an Indian reservation. Jeff Mann agreed to be a chaperone. The youths worked as a team on several projects including outside renovations to a tribal member's home, interacted with the local children at a day camp with games and crafts. At night, they spent time with the local residents in this community-in-need, as they sought to understand the tribe's culture and needs. Reverend Lee continued her education at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, where she earned her doctorate in Homiletics, the art of preaching and writing sermons, in 2008.

Youth ministries flourished in 2009. The FROGS, which was our fellowship group for students in grades 4 through 8, continued to grow. FROGS welcomed new members, and met on a monthly basis in the Christian Education building. The senior youths went to Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, for their third youth mission trip. Betsy Develin recalled, "It was stressed that they not only concentrate on working but also on having conversations with those they met. Jesus was about making connections by listening to others and helping in whatever way he could. We tried to be the hands and feet of Jesus on these trips. All of us who went got more out of these times than the people we were helping. We were all touched and have lasting memories."

Of her time at The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, Pastor Lee said, "I'm particularly proud of all the young families who became engaged in the life and ministry of the church, and the way that our youth ministry flourished. My best memory was when Elder Ejvind Hansen agreed to chaperone the youth mission trip to Rutland, Vermont. Between that, and the opportunity to work with Lynne Klepacki, I would say those were my greatest joys." Also, "Betsy was one of the people that helped me to stay as long as I did."

Church members remember Rev. Lee and the events that occurred.

Betsy Develin said, I loved her as a pastor. I was the one who asked for Youth Mission Trips and she delivered them for several years. We went to Rutland, Vermont first, then to Lander, Wyoming, and to Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, up in the Pocono area. She did a great job with the kids and adults, as well on our adventures. I was so sad to see her go. After Rev. Lee left, the West Virginia and Alabama trips were led by myself, and Linda and Al Cybart.

In the 2009 worship committee report, Elder Develin talked about retaining new members. “The main goal for the upcoming year (2010) was to keep in close contact with the new members who had joined within the last several years, and let them know they were vital to us. We wanted to help them in every way possible, to make sure they knew we are here for them during this time of transition as we searched for a new Pastor. We wanted to address any and all concerns so they felt their needs were important to us. I wanted to host another luncheon at my home for the recent new members with some of the congregation, so they felt welcome and involved. This venue gave them a non-threatening avenue to discuss any questions or concerns they had.”

Both Joanne Peel and Peg Elliot remembered Rev. Lee’s monthly themed potluck dinners to foster church congregational bonding. Hymn sings were also part of this socialization.

Arlene Osborne said, “Reverend Lee was a young mother of two small children while serving here. She supported a very large Vacation Bible School, organized camping trips, and retreats for teens, pre-teens and their families. She taught people what it meant to be a Presbyterian, and to reach out to help others. Her ‘book talks’ and meetings were well received. Reverend Lee initiated the Groups of Eight. One of these social groups continued to meet, even today (in 2017). She was very caring to my daughters when one of my sons-in-law died in May 2008.”

During this time period, PC(USA) activities directly affected the responsibility of the deacons and elders of our church in at least two ways:

1. In 2008, The Mission Committee of Session reminded the congregation of its responsibility to promote an awareness of, and encourage a church response to the needs of, our local, regional and global communities. Among its many activities are The One Great Hour of Sharing, and Peacemaking offerings, which are designated for community and global mission ministries overseen by The Presbytery of Philadelphia and the Presbyterian Church USA. The Mission Committee recommended, and Session approved, that Valley Forge Presbyterian Church recommit itself to Peacemaking, a ministry of the PC(USA), by signing a Peacemaking Commitment Statement. The Mission Committee recommended, and it was approved, that as a church community we would fulfill this commitment through worship, prayer, making peace with the earth, and receiving the peacemaking offering. [AR 2008]
2. In July 2010, the General Assembly voted to propose a constitutional amendment to remove a requirement for ordination from the Book of Order section G-6.0106.b. The action was that, “Each ordaining body, the session for deacon or elder and the presbytery for minister, is now responsible to make its own interpretation of what scripture and the confessions require of ordained officers”[12]. The amendment was approved in May 2011. <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2011/5/10/presbyterian-church-us-approves-change-ordination/>

Reverend Donald “Don” R. Wassinger, Jr., Interim Pastor (2011-2013)



At age 58, Reverend Wassinger became our sixth Interim Pastor in February 2011. A graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, he had spent 30 years serving congregations in the Philadelphia Presbytery, most recently at Elkins Park Presbyterian Church, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.

2010 was a year of transition. It was a year of change and a year of hope. VFPC said goodbye to Pastor Hope in January, and wished her well, and began our search for an interim to help us move forward. Our Worship Committee reported that throughout the year we utilized a total of fifteen Supply Preachers to lead us in our services. Some were known to us; others were found through the Philadelphia Presbytery USA's list of available Supply Preachers. Most were ordained; several had finished school and were awaiting a call. VFPC also served as the neutral pulpit several times for other churches looking for future Pastors. We were grateful to each and every one of those people who helped us during this transition time. We had the opportunity to listen to many different styles of preaching and sermons. In September, Lynne Klepacki brought back the Children's Sermon as part of the services. Throughout 2010, our congregation continued to support the church and its normal activities [AR 2010].

Session further reported that the senior high youth had selected Lincoln County, West Virginia, as their 2010 (fourth) mission trip. The youth again worked as a team on several projects. They made many connections with the people whose homes they painted, and interacted with the local children at a day camp with games and crafts. At night they spent time with the local residents in this community-in-need. Those local people helped our youth understand local culture and issues. VFPC Mission also sent Bob and Barb Beck, and Zandra Maffett [to Zambia](#) with a Mission Team representing several Presbytery of Philadelphia churches. VFPC continued with traditional fundraising activities: The Flea Market, the Clothing Drive, and the Alternative Gift Market.

Despite not having a full-time pastor, the year included many activities. We reached out to the community with our second annual barbeque in August. We had Fellowship Dinners and special theme programs. Forever Young continued their adventures. The traditional young families' events, adult Bible study, and choir events occurred. The Adult Choir sang for Sunday morning services, Christmas Eve, and welcomed former singers for Rev. Jensen's memorial service. Brooke Baldwin wrote a narration creatively blending Lenten and Easter music for the choir as a Palm Sunday Cantata.

The youth groups continued to grow with The Wave, FROGS and all of the Sunday school classes. Lynne Klepacki reported that there were eight middle-school students in the Confirmation class. The students studied the Old and New Testaments, the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, baptism, spiritual gifts, and shared their faith. At the completion of their class, the students would elect to claim their faith, and become members of Valley Forge Presbyterian Church.

The congregation formed an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (IPNC) to search for an interim pastor. It was announced that Gina James, a member of First Presbyterian Church of Pottstown, would assist and advise us in this process. A job description was approved that would be posted on the Philadelphia Presbytery USA website for applicants to review in searching for a new call. The IPNC met with Gina James for the first time on March 11, 2010, to go through the entire process with the committee. She gave the members information to read and study in order to help them in their search for a candidate as VFPC Interim Pastor, and each member was assigned specific roles; she stated that it was a formal, structured process. The committee met often, listened to sermon tapes or read transcripts, and interviewed some candidates. The process worked. Reverend Donald Wassinger was announced as Interim Pastor to the congregation on December 12th; he would be starting on January 10, 2011. Betsy Develin remembered Gina James said once during that seemingly long time period, "God has His own time, but He's on time, all of the time." [AR 2010].

Session reported that 2011 was a year of growth; it was a year of change, and a year of hope. The congregation welcomed Rev. Don Wassinger to the pulpit, and were very excited that he joined them. Pastor Don brought his musical talents to VFPC, introducing contemporary music as responsive solos, hymns, and a teen-adult choir anthem. He also showed us new ways of doing things as well as helped the members to grow in VFPC's important missions. VFPC continued its normal activities with the fifth major senior high youth mission trip. The high schoolers selected Bayou La Batre, Alabama, as their 2011 trip. The youth team put faith into action. They reached out to the community to repair/renovate some homes, and interacted with the local children at a day camp with games and crafts. The baton then passed to the group, FUSION (the new 2011 high school fellowship group), as they planned their first mission trip for 2012. Session approved an adult mission trip (to Towanda, PA, described later) for 2012. The adults looked forward to those trips becoming an annual event. Lynne Klepacki reported that Communicants, Aubrey Bucha, Grace Bucha, Katelyn Klepacki and Kirsten Yatsko successfully completed the Confirmation class and were received into full Church membership on October 30th.

The church's long-desired facility improvement occurred under Pastor Don's and the Session's guidance: The Air Conditioning Campaign. It was a long road but the congregational members pulled together and made it happen. Pastor Don observed, "The congregation

accomplished an extraordinary project in 2011. You authorized the Session to investigate the installation of air conditioning for the facility. Step by step, and report by report, the work moved forward until it was time to test the financial resolve and ability of the congregation to fund this ambitious project. As a result of your extraordinary generosity, the work was fully funded and completed by mid-summer. That was totally amazing!”

Here, in an August 2011 photo, the air-conditioning is being installed in the sanctuary. Worship would now be 52 weeks a year in the Sanctuary; no need to move to the fellowship hall or chapel in the summer.



VFPC continued with traditional fundraising activities: The Flea Market, the Clothing Drive, and the Alternative Gift Market. In early February, there was the now-traditional “Souper Bowl Sunday”, that collected a “carload” of food and raised \$471 for Mission. The youth groups continued to grow by leaps and bounds with The Wave, FROGS, FUSION, and Sunday school classes. VFPC again reached out to the neighborhood with our third annual barbeque in August.

Pastor Don revived Rev. Sales’ Kerygma Bible Study in 2011. A hearty group of Bible scholars met, starting in the spring, in an endeavor to increase their understanding of the scriptures. They utilized an outstanding Bible overview course called, "Kerygma" (the Greek word for "proclamation, preaching, or message"). The study was co-ed, and met most Tuesday afternoons from 1:00pm to 2:30pm in the Fellowship Hall. The Pastor's Bible study continued in 2012, with the group working through the New Testament portion of *Kerygma: Discovering the Bible*. The course provided participants an overview of the whole of scripture, tying together events, personalities and meaning. After an extended summer break, the Bible study re-formed in late October to spend time learning key life lessons from the Sermon on the Mount. The arrival of Pastor Wassinger made it possible for the New Member/Membership Care Committee to resume formal instruction for potential new members. A "New Members" class began in December 2011 and ended in January 2012. The committee members attended the classes, and assisted the new members with their integration into the church community.

The choir took on the challenge of learning Vivaldi’s *Gloria* in Latin for Christmas with immense support from Pastor Don and a marvelous accompaniment from John Fuyume.



Zandra Maffett commented on this 2011 photo taken in our parking lot, “This was a delegation of pastors from Zambia, who came to the United States after our trip to Zambia in 2010.” Reverend Don Wassinger was showing the delegation the church and its grounds.

With the assistance of Peg Elliott, Fellowship Hour continued. It provided an opportunity to share some coffee and snacks with friends, and to catch up on the week's events. Forever Young was a group formed to provide fellowship for senior members and friends of VFPC. As usual, that group was on the go all year long. Its 2011 activities included a Valentine's Day party, Game Night, Kick-off picnic, and Pizza & Movie Night. The group even ventured offsite to Rainbow Dinner Theater, Winterthur, and Shady Maple Farm. Below is Eiko Ikeda's group photo from the Forever Young April 20th Seabrook trip, one of ten activities for the group in 2012.



“Forever Young Group” at Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center

Back: Eiko Ikeda, Al Ikeda, Bob Peel, Rev. Don Wassinger, Bob DiMartino, Ralph Duey, Royal McGeorge, Jocko Chin, Ejvind Hansen, Frank Schoendorfer, John Fuyume (Co-founder SECC)

Front: Sets Fuyume, Chickie Furushima, Joanne Peel, Betty DiMartino, Donna McGeorge, Lilly Chin, Margaret Yoshida, Joyce Schoendorfer, Aleta Duey

On Floor: Chiz Sakata, Teresa Masatani

Note: Teresa Masatani, Chickie Furushima, Margaret Yoshida were docents at SECC. John Fuyume served as docent that day as well.

VFPC members and friends of all ages got to know each other better at Sunday night "Fun, Food & Fellowship" potluck dinners. They enjoyed line dancing, a winter picnic, and "Can You Win It" themes. Those dinners were held periodically throughout the year. The Knitting Group at VFPC (also led in 2010 by Eileen McFalls) welcomed knitters and crocheters of all skill levels. The group met twice a month creating items for the Guideposts Sweater Project, CHOP'S neonatal unit, Rivers of the World, Presbyterian Children's Village, and Warm Up America.

As pastor, Rev. Don noted about the year, "There were memorable moments for which the congregation must be applauded. There was the Flea Market in the spring and the Clothing Sale in the fall (his personal firsts) that raised thousands of dollars for the mission work of the church. There was an extraordinary VBS in the summer with scads of children [about 100] filling the building for a week in August. There were exceptional cantatas performed by the choir during the Easter and Christmas seasons. An enthusiastic Bounce-Back Sunday held on the patio started the fall program year." Pastor Don remarked "Enjoyed a 'hoot of a time' with the 2011 Confirmation class and Lynne (Klepacki). Many of the congregation were gracious and cooperative, and highly talented, as you performed skits and dramas to enhance our worship experience." He further noted that, "Valley Forge Church was blessed with an outstanding staff. The ministries of Lynne Klepacki, Marty Meyer, Marilyn Knox and Bob Klepacki provided an invaluable service to the congregation. What they made look so easy to the membership took extraordinary work and countless hours of creative perspiration to accomplish." [AR 2011].

Rev. Don reported that during the year his work had been shaped by two distinct roles. The first was being pastor. The second role was moving through the interim process towards calling the congregation's next pastor.

Discussing his role of interim guidance, Rev. Wassinger wrote in 2011,

The interim task is best understood as a bridge crossing. One important goal is to get to the other side. This urgency to get to the next pastor dominates and motivates most members of the congregation. The interim pastor provides stable ministry and leadership while a congregation is engaged in the search for a new permanent pastor. The process involves a number of steps. One component of my work as interim is to keep you faithful to those steps.... The second part is to prepare the congregation for the arrival of the new pastor. It involves taking time to look at the history and personality of the church, examine the ways that VFPC does things, and how you came to do them that way.

Rev. Don also wrote about the questioning in his 2012 Interim Pastor's Report.

Some aspects of interim work appear childish. The interim period, however, is an excellent time to ask questions like, 'Why do we do things this way?', and, 'Why do all the same faces do all the heavy lifting for the congregation?' Why, why, why - I'm sure I drove a number of you nuts with that question. Still, the answers were quite revealing.

Reverend Wassinger proceeded to work with and to question the congregation about the preceding questions and prepared them for the arrival of the next pastor. [Exhibit K](#), is the

publication of the thoughts and opinions of members of The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church in 2011, under Reverend Donald Wassinger's questioning. No names were included, and the comments were interesting.

Session reported that "This year, 2012, was a year of change; it was a year of transition and a year of hope. We continued with the leadership of our interim pastor, Rev. Don Wassinger.



He provided inspiration and direction as the Pastor Nominating Committee followed the steps necessary to find a new permanent pastor. Pastor Don helped us to grow in VFPC's important missions and provided opportunities for new styles of worship."

Many 'Family Fellowship' opportunities were offered throughout the year including: The Church Picnic, Family Night at the Movies, Miniature Golf, Parents Night Out, Bowling and a trip to Hershey Park.

In July 2012, several people from our church volunteered for the flood relief "Volunteer Village" through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance at Towanda, Pennsylvania. Towanda is a borough and the county seat of Bradford County. It is located 66 miles northwest of Wilkes-Barre, on the Susquehanna River. The team members were: Betsy Develin, Aleta and Ralph Duey, Don Higgins, Zandra



Maffett, Royal McGeorge, Gwen Schreur, Michael Roberts, Mike

Simmons, and Reverend Don Wassinger. According to these members, they said that their team did a lot of scrubbing and scraping to remove flood debris. The team

was housed and ate meals at the First Presbyterian Church, 5 Court Street, Towanda, PA, and they slept on Red Cross cots.

They worked on two houses. One house belonged to a young couple with a 10-year-old daughter. The family had just closed on the house when the flooding from Hurricane Sandy displaced them. The team cut and installed drywall for the 10-year-old daughter's bedroom.



The other home owner and his wife left with only meds and the clothes on their back. The family left food and water on the top floor for the dog and



several cats. Our team tiled a shower, installed a kitchen, and cut lumber for bedrooms, among other things.



Reverend Rachel S. Stahle of Towanda First Presbyterian Church said that, “The work that was accomplished during the team’s time there touched many lives in obedience to the Lord, and they were pleased and privileged to host us.” This was just another expression of Reverend Wassinger, who was known to care for people outside of the church and for people in general.

The Director of Children and Youth Ministry reported that the 2012 Vacation Bible School theme was **Operation Overboard: Daring to Go Deep with God!** Over 80 children, throughout the week, were welcomed to the program. Bounce-Back Sunday worship was held on September 16th. Following the service, the entire congregation was invited to join in an All Church Picnic at Swedeland Park.

The 2012 Communicants, Brendan Magdamo, Renee Whalen, Kacy Wallace, and Emily Hunziker, completed Confirmation class, and were received into full Church membership on October 28th.

On December 9, 2012, there was a special meeting of the congregation to accept the recommendation from the PNC to call Reverend Blake E. Brinegar as the Installed Pastor of the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church. The congregation voted 103 to 0 to accept the recommendation. Reverend Brinegar was welcomed with a standing ovation [S: vi, pp117-118].

Pastor Don concluded about the PNC Search at VFPC.

The electricity in the Body was provided by the faithful, Spirit-reliant, diligent search of your PNC for Pastor Blake and Selena, whom God was busy calling to a new field of service beyond Houston. God is still good; Jesus is still Lord; and the Spirit is still at work at VFPC. That third rail remains important to your journey together. May our God bless you and equip you with His peace, provision, and power. Thank you for the privilege of serving VFPC and for

allowing me to work beside you for Christ Jesus in King of Prussia. In Jesus' love,
Pastor Don.

Rev. Wassinger had finished his Interim Pastor role and left VFPC on January 13, 2013.

Ejvind Hansen said, "From the start Reverend Don was active, setting up meetings to find a full-time pastor. He was friendly to all."

Reverend Don was well liked. Marlene Iannuzzelli thought Reverend Wassinger was "God in Street Clothing". She said that in 2011, he visited with Dom, her husband, two to three times a week for the 3½ months Dom was in the hospital, and then when he returned home, Marlene said, "He was my life saver. Reverend Don didn't read his sermons, they came from his heart. It felt like his message was directed (just) to you. He sang with the choir, and at times shared a song he had composed." While he was here, he made many friends. He was a composer, singer and teacher.

Joanne Peel said, "Don (Reverend Wassinger) served between Reverend Dr. Lee and Reverend Blake Brinegar. To me he was 'God's gift to our congregation'. He was a very gifted man in many ways. Don had a music background and he wrote music including hymns. He taught us many hymns which are remembered by us today. He would present 'skits' with members of our congregation having starring roles. He was always conveying a message with lots of fun. He even presented a musical which included the entire congregation."

Joanne Peel said, "Don's strength was in visitations. Not only would he make hospital visits and visits to the homebound, but also to others just to get to know them. Bob and I really got to know Don when our son died. I knew for sure then that Don was sent from God to us. Not only did he visit us before our son's funeral, but did many follow-up visits to us while we grieved. It was during those visits that Don made verses of scriptures come alive with real meaning. He knew the Bible! Don then became not only our pastor but also a valued friend. It was our privilege to have had Don preside at Bob and my 50th Wedding Celebration where we renewed our vows. What a sad day it was when Don's time spent at The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church came to an end."

Joanne Peel said, "Sadly, Don died in Florida on the day after his sixty-second birthday, on October 5, 2015. At his funeral at Elkins Park Presbyterian Church, where Don was a pastor for many years, there were 'MANY' people from The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church in attendance where Reverend Don Wassinger was also remembered for a fine singing voice and his pastoral visits."

Reverend Blake Evan Brinegar, Pastor (2013-2015)



Pastor Blake and Selena Brinegar arrived at The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church on March 17, 2013, from Westminster Presbyterian Church in Houston, Texas. He said, "I came north to live closer to my brother, a Medieval Literature professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, and also to live where there were seasons." He was our sixth pastor. Arlene Osborne remembered that his mother was also a minister, and that she participated in his Installation Service. Immediately after his installation, he had an open-air service on the church patio.

Session noted that 2013 was a year of new beginnings with the installation of our newly called pastor, Rev. Blake Brinegar. Pastor Blake brought new vitality, new ideas, and a firm theological foundation to us as we sought to grow in VFPC's mission to ourselves, our neighbors, and the world [AR 2013].

Pastor Blake wrote in his section of the annual report, that he had enjoyed getting to know the congregation of Valley Forge, and to have walked with us that year. He continued by noting he was looking at trying new things, but not making large or [wholesale changes](#). He would look at improving what we were doing well, and evaluate those things which may not be working as well as they once did. He looked at what we could do about reaching younger families at Valley Forge, and ways we could help the families of Valley Forge grow in their faith journeys, through study, retreats, and fellowship. Noting about the future, he said he planned to [build on the heritage](#) of Valley Forge, but at the same time, not let our heritage keep from holding us back, limiting our dreams, our hopes, and our goals. Pastor Blake put forth that positive view, but also cautioned not to yearn for the days '[of old](#)'. He said he had heard many [stories](#) of how things used to be, of how [extra chairs](#) had to be set out for some services, of how much money used to be raised with certain fundraisers, etc. The world had changed, the role of the church in the lives of many had changed, and things were not what they once were. He further remarked, "We could allow this to depress us and rob us of our hope, or we could choose to be a hopeful people, trusting in God, and living to the glory of God, with what we did have, and reach out to others who had needs" [AR 2013].

The Mission Committee reported that fifteen distinct mission partners shared benevolence of nearly \$27,000, including One Great Hour of Sharing, Hurricane Sandy, and Haiti reliefs in 2013. Overall, we applauded that 10.5% of our actual income was reflected in those disbursements.

The year 2013 was again filled with lots of church activities including: Fellowship dinners with special theme programs, Forever Young events, young families' events, adult Bible study,

music from the Choir, special music guests, and performances by the Bell Choir. The youth groups continued to grow with the Wave, FROGS and Sunday schools. VFPC again reached out to the neighborhood with the annual barbeque in August, and the newly created Chili Cook-Off in January.

The youth ministries prospered too. The programs for children and youth were directed by Lynne Klepacki. Vacation Bible School was held in the evenings in August, and had eighty children participating in five different stations each night. Of particular note was the large Vacation Bible School enrollment produced through persistent and frequent phone calls from Lynne to the parents.

Elder Donna Newell, of Christian Education, reported the Children's Sunday school used the FaithWeaver® curriculum. The fall lessons concentrated on the Old Testament; the winter and spring lessons were from the New Testament. There had been an increase in children attending Sunday school in 2013. The biggest increase was in the pre-school to second grade group. Donna noted that the Adult Sunday school restarted in September, with Pastor Blake leading the discussions. Bible discussions were held for men and women during the week. They also used the FaithWeaver® curriculum. That way, the parents, and their children, could discuss at home the same lesson they both had studied in their Sunday school classes. There were four teenagers who had participated in a two-year communicant class; they became members in May 2013.

Pastor Blake reported, for librarian Shirley Richmond, that the Church Library was still operating with the aid of many helpers and friends. Typically, newly featured books were found in the bookcase outside the Church Office. Linda Heuser, Lynne Klepacki, and others helped us stay in order. We also had many reviewers of the books, who helped to let the congregation know what books we did have, what they were about, and some of the nuggets of wisdom they offered. The main library was still in the Christian Education Building, where the widest variety of books could be found: Christian non-fiction and fiction, reference books, children's materials, and books dealing with a variety of life circumstances (personal relationships, aging, retirement), music, and arts & crafts.

Valley Forge Presbyterian's booth at U.M. Twp. 300th Anniversary (2013)
L-R Alan and Gwen Schreur, Marlene Iannuzzelli, Reverend Brinegar, and Dominick Iannuzzelli.



Reverend Brinegar at a Pet Blessing
September 29, 2013

Bounce-Back Sunday and All Church Picnic on the Quad, September 8, 2013



Session noted, in the 2014 Annual Report, that Pastor Blake continued with vitality, new ideas, and a firm theological foundation. In his section of the report, Pastor Blake summarized the year as follows: This year we welcomed a new music director, Art Henry, as the [Minister of Music](#). Art enhanced the music program greatly. The worship's time was changed to accommodate a new educational program, "The Story", which was also being studied by the younger members of the church. All worked on increasing biblical literacy in the congregation, and worked on ways to incorporate scripture into our daily lives. There were weekly services, along with some special services at the church. There was a Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, and as a result of that event, VFPC began having breakfast on the fifth Sunday of each month.

Family fellowship opportunities were offered throughout the year including: Family Night at the Movies, monthly themed fellowship dinners, annual Easter Egg Hunt, miniature golf, Parents Night Out, bowling, fishing fellowship and a trip to Hershey Park. The community barbeque was made a free event, and members of the community were invited to participate.



2014 Fishing Fellowship

VFPC also partnered with the Upper Merion Area School District to help some families have a nice meal during Thanksgiving. VFPC hosted the community-wide service at Thanksgiving, with clergy from some of the local churches participating.



Halloween 2014 was fun too.



The Children and Youth Ministry director, Lynne Klepacki, reported that a new model for the 2014 Sunday school hour had been introduced – “Hands on Worship Children's Church”. The children experienced encounters with God every week through music, Bible adventures, and prayer. The music was led by Lauren Mann.

Vacation Bible School was held for 5 evenings in August, with sixty-five children and thirty-five volunteers. The guides led their groups to story time, music, crafts, discovery time, games and a snack each night.

Bounce-Back Sunday was held on September 8th. Following the worship service, the entire congregation joined together for an All Church Picnic in Fellowship Hall. An afternoon of fun, food and fellowship was shared.

On December 21st, the community-wide live Nativity event was held. The children were the angels and shepherds, and Quiver Farms supplied the animals. The story, about the birth of Jesus, was told three different times during the two hours that the Nativity was presented. The children enjoyed participating in the Christmas story with an alpaca, sheep, birds, bunnies, ducks and a high-spirited donkey. The Deacons supplied delicious hot chocolate and cookies for all.

Session remarked that the church's normal activities, for the year 2015, started with the Chili Cook-Off in January, which was attended by many. This event was always a great time of fun and fellowship for our members as well as those in the community. Winners, in numerous categories, were announced after all had tasted the chilies and voted for them. Our Lenten

series on Wednesdays were fairly well attended in February and March. We closed for services one Sunday in February for the safety of the congregation, due to the terrible weather. On May 2nd, we held the Flea Market for those who looked forward to finding something for themselves and their families in the UM community. It was nice to worship in the now air-conditioned sanctuary throughout the summer with so many of us being kept cool from the hot summer days.

2015 Vacation Bible School



Vacation Bible School was held during the first full week of August, with 60 children and 27 adult and teenage volunteers. The annual Bounce-Back service and picnic on the Quad was held in September [AR 2015].

Building on the previous Zambia mission association, Reverend Brinegar made a service trip to Zambia and helped to set up a school; he later shared the slides of his trip with the congregation. In the fall of 2015, Pastor Blake was away for three weeks in September and October working on a grant with the other grantees. He attended a religious conference in Europe, visited Taizé, France, and Iona Island in Scotland. When he returned, he shared his moving experiences with the congregation.

2015 Halloween Party with Costumes for Young and Old



Summing up the year, “The annual report for 2015 did not show a particularly prosperous year in the life of VFPC” reported Clerk of Session pro tempore. “We saw fewer members filling the pews in church for worship, our activities held were not as frequent for ourselves and the community. Session tried to rally with Pastor Blake, but it didn’t seem to catch on with many in the congregation” [AR 2015]. The year ended with a live Nativity in the front of the church on a beautiful, December afternoon and evening. Those who came were blessed with hearing of the Christmas story, as well as being able to see and pet the animal's, one-on-one. We advertised our single Christmas Eve, family-oriented, candlelight service held at

7:30 p.m. on December 24th. It was open for any and all to attend. At the service, there were many activities for children to gather and enjoy, and Pastor Blake offered several activities for anyone to attend, if interested.

Reverend Brinegar's last sermon at The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church was on December 27, 2015. He was granted medical leave, and his relationship was dissolved in March 2016 [S: vi, p225].

Some additional remarks about Rev. Brinegar's tenure.

Pastor Blake said, "I enjoyed my time in King of Prussia and made many friends there." He continued, "Upon arriving, my focus was to try to connect with the community, and to increase the focus on mission." Pastor Blake was proud of holding sunrise services on Easter, and holding fifth Sunday breakfasts at the church. Reverend Brinegar enjoyed assisting in the live Nativity, which was our annual gift to the community, leading up to the celebration of Christmas. During Lent, Reverend Brinegar held Wednesday night Soup and Bread services for our congregation in the Fellowship Hall. He also initiated a "Volunteer Interest Survey" to help match volunteers by their passions, interests and abilities.

Often, Reverend Brinegar could be seen visiting folks in their homes, hospital rooms and nursing homes to bring them cheer and solace. "Pastor Blake was here only a couple of weeks, and he visited me (Arlene Osborne) when I was in for my left knee surgery; he met my whole family." Rev. Brinegar also visited Gail Moore quite often at Manor Care while she recuperated from surgery for over three weeks in 2014.

Pastor Brinegar was also concerned about the congregation's reaction to the 2014 General Assembly PC(USA) decision that approved a change in the wording of its constitution about defining marriage [\[12\]](#), and he offered these thoughts:

As we move into 2015, there are some members, who are not happy with some of the actions of the General Assembly and Presbytery. We can allow these actions to misguide us from who we have been and are, or we can choose to still be a great church in King of Prussia. We will have some challenges, as we find ourselves being the body of Christ in the midst of changing times. One of the challenges is financial, another is how to remain relevant to a world which has many activities to select from on a Sunday morning. The guiding question becomes, how does Valley Forge become a priority in the lives of members and visitors from the community? The answer to this question may require an adaptive answer, but it is definitely a question worthy of discerning. The Bible is chock full of stories of people who felt they were victims of their circumstances, but those who remained faithful found the

joy of the Lord. There is still a lot of work to be done in our broken world. Our world is in need of the Light of the world, which casts out the darkness of our world [AR 2015].

As noted in the Personnel Committee Report, 2016 was somewhat a challenge for church staff because of Pastor Blake's resignation at the beginning of the year. It left the church with no head of staff for most of the year. In addition, the church's Administrative Assistant position became vacant early in the year. In the latter case, Lynne Klepacki was able and willing to take on the administrative position itself, in addition to her other responsibilities.

The Worship Committee found out about Pastor Blake's leaving at the end of December 2015, and planned accordingly for 2016. The committee ensured that the pulpit was filled each Sunday, and that pastoral care was available. Pulpit Supply Pastors provided a consistent presence for those attending worship at VFPC, as well as ministering to our local community. Reverend James Lappen and Reverend LoisAnn Furgess-Oler primarily filled those needs. Worship did rely on seven others from the Pulpit Supply list of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. For the Lenten times, we had an Ash Wednesday service and a Maundy Thursday service, where Reverend James Lappen spoke. Art Henry and the choir provided an Easter cantata, "A Living Hope", on March 13th. James Lappen was also the Pastor for Easter services, where our smaller cross and fresh, white lilies graced the sanctuary.

The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church and the Session began another journey, again seeking a new pastor, at the beginning of 2016. The Presbytery of Philadelphia's concern for our church was evident. They assigned an able moderator to VFPC, the Rev. Lori Kosinski. They also recommended that VFPC seek a Designated Pastor, rather than enter into the normal search process again. Throughout all of this, the Session worked to maintain and support the congregation. Special Congregational meetings were held in May, to approve the Designated Pastor search concept, and the nominating committee for the search.

Normal church activities were maintained throughout 2016 due to the diligence and dedication of the many service committees and the congregation. Property improvements were made, and the elevator issues were remedied. The cushions in the sanctuary were all repaired. Miscellaneous drainage and electrical problems were taken care of, along with substantial plant and equipment problems. Fifth Sunday breakfasts continued, when the congregation shared a hot morning meal served in Fellowship Hall before worship service. The meal was again prepared by of many of our members including Betsy Develin, Bob Klepacki and Donna Newell. Mission activities continued with The Souper Bowl project that raised \$210, and the Flea Market that raised \$1,575. Mission supported its eight traditional partners, as well as the Charles and Melissa Johnson Zambia mission.

Melissa and Charles Johnson had been invited by PC(USA) for a 4-year mission supporting the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian's Zambia Synod to expand its holistic ministry of community development, food security and improved health. Charles served as a Development Specialist, and Melissa served as a Health Education Program Facilitator. As Mission Co-Workers of the PC(USA), our church began supporting them as one of our mission partners. We held a luncheon for them in February, and provided \$1,000 from the Local Missions fund.



<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/charles-and-melissa-johnson/>

Vacation Bible School was held during the first full week of August, with 50 children and 25 adult and teenage volunteers. On September 11, 2016, the 15th anniversary of 9/11 was remembered (on or just after Sept 11, 2001, there had been an evening prayer service that helped members deal with the tragedy). The Bounce-Back Sunday was moved one week later so we could have that memorial service. The 9/11 memorial was given by Reverend LoisAnn, entitled "Remembering", with a candle lighting to honor and remember those who had passed, and those who had assisted on that dark day. Reverend Bill Thompson spoke at our Bounce-Back the next week, and we had our picnic in the fellowship hall after the worship.

In October, when the pastor search was completed, the congregation called Rev. Timothy Dooner to be the Designated Pastor for Valley Forge Presbyterian Church.



Neighborhood Meals on Wheels completed its 42nd year of delivering low-cost meals to homebound community residents. The organization thanked Valley Forge Presbyterian Church for providing office space for the day-to-day operations, a meeting space for board meetings, and for those members and friends of VFPC who served on the board and as volunteer drivers.

The year's activities ended with the live Nativity presented on December 23rd, with the Quiver Farms animals. The children of Valley Forge were again the angels and shepherds.

Our church and staff had worked diligently throughout the year, and carried on the work of the church.

Reverend Timothy “Tim” Michael Dooner, Pastor (2016 – Current)



Reverend Dooner arrived at The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church as our Designated Pastor in November 2016. He earned his M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister in 2008, and is currently working toward his D.Min. in Missional Leadership at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary [S: vi, p261A]. He and his wife, Blair, and their three young daughters Margaret, Emmaline, and Rosetta, took up residence in the Sweetbriar development in Upper Merion. Prior to becoming our pastor, Reverend Dooner was Pastor of the Faith Presbyterian Church in Emmaus, PA, and Associate Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Malvern, PA. Reverend Dooner also writes a [blog](https://timdooner.wordpress.com/), *Reflecting, Rethinking, and Redefining: Imperfect Thoughts by an Imperfect Pastor*.

“2017 was the first full year of Pastor Tim's leadership at Valley Forge Presbyterian Church. As a Session, we were led to consider anew, our thoughts and hopes for the church's mission here in King of Prussia. The results of some of those discussions have become evident to the congregation: reconfiguration of parts of the office wing to provide a space for Sunday school to keep our children closer to the sanctuary; and opening up the narthex to provide a more inviting space, and improve the hospitality to those who walked through our doors” [AR 2017].



The Session also committed to support the Presbytery of Philadelphia's 300th Anniversary celebration; the church and congregation responded by raising over \$3,800 for the 8 mission projects identified by the Presbytery. Pastor Tim and several members of the congregation participated in the celebratory worship service attended by close to 2,000 fellow Presbyterians across our Presbytery [AR 2017].

The Session worked to husband and grow the church's resources in several ways to ensure its future. Recognizing trends on membership [\[13\]](#), the Session again clarified the active membership roll, since the church only pays per capita on active members; this positively affected (reduced) our 2018 budget. The Session approved the establishment of a separately managed endowment fund, entitled the “Future Fund”; a validation of Sessions' hope for the future of the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, and its mission here in King of Prussia. In December 2017, Session also established the “Matthew 25 Fund” [S: vi, p292], an endowment fund for new, near-term, mission endeavors.

Our church family grew in 2017. Betsy Develin wrote that, “As the Worship Committee, we were encouraged by the recent baptism of Colin Maloney and welcomed new members Sam Boccella, Kate, Jack, and Mae Deeney, Blair, Maggie, Emmie, and Etta Dooner, Kelly and Abbey Hess, Laura and Colin Maloney, and Kim, Kevin, and Karalyn Mengel. We looked forward to forging meaningful relationships with everyone in the spirit of Jesus who taught us all things!” The Director of Discipleship, Lynne Klepacki, reported a successful communicant, Joshua Gonsalves, joined the church.

The church became even more children-friendly. The “Children’s Corner”, located in the front of the Sanctuary, was created to be more welcoming of children. Well-liked by the children, it was stocked with coloring books, mazes, and items that reflected the week's worship theme. “Room 4:16” was created from the former office area for Sunday school for children up to third grade. Fourth through eighth grades met in the pastor's office twice a month. Following the “Children's Message”, given since 2008 by Lynne during worship, the children went to Room 4:16 for their Sunday school program. The last Sunday of each month was designated as "Children in Worship" Sunday when children were encouraged to participate in the service as greeters and ushers, and to share their many musical gifts with the church family. While the Children's Sunday school attendance increased in 2016, the pastor noted a struggle to find new educational rhythms and patterns with high schoolers, young adults, and adults, and therefore needed to look for new ways going forward.

Traditional activities continued. Fifth Sunday breakfasts were enjoyed during the early part of 2017. In the summer, forty-five children attended our VBS program. Bounce-Back-Sunday



was held in mid-September when the congregation enjoyed a relaxed morning of informal worship. The picnic followed the service with a delightful afternoon of fun, games, a Moon Bounce, good food and fellowship. Our church and social activities continued with Girls Night Out (its seventh consecutive year of monthly meetings), the Knitting Group, an annual Chili Cook-Off, Easter egg hunt, Family Bowling, Family Night at the Movies, Lancaster Theater Group with Bob Peel, Bible study with Ejvind Hansen, a Flea Market, and more. The VFPC congregation continued to support many local endeavors: the live Nativity at Christmastime; a Christian book study; the traditional Souper Bowl of Caring; the Deacons and Mission

Committees supported Upper Merion Emergency Aid's annual school supplies drive; and, as always, the One Great Hour of Sharing.

The Mission Committee fulfilled its stated purpose and goals to serve, empower, feed and share God's love [AR 2017]. Typically, VFPC designated about five percent of its yearly budget to Mission Outreach. In 2017, \$21,919 was disbursed for benevolence to more than twenty organizations in our local community, and nationally through our \$10,000 denominational gift. In cooperation with PC(USA), our outreach continued internationally. Mission supported Co-Mission Workers Melissa and Charles Johnson in Zambia, our partnership with Garden Presbyterian Church in Zambia, and Church World Services. The Johnsons joined our church members at a reception on July 25, 2017, where we learned about their enthusiasm for two-hour church worship services with hymns, and their deep sense of family life. They described their mission work to help the community develop an agricultural income generating activity—farming for profit—and teaching a course in self-sustaining agriculture to help the students of the college to feed their families and the community. In their presentation the Johnsons showed us the 'by-hand-and-foot' planting techniques used by that local population https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/johnson_charles_melissa.pdf.

Mission continued to support the Interfaith Food Pantry, Laurel House, Norristown Ministries' Hospitality Center, Neighborhood Meals on Wheels, theVillage®, Upper Merion Emergency Aid [S: vi, pp302-304], and West Kensington Ministries [S: vi, p315]. Royal McGeorge led the semi-annual American Red Cross blood drives, since Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico were particularly devastated by hurricanes. In October, we provided a "match incentive" to the congregation's giving. They responded with many checks directed to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) to enable immediate response to those impacted.

The Deacons continued their traditional role to tend to any needs a church member might have. They also assisted in serving communion. Some of their other activities included: "We Care" packages (a deacon tradition) sent in the spring to college students and military away from home. Christmas Wish Tree, where members of the congregation purchased a requested item or made a monetary donation for individuals on the Upper Merion Emergency Aid list, continued. New Eyes for the Needy— a collection and mailing of used eyeglasses. Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child— where shoe boxes were filled with small items collected and shipped to children around the world in the month of November.

TheVillage® activities included continuing the December Cookie Sampler Sunday to provide cookies for theVillage® parties, collecting gift cards, and hosting a Children's Shower in the spring to collect items for theVillage® clients. The Deacons have relied on sponsored programs to support the Deacons Fund, and their activities. Wawa™ discount hoagie cards were sold on the second Sunday of each month as a service to members, and to raise funds for the Deacons. They added a new fund-raising program in 2017, selling Brooke Baldwin's handmade cards.



The VFPC Property Committee teamed with other committees and volunteers in 2017. The narthex renovation was taken on by the New Member and Worship Committees. Vegetable gardens were planted by the Feed the Hungry Committee. A strong workday by many in the spring refurbished the basketball courts in the parking lot. Rock gardens were planted along the repaired concrete steps. Even our kids joined in planting flowers on workdays. The elevator issue that had us “stuck” for so long was solved; and the roof over the pastor's office was repaired. VFPC received a grant from the Philadelphia Presbytery’s Covenant Fund Program to develop and implement an exploratory “House Church”. The Chapel was subsequently repurposed to become the House Church, but has not yet come to fruition [S: vi, p283].

Grace Notes, a children's choir, was formed in 2018. They sang for two occasions during the worship services. During the year, the children also made ornaments for the church’s Christmas tree. Vacation Bible School for 65 children was held for 5 evenings in August, along with adult and teenage volunteers. A live Nativity on the patio in front of the church had been planned for Friday, December 22. Since the weather was a rainout, the animals were not present. The nativity was moved into the sanctuary where the children, dressed as the angels and shepherds, enjoyed crafts and shared the story about the birth of Jesus. The Deacons supplied cookies and hot chocolate that were enjoyed by all.

For 2018, the Session approved two more construction projects going forward – the addition of a handicap bathroom near the office, and the total renovation of the kitchen – to improve the level of hospitality that our church offered its members and visitors. The narthex face-lift was completed, as was the additional bathroom. The children’s Sunday school returned to the Christian Education building, its traditional location, since Room 4:16 had been appropriated for the new, handicapped-accessible bathroom. The residual room space was repurposed for the choir’s use.

The church's biggest 2018 undertaking was to set up facilities to accommodate SHARE and the Upper Merion Area Community Cupboard (UMACC). The Share Food Program is a nonprofit organization serving a regional network of community organizations engaged in food distribution, education, and advocacy. Pennsylvania's SHARE Food Program for all of Montgomery County is now headquartered in our Christian Education building [S: vi, pp302-304, p310]. Arlene Osborne said, "Pastor Tim's focus is on community and the neighborhood."



UMACC is a community response to those who are hungry or food insufficient. VFPC's kitchen became the host site of the UMACC, a significant commitment made by the Session and our church to serve



people in our township who were food insufficient. The long-awaited kitchen remodeling, in conjunction with the UMACC decision, came to fruition to accommodate UMACC, SHARE, and the activities of our church [S: vi, pp304-315]. VFPC also extended our long involvement with Upper Merion Emergency Aid (UMEA), a long-standing volunteer organization which has served our community in a number of ways (food, clothing, etc.). UMEA is also involved with UMACC and used one room in our CE building for their program supplies.

Many of the functions formerly performed by the Board of Deacons were transferred to the Mission Committee in 2018. Following their belief that God has called us to live out our faith by serving and sharing his love locally, nationally and globally, Mission continued local support with: One Great Hour of Sharing; a Flea Market; the Children's Shower and Cookie Sampler Sunday for theVillage®; Upper Merlon Emergency Aid's Annual School Supplies and Sneaker Drive and Giving Tree; Blessing Jugs; Blessing Bags for Norristown Ministers' Hospitality Center; Annual Blood Drives in August and December; and the Annual Christmas Nativity, which is our gift to the community.

In the spring we created a tribute cookbook, Cooking Together in Communion, in honor of Lou Ann Lewis who had been an active member of our church for over 50 years, and head dietician at the Upper Merlon Area School District for over 30 years. Some profits from the sale of this cookbook were donated to Laurel House. Pop Top Collection, in support of the Philadelphia Ronald MacDonald House, was added. We also donated 50 beanie hats to Norristown Ministries' Hospitality Center. Deacon Barbara Roback chaired Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child; 59 boxes were donated. Nationally, Mission provided 26 Gifts of the Heart Hygiene Kits for the PDA. The remainder of the profits from the cookbook sale became the basis of a congregational match in support of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's (PDA) U.S. Wildfires Relief effort in support of three presbyteries in California.

Gifts of the Heart Hygiene Kits are small packages of supplies assembled by VFPC volunteers and shipped to families and communities in need around the world, especially in the aftermath of disasters. The delivered kit included: a hand towel, face cloth, bar of soap, tooth brush, toothpaste, comb, nail clippers with file, and band aids.



Globally, we continued to support our two Mission Co-workers (Charles and Melissa Johnson) in Zambia, and partnered with the Garden Presbyterian Church in Zambia.

Our congregants donated human capital in service to the community as well. We hosted the *Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia* at VFPC in May 2018, and in October, hosted a meeting on *Disaster Assistance Response Training* sponsored jointly by the Synod of the Trinity, and the Presbytery of Philadelphia [S: vi, p315]. The service committees of the church were also very active, reaching out to the larger community as well as serving the needs of our members. The Congregational Life Committee worked to improve timely communications with the membership through the website, Facebook, and the weekly *E-Blast*. *Connections* became a reflective and informative quarterly publication, allowing the other media to effectively disseminate the more time-sensitive information. The Deacons continued their traditional role to tend to any needs a church member might have. Besides their regular activities, the Deacons assisted church families with financial needs. In November, a special offering was needed to replenish their fund since the Deacons were never funded in the church budget.

The Session approved forming the Long-Term Vision Working Group late in the year. This group (Pastor Tim, Betsy Develin, Mike Henry, Lynne Klepacki, Kathy Knoebel, Zandra Maffett, and Eileen Wilkie) was commissioned during the November 18th worship, and will meet regularly in 2019 to look at all aspects of our life here at Valley Forge. The stated goal is “To develop a realistic plan to keep our congregation serving our Lord in our community in the years ahead”.

Quoting from the Pastor’s report about our future,

Our committees will continue to implement the guidance of God within the various layers of our work and witness. The Deacons will continue to nurture connectedness and care among their flocks. The Elders will continue to discern God's guidance upon our work and witness, and to hold all of the layers of our life together in concert. The Long-Term Vision Worship Group will emerge from their season of discernment with a clearer vision of a sustainable and thriving future, which will instill within us all even more hope! We have grown together in 2018. With God's help, we will continue to grow together in 2019 into a people who are even more faithful, hopeful, fruitful,

and blessed. How might you be compelled to invest of your time and talents in our work and witness in 2019? The body gets stronger as more and more of its members work together in concert. As I give thanks for all of God's gifts in 2018, and look forward to even more gifts in 2019, I share the same expectant hope that Paul experienced as he considered the congregations in Rome: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit [AR 2018].

At the Congregational Meeting on October 14th, Reverend Dooner's Designated Pastor status was voted on, and changed to Installed Pastor [S: vi, p318].

CLOSING

Upper Merion Township was a rural area. However, by 1949, housing developments were being built along DeKalb Pike. Upper Merion attracted many businesses, services industries, and workers. The Township motto proclaiming this fact, "A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE, WORK & WORSHIP" was posted on Gulph Mills or from came. This once quiet explosion. Housing the former farmland, and churches. In anticipation of Presbytery of Philadelphia development in the Candlebrook section of King of Prussia; thus, The Valley Forge Church was founded. We noted that throughout our ministerial eras, our congregation members have always come and gone with their jobs, and as their life experiences and values changed. Today, as Reverend Mike Dunfee would have said, "We listen actively for God's insight." We are now in the process of again revitalizing our church life, and reinventing our mission outreach. We serve our congregation through worship, youth programs and ministries, and family activities. We host the Upper Merion Area Community Cupboard and SHARE. We partner with Interfaith Food Pantry, Laurel House, Neighborhood Meals on Wheels, Norristown Ministries' Hospitality Center, theVillage®, West Kensington Ministries, and Upper Merion Emergency Aid.



signs when entering from Bridgeport. More people township had a population developments sprung up on there was a need for new this expansion, the UPNA began a new church

We conclude this short history of the first 65 years of the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church by remembering that Jesus is always with us. Our job is to remain watchful. With God's blessings and guidance, we strive to remain a mission-centric church, serving our various communities, and will continue to do so going forward.

Valley Forge Presbyterian Church

Your Tomorrow Is Here Today



House Church



New Kitchen



Narthex



2018 Flea Market

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6: 10

REFERENCES

All references to Session Minutes throughout this history are the multiple volumes (currently 6) available through the VFPC office. Notation is by Session: Volume and Page; i.e., [S: i to vi, page #]. Church Annual Reports are issued each year to the congregation. Notation is [AR year]. Contact us via <https://www.valleyforgepres.org/about-us/>.

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#Denominational Rolls and Statistics
15. <https://church-trends.pcusa.org/church/9604/overview/5/> *Home-Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, Five Years at A Glance: OVERVIEW*

*These articles were obtained from The Historical Society of Montgomery County, 1654 DeKalb Street, Norristown, PA 19401 Tel: 610-272-0297. Their website is <http://hsmcpa.org/index.php/visit/historical-society-headquarters>

Reverend Phillippe's correspondence regarding his book:

Note: email addresses have been redacted for privacy

Subject: Re: Valley forge Presbyterian Church
From: WILLIAM Phillippe
Date: 7/26/2018, 2:48 PM
To: gailmm

Hi: and thanks for the email. Great to know that you are a Ruling Elder at the Valley Forge Church. You may want to get a copy of my book, "The Pastor's Diary: How a Conventional Conservative Became a Theological Liberal" that I published last year. There is a good section on when and how I started the church in King of Prussia.

I will be happy to write something for you around your questions but it will be a few weeks until I do. I'm busy here in our retirement association, Princeton Windrows," where I am a trustee and also teaching in our local congregation the Nassau Street Presbyterian Church. I'm also writing another book! Just had my 88th birthday so I am recovering from that!

Again, I'm pleased that someone is working on a history of the congregation. It still remains my fondest memory of all my ministry. More later. Bill

> On July 25, 2018 at 5:11 PM gailmm wrote:

>

> Hello Pastor Phillippe,

> I found your e-mail from the Office of General Assembly. I am an Elder at Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, 191 Town Center Road, King of Prussia, PA 19406, and I am gathering notes to create the history of our church from 1955 thru 2018. Since you were the founding pastor, would you be willing to write a few lines about your time here, both the challenges and successes?

>

> I have attached a copy of our file for you and would welcome your input. How were you chosen to start up this mission church? What did you take particular pride in, besides starting the church? What was your hardest challenge? What brought you the most joy? What was it like for you and your family to arrive in King of Prussia as so many housing developments were springing up?

>

> We hope to have this project wrapped up by the end of the year or early in 2019. I would welcome any information you would be willing to share with us. I foresee one copy of a book going into our church library, one to the Presbyterian Historical Society and one to the Historical Society of Montgomery County (PA). We plan on making DVDs available to anyone who might be interested in having a copy.

>

> Regards,

> Gail Moore

> 7.25.2018

EXHIBITS

A: ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION VALLEY FORGE CHURCH

(This is a transcription from a copy of the original document)

Articles Of Incorporation Of The Valley Forge Church No. 9, June Term, 1956 24 M – 289	IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA IN THE MATTER OF : 9 JUNE TERM, 1956 THE VALLEY FORGE CHURCH : MISC. DOCKET NO. 24 PAGE 289
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ARTICLE OF INCORPORATION

TO THE HONORABLE, THE JUDGES OF THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS:

The undersigned subscribers, citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, being desirous of becoming incorporated according to the provisions of the Act of Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, entitled "An Act Relating to Non-Profit Corporations" approved the 5th day of May 1933, as amended, do hereby declare and set forth and certify the following are the purposes, objectives, articles and conditions of their said association for and upon which they desire to be incorporated.

1. The name of the proposed corporation shall be THE VALLEY FORGE CHURCH.
2. The location and post office address of the initial registered office of the proposed corporation shall be Prince Frederick and Town Center Road, Bridgeport, R. D., Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.
3. The purposes for which the Corporation is formed are:
To support worship of Almighty God and instruct in the Christian religion, according to the Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.
4. The proposed Corporation does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit, incidental or otherwise, to its members.
5. The term for which the Corporation is to exist is to be perpetual.
6. The names, places of residence and post office address of the incorporators are as follows:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>P.O. ADDRESS</u>
William R. Phillippe Pastor	89 Prince Frederick Street	Bridgeport, PA
Robert R. Klein	7 East Crossfield Road	Bridgeport, PA
Horace F. Bowers	27 Cinnamon Hill Road	Bridgeport, PA
Anne S. Eckman	3 Country Lane	Bridgeport, PA
Ernest T. Blidan	83 Prince Frederick Street	Bridgeport, PA

7. The names and addresses of the persons who are to act as Officers and Directors of the Corporation until the election of their successors are as follows:

OFFICERS:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>P.O. ADDRESS</u>
Robert R. Klein	7 East Crossfield Road	Bridgeport, PA
Horace F. Bowers	27 Cinnamon Hill Road	Bridgeport, PA
Anne S. Eckman	3 Country Lane	Bridgeport, PA
Ernest T. Blidan	83 Prince Frederick Street	Bridgeport, PA

DIRECTORS:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>P.O. ADDRESS</u>
Ernest T. Blidan	83 Prince Frederick Street	Bridgeport, PA
Horace F. Bowers	27 Cinnamon Hill Road	Bridgeport, PA
Samuel L. Britton	6 Flintlock Road	Bridgeport, PA
Frank L. Haswell	63 Hillview Road	Bridgeport, PA
H. Woodward Johnson, Jr.	1 Patriot Road	Bridgeport, PA
Robert T. Jordan	31 Prince Frederick Street	Bridgeport, PA
Nelson R. Kehl	13 Musket Road	Bridgeport, PA
Robert P. Manning	12 Firethorn Road	Bridgeport, PA
William S. Neff	5 Independence Road	Bridgeport, PA
Carlton F. Small	9 Hawthorne Road	Bridgeport, PA

8. The proposed corporation is to be organized upon a non-stock basis.

9. The proposed corporation will start its corporate functions with the following assets: Cash - \$1,000.00.

10. The proposed corporation shall have power to receive, hold and convey real and personal property, and to receive and distribute gifts of property of all kinds.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our respective hands and seals this 8th day of June, 1956.

William R. Phillippe, Pastor	{Seal}
Robert H. Klein	{Seal}
Horace F. Bowers	{Seal}
Anne S. Eckman	{Seal}
Ernest T. Blidan	{Seal}

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA :

SS

COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY :

WILLIAM R. PHILLIPPE, ROBERT H. KLEIN, AND HORACE F. BOWERS, being duly sworn according to law, depose and say that they are three of the subscribers of the above and foregoing Articles of Incorporation, and, in due form of law, acknowledge the same to be their act and deed, and the act and deed of their associates above named, according to the Act of Assembly in such case made and provided, and that they and each of them have executed the foregoing for the purposes therein contained and desire that the same be recorded on such.

Sworn to and subscribed
before me this 9th day
Of June 1956.

William E. Wills (N.P.)
Notary Public (Seal)
Upper Merion Twp., Montg. County, PA
My Commission Expires Jan 27, 1959

William R. Phillippe
Robert R. Klein
Horace F. Bowers

B: BYLAWS

(This is a transcription from a copy of the original document)

BYLAWS OF THE VALLEY FORGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

Updated and Approved November 11, 2012

ARTICLE I – NAME AND CORPORATE IDENTIFICATION

The name of the organization shall be The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church located in King of Prussia, Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, as specified by its incorporation papers filed with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is hereinafter referred to as the “Church”.

ARTICLE II – OBJECT, ALLEGIANCE AND POWERS

The Church is organized and incorporated for the purpose of conducting the usual ecclesiastical and corporate affairs of a local Church in accordance with, and in obedience to, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The corporate powers of the Church, to be exercised in and by its corporate name, shall be all the powers of a corporation under the general corporation laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including the right to acquire (by purchase, gift, bequest or devise), hold, sell, lease, convey, mortgage or otherwise encumber real and personal property, within the limitations prescribed by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

ARTICLE III – MEETINGS

Section 1 – Annual

Unless otherwise ordered by the Session for a cause, there will be two annual meetings of the congregation of the Church each year. These meetings will be held in the building of the Church; one on an announced Sunday in January and one on an announced Sunday in May. At the meeting in January, the congregation shall be competent, without special provision in the notice, to transact any business of the Church (whether corporate or ecclesiastical) properly coming before it, such as hearing reports of the Pastor, the Session including plans for the coming year, financial reports of the preceding year, and the budget for the coming year, the Board of Deacons, and other organizations, and staff members of the Church. The January meeting will also include the consideration of matters, related to buying, mortgaging or selling real property, ministry programs and goals of the congregation, and transacting other business as is appropriate. It shall review the adequacy of the

compensation of the Pastor or Pastors upon the report of the prior review by Session. At the special annual meeting in May, the congregation shall act on the election of officers to the Session and to the Board of Deacons.

Section 2 – Special

Special meetings of the congregation shall be called by Session whenever it determines such a meeting is necessary, by the Presbytery whenever it determines such a meeting is necessary, or by the Session when requested in writing by one fourth (per G-I.0502) of the members on the active roll of the Church.

Section 3 - Quorum

A quorum of ten percent (10%) of the active membership shall be required for the transaction of business at all ecclesiastical meetings and ten percent (10%) of the adult active membership (those 18 years of age and older) at corporate meetings, annual and special; except a lesser number of members may adjourn either the ecclesiastical or corporate meetings to a future, specific date and time pending proper notification per Section 5.

Section 4 – Adjourned Meetings

An annual or special meeting of the congregation may be adjourned, as the circumstances may require to a future, specific date and time pending proper notification per Section 5.

Section 5 – Notices

Notice of all meetings, annual or special, shall be given to the congregation in writing and (per G-1.0502) by public announcement in two (2) Successive Sundays preceding the meeting; and may be given in such additional manner, if any, as may be ordered by the Session.

Section 6 – Moderator and Clerk

The Pastor shall be Moderator of all meetings of the congregation except the meetings of the Church corporation which deal with budgetary or other affairs of the Church as a secular corporation, and except those meetings called for the consideration of the Pastoral relationship. The Clerk of Session shall ordinarily be the Clerk for all meetings of the congregation; or in the Clerk's absence, the Assistant Clerk shall serve.

The Pastor shall be excused from meetings, or portions of meetings, during which the Pastoral relationship is being considered. On such occasion, and also when the Pastor is absent due to sickness or any other cause, the Moderator shall be a Teaching Elder of the same Presbytery invited to act as such by the Pastor, with the concurrence of the Session.

When the congregation is reviewing the Pastor's compensation, the Pastor may be excused and the Clerk of the Session may preside for this purpose only.

When the pulpit is vacant, the Moderator of the congregational meetings, ecclesiastical in nature, shall be the Teaching Elder or Ruling Elder appointed by the Commission on Congregations and Leadership (CCL) of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

Corporate meetings of the Church shall be presided over by the President of the Corporation or, in his/her absence, by the Vice President of the Corporation. The Secretary for the Corporation shall record and preserve all minutes of all Corporation meetings. In the Secretary's absence, an Acting Secretary shall be designed by the Board of Trustees or appointed by the President.

The Clerk of the Session shall be Secretary of all ecclesiastical and corporate meetings of the congregation except that in the case of the Clerk's absence, an Acting Clerk shall be designated by the Session or appointed by the Moderator.

Section 7 – Qualification for Voting

All members on the active roll who are present are entitled to vote.

Section 8 – Prayer

All meetings of the congregation shall be opened and closed with prayer.

ARTICLE IV – THE SERMON

Session 1 - Composition

The Pastor or Co-Pastors, the Associate Pastor, and no more than twelve (12) Elders elected by the congregation shall constitute the Session of the Church. The term shall be three (3) years and no Elder shall serve on the Session for consecutive terms, either full or partial aggregating more than six (6) years. An Elder having been elected to the Session for consecutive terms aggregating six (6) years shall be ineligible to serve thereon for a further term until at least one year has elapsed from the expiration of the last term for which the Elder was elected.

Section 2- Quorum

The quorum required to constitute any meeting of the Session shall be five (5) elders and the Moderator.

Section 3 – Ecclesiastical Powers and Duties

The powers and duties of the Session shall be those enumerated in the Scriptures, and in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (See Book of Order G-3.02 and following.) The Elders are immediate representatives of the people, chosen by them, that, in association with the Pastors they may exercise government and

discipline, and oversee the spiritual interest and mission of the Church. They are charged with the supervision of the Church school, the work of the Deacons, and all the societies, programs and agencies of the congregation including the weekday nursery school. They shall elect Elder commissioners to represent the Church at meetings of the Presbytery.

Section 4 – Corporate Powers and Duties

By reason of their office, Elders serving on Session shall be the Trustees of the Corporation and any meeting of Session may be deemed to be a meeting of the Trustees of the Corporation. The Corporation shall have the following powers: to receive, hold, encumber, manage and transfer property, real or personal, for the Church; to accept and execute deeds of title to such property; to hold and defend title to such property; to manage any permanent special funds for the furtherance of the purposes of the Church, all subject to the authority of the Session, the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and under the provision of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) provided further that in buying, selling, leasing and mortgaging real property, the Trustee shall act only after the approval of the congregation granted in a duly constituted meeting, and with the approval of the Trustees of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

The officers of the Corporation shall be President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The President and Vice President shall be elected annually from among the membership of the Board. The Clerk of Session shall, by reason of his/her office, be the Secretary of the Corporation, and the Treasurer, by reason of his/her office, shall be the Treasurer of the Corporation.

Section 5 – Session Policies

The Session, through its Personnel Committee, shall maintain a Policy Manual to which all employees, ordained and non-ordained shall be bound. The Policy Manual shall include a Personnel Policy, a Sexual Misconduct Policy, a Manual of Operation, etc.

ARTICLE V – THE BOARD OF DEACONS

Section 1 – Composition

The officers of the Church shall include a Board of Deacons separate from, but subordinate to, the Session. The office of Deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, witness and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, warm sympathies and sound judgement should be chosen for this office.

It is the duty of the Deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. They shall assume such other duties as may be delegated to them from time to time by the Session.

The Board shall meet regularly, or upon the call of its Moderator, or when directed to meet by the Session, but it shall meet at least quarterly. The Board shall determine its own quorum.

Section 2 – Members

There shall be elected to this Board any number of members, not to exceed twelve (12), determined by resolution of the Session and in equal classes. The term shall be three (3) years and no Deacon shall serve on the Board of Deacons for consecutive terms, either full or partial aggregating more than six (6) years. A Deacon having been elected to the Board of Deacons for consecutive terms aggregating six (6) years shall be ineligible to serve thereon for a further term until at least one year has elapsed from the expiration of the last term for which the Deacon was elected.

Section 3 – Officers

The Deacons shall annually elect their own Moderator and Secretary and any other officers or committees as they see fit.

The Pastor or Co-Pastors and Associate Pastors may be advisory members of the Board as determined by the Session.

Section 4 – Relationship

A Deacon shall make a monthly report in person to the Session. This Deacon shall be invited to remain throughout the Session meeting except on those occasions when the Session finds it necessary to meet in executive session.

The Board of Deacons shall be under the supervision and authority of the Session. The records of the Board of Deacons shall be submitted to the Session at least annually and at other times upon the request of the Session. The Session may void or amend any action of the Board of Deacons or direct the Board to reconsider particular actions.

A joint meeting of the Session and the Board of Deacons shall be held at least annually to confer on matters of common interest, with the Moderator of the Session presiding. No binding decision may be reached in such joint meeting, but the Session and the Board may act separately on matters committed to their care.

ARTICLE VI – NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS AND VACANCIES

Section 1 – Composition

Nominations shall be made by a representative Standing Nominating Committee of active members of the Church. The Session shall elect two members of the Session to serve on this committee, and shall appoint, with the concurrence of the Moderator, one of their Elders as Chairperson. One member of the committee shall be elected by and from the Board of Deacons. Four members of the Standing Nominating Committee a number sufficient to constitute a majority thereon (exclusive of the Moderator), shall be elected by the congregation at its annual meeting.

The Pastor shall serve ex-officio and without vote (per G-2.0401).

Section 2 – Duties

It shall be the duty of the Standing Nominating Committee to provide an opportunity for members of the congregation to support people for consideration as nominees and to confer with all nominees concerning their willingness to take the appropriate vows and give of their time.

The Nominating Committee shall nominate only the number required to fill the expected vacancies for the various Church offices. The Nominating Committee, if possible, should publicize the names of all candidates at least four (4) weeks prior to the date of the election.

The Standing Nominating Committee shall nominate four (4) people from the congregation (not active Elders or Deacons) to serve on the next Standing Nominating Committee.

No member of the Standing Nominating Committee shall be eligible to accept nomination for another office during the year he or she serves on the committee, nor shall any member of the Nominating Committee serve more than three (3) years consecutively on the committee.

Full opportunity shall always be accorded at the congregational meeting for nominations from the floor. However, all nominations from the floor must have the prior consent of the person being nominated.

Section 3 – Elections

If there are no additional nominations from the floor and if no objection is heard, the election may be by voice vote. If there is an objection to the voice vote, the congregation may, by two-thirds vote, overrule the objection and a voice-vote may be taken. If there are additional nominations from the floor, the election shall, in all cases, be by ballot. A majority of voices cast shall be necessary to elect.

Section 4 – Vacancies

When a vacancy occurs in either the Session or the Deacons, a special congregational meeting may be called for the purpose of electing an officer to fill the unexpired term. In such cases, a nominee for each vacancy shall be presented by the Standing Nominating Committee. If no special congregational meeting is called, the vacancy shall be filled at the next annual meeting of the congregation. Whenever vacancies on either the Session or the Deacons exceeds one-third of their respective full membership, the Session shall call a special congregational meeting for the purpose of electing officers to fill the unexpired terms.

ARTICLE VII – FINANCES

Section 1 – Treasurer and Financial Secretary

The Session shall annually elect a Treasurer who will be responsible for the keeping of the ledgers and writing of checks. The Treasurer shall make a regular monthly report to the Finance Committee and Session and shall keep separate and accurate accounts of all the Church's financial assets including current budget accounts, ongoing fund accounts, and investments or trust funds. The Treasurer shall not serve for more than six consecutive years. After being out of office for one year, the former Treasurer may be considered for re-election.

A nominee for Treasurer shall be brought to Session by the Finance Committee.

The Session shall annually elect a Financial Secretary who shall record all regular and special offerings and contributions, keep individual pledge cards, send statements, receipt and acknowledge unusual contributions, report regularly to the Finance Committee of Session and make detailed reports as to giving trends, etc., for the use by Session as the occasion demands. The Financial Secretary shall not serve for more than six consecutive years. After being out of office for one year, the former Financial Secretary may be considered for re-election.

A nominee for Financial Secretary shall be brought to Session by the Finance Committee

The Session may also elect an Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Financial Secretary. They shall have the same terms and restrictions as the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary.

All financial records shall be audited annually, on or before June 30th, by an Audit Committee elected by Session. The Audit Committee shall consist of not fewer than four (4) members, at least one whom shall be an Elder currently serving on Session, and at least one shall be a member of the Congregation not serving on Session, the Deacons, or the Finance Committee. Nominees for the Audit Committee shall be brought to Session by the Finance Committee. The Audit Committee shall make a

written report to Session. No member of the Audit Committee shall have the authority to sign checks or payment vouchers.

The counting of the offerings shall be done by two active Church members. The Finance Committee shall be responsible for counting procedures and for the training and oversight of all counting teams, and for bringing the names of counting team members to Session for election.

Section 2 – The Budget

All ordinary fiscal affairs of the Church, relating to both current expenses and benevolences, shall be governed by a Budget approved by the Session and received by the congregation at each annual meeting in January.

Section 3 – Preparation of the Budget

The Session shall each fall receive, debate, amend and approve the operating budget of the church for the coming year.

The Finance Committee shall first circulate appropriate forms to all program groups in the Church for the purpose of ascertaining their needs for the coming year. The Finance Committee shall present the complied data to the Session along with its recommendation for an operating budget for the coming year.

ARTICLE VIII – RULES OF ORDER

Meetings of governing bodies and committees shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of Robert’s Rules of Order.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENT

Except as required by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), these Bylaws may be amended, altered, revised or repealed by a two-thirds vote of the qualified voters present at any meeting of the congregation, annual or special, but the notice of the meeting shall briefly describe the purpose of the amendment.

ARTICLE X – BYLAW REVIEW

The Session shall appoint a Church Governance Committee to include the Pastor to study these Bylaws and the form of operation of the Church every five years.

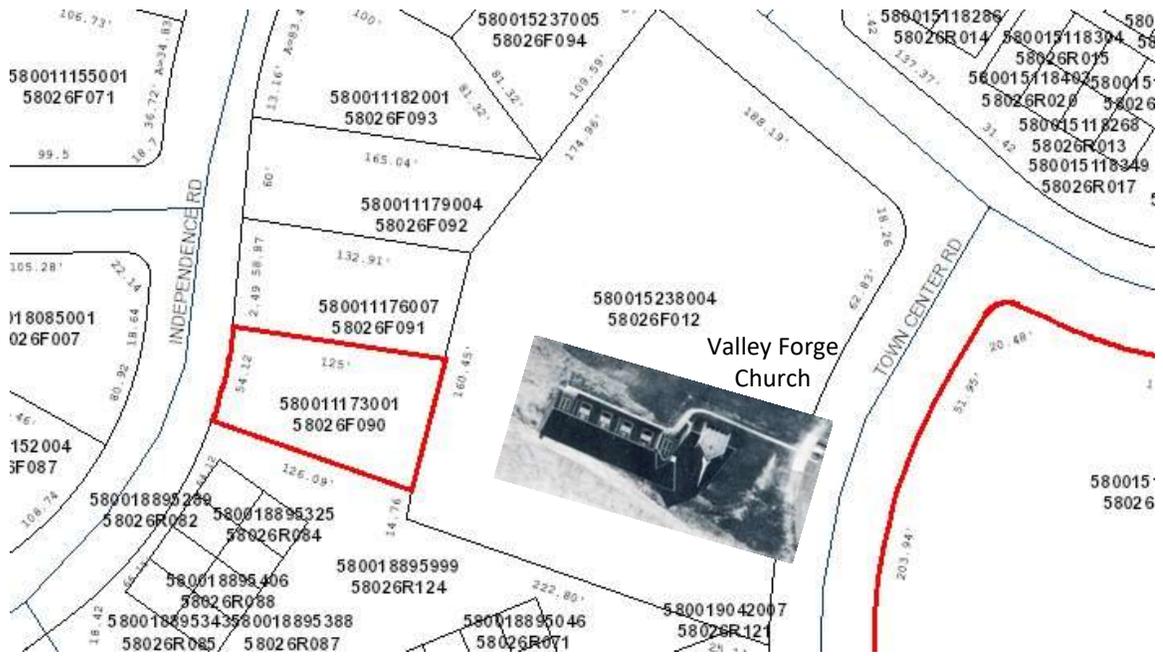
Note: Throughout this document, the word “Elder” is understood to mean “Ruling Elder,” and “Pastor” is understood to mean “Teaching Elder,” in conformance with current PC (USA) terminology of the new Form of Government, July 10, 2011.



NEWLY-COMPLETED Valley Forge Presbyterian Church (center) and the Upper Merion Medical Building (background) were among the first to locate on Town Center rd. 25 years ago. In

the foreground is the minister's residence on Prince Frederick st., now a private home. (Photo courtesy of Valley Forge Presbyterian Church)

C: DEEDS



Profile	PARID: 580015238004	
Accessory Structures	VALLEY FORGE CHURCH	PRINCE FREDERICK ST
Assessment Breakdown	Parcel	
Assessment History	TaxMapID	58026F012
Commercial	Parid	58-00-15238-00-4
Lot	Land Use Code	5901
Map	Land Use Description	E - EXEMPT CHURCH
Permits	Property Location	PRINCE FREDERICK ST
Photos	Lot #	
Residential	Lot Size	1.646 ACRES
Sales	Front Feet	273
Sketch	Municipality	UPPER MERION
Splits and Combinations	School District	UPPER MERION AREA
	Utilities	ALL PUBLIC//
	Owner	
	Name(s)	VALLEY FORGE CHURCH
	Name(s)	
	Mailing Address	191 TOWN CENTER RD
	Care Of	
	Mailing Address	
	Mailing Address	KING OF PRUSSIA PA 19406



Search by
Owner Name

Name *
Type in: LastName FirstName

Filter By

Options

Sort by:

Results/page:

* required

Data Current as of 02/Sep/2018

Results

Click rows to view property details

Displaying 1 - 3 of 3

Parcel ID▲	Owner Name	Property Address	Sales Date	Sales Amount	LUC	AltId
580011173001	VALLEY FORGE PRESBYTERIAN CHU...	227 INDEPENDENCE RD	01/01/1900	0	5902	58026F090
580011176007	VALLEY FORGE PRESBYTERIAN CHU...	223 INDEPENDENCE RD	01/01/1900	0	5902	58026F091
580011179004	VALLEY FORGE PRESBYTERIAN CHU...	219 INDEPENDENCE RD	01/01/1900	0	5902	58026F092

Printable Version

Results Page: **[1]**

D: STATISTICS

D.1 –The statistical information in the table is from the Minutes of the General Assembly in ten-year increments between 1955 through 2015. The first statistics were recorded in 1956 and appear in the 1957 Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.

Date	Church Membership	Youth Fellowship – Church School	Baptism Infant-Adult
June 12-17, 1957	240	21 Fellowship	16-0
Jan. 1 to Dec 31, 1965*	859	Not Recorded**	26-8
Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1975	558	312 Church School	13-3
Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1985	518	146 Church School	19-3
Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1995	510	123 Church School	11-3
Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2005	341	38 Church School	5-0
Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2015	214	154 Christian Education	6-0

*Total Communicants was reported to Session as 998 on May 25, 1965 [S: i, p267].

**Total Church School was reported to Session as 458 on March 20,1965 [S: i, p207].

More recent and complete statistics on membership for any church may be found at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/churchwide-ministries/stats/denominational-statistics/>

By entering our (VFPC) church’s proper name or PIN (9604) at <https://church-trends.pcusa.org/church/9604/overview/5/>, our current statistics may be found. On the following page are recent 5-year statistics as of 1/4/2019.

D.2 – Valley Forge, 191 Town Center Rd, King of Prussia, PA 19406-2330
PIN: 9604 Presbytery: Philadelphia, Synod: The Trinity
Five Years at A Glance: OVERVIEW

November 30, 2019 <https://church-trends.pcusa.org/church/9604/overview/5/>

<i>Membership</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2013</i>
<i>Total Membership</i>	135	188	214	214	253
<i>Female Members</i>	90	124	139	139	162
<i>Age 25 and Under</i>	5	18	0	0	0
<i>Age 26 to 45</i>	30	45	0	0	0
<i>Age 46 to 55</i>	8	23	0	0	0
<i>Age 56 to 65</i>	21	28	0	0	0
<i>Over Age 65</i>	71	74	0	0	0
<i>Disabilities</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2013</i>
<i>Hearing</i>	0	3	6	6	4
<i>Sight</i>	0	2	4	4	3
<i>Mobility</i>	0	6	4	4	9
<i>Other</i>	0	4	0	0	0
<i>Racial Ethnic Diversity</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2013</i>
<i>African</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>African-American</i>	6	9	0	0	0
<i>Asian</i>	5	9	11	11	15
<i>Black</i>	0	0	8	8	9
<i>Hispanic</i>	0	1	0	0	6
<i>Middle Eastern</i>	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Native American</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>White</i>	124	169	195	195	222
<i>Other</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	135	188	214	214	253
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2013</i>
<i>Deacons</i>	9	10	10	10	9
<i>Session Members</i>	12	12	12	12	9
<i>Budgeted Finances</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2013</i>
<i>Budget Income</i>	250,725	258,370	275,000	278,415	115,653
<i>Budget Expenditure</i>	262,926	252,009	275,000	278,415	132,028
<i>Giving per Member</i>	2,122.48	1,399.15	1,257.48	1,263.38	557.21

E: LIST OF CLERKS OF SESSION**PASTOR**

Raymond M. Warner	1956-1956	William R. Phillippe	1955-1962
Henry L. Hellyer, Jr.	1956-1959		
Craig A. Turner	1960-1960		
James A. Clark	1961-1962	Joseph L. Jensen, Jr.	1962-1984
Henry L. Hellyer, Jr.	1963-1963		
Warren G. Ewing	1964-1964		
Robert F. Peck	1965-1965		
Donald A. Schmaltz	1966-1966		
Rowe Chapman, Jr.	1966-1967		
Waldron H. Giles	1968-1969		
Samuel R. McClure	1970-1972		
Albert F. Beck, Jr.	1972-1972		
Charles J. Gross	1972-1973		
Robert W. Jones	1974-1976		
Paul T. Gaskins	1976-1979		
Thomas F. Spreeman	1979-1980		
Michael Henry	1980-1982		
Paul T. Gaskins	1983-1985		
Michael Henry	1985-1991	J. Edward Sale	1986-1992
Lois Blair	1992-2000	Michael A. Dunfee	1994-2003
Edyth M. Cwienk	2000-2004		
Michael Henry	2004-2007	Hope I. Lee	2005-2009
Linda (Acerba) Cybart	2007-2011		
Robert E. Beck	2012-2016	Blake E. Brinegar	2013-2016
Michael Henry	2016-current	Timothy M. Dooner	2016-current

F: LIST OF FIRST ELDERS. FIRST DEACONS, FIRST OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION

ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICERS

FIRST ELDERS

Justin Baldwin
Samuel Durant
Henry Hellyer
Edwin Lewis
Ridgely Davis
Robert Lowery

FIRST DEACONS

Ernest Blidan
Samuel Britton
Horace Bowers
Frank Haswell
N. Woodward Johnson, Jr.
Robert Jordan
Nelson Kehl
William Neff
Carlton Small
Robert Manning

FIRST OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION

Chairman of the Congregation
Secretary of the Congregation
Treasurer of the Congregation
Robert Kline
Anne Eckman
Ernest Blidan

FIRST TRUSTEES

Horace F. Bowers
Robert A. Hillman
W. Robert Irwin
H. Woodard Johnson, Jr.
D. Robert Jones
Edwin D. Lewis
Stephen A. Marouchoc
Carl E. McIlroy
F. Gene Shellenberger

G: CHOIR DIRECTORS AND ORGANISTS

Mary Jones	1955-1956
Thelma Atkinson	1956-1963
Jean Mc Arthur (Director/Organist), Ridgely Davis (Act'g Organist)	1963-1963
Mrs. H.G. (Louis) Asmas (Organist)	1963-1964
Earl Allebach (Organist)	1964-1965
Dr. Robert Wilde (Director of Music)	1965-1969
Frances Cornelson	1969-1970
Saralee Kornfeld	1970-1971
Dr. Robert Wilde (Director of Music)	1971-1985
Stephen Schreiber	1985-1986
Dr. Robert Wilde (Director of Music)	1986-1992
Barbara-Ann T. Douglas (Director of Music)	1992-2000
Amabelle Chuatico Follett (Director of Music)	2001-2006
Ru Jing Chang (Assistant Pianist and Accompanist)	
Martha (Marty) Meyer (Organist & Assistant Director of Music)	2001-2003
Lynne Kolodinski (Assistant Organist and Accompanist)	
Marty Meyer (Director of Music)	2006-2013
Art Henry (Minister of Music)	2014-current

H: SECRETARIES AND ADMINISTRATORS

Five women came forward to give a day a week of their time to run the church office and perform the necessary secretarial duties, until Mrs. George H. Ramsey and later Ruth Getty were hired for secretarial duties [7, p41]. Today the following are perhaps better titled as office administrators and managers.

Mrs. George H. Ramsey	1960-1961
Ruth Getty	1961-1962
Dorothy Lewis	1962-1980
Fran Terry	1982-1984
Ann Gross	1984-1991
Pat Wiley	1991-1997
James Ebbenga (Administrative Assistant)	1999-2002
Arline Salas (Administrative Assistant)	2002-2006
Marilyn Knox (Administrative Assistant)	2006-2011
Linda Cybart (Administrative Assistant)	2012-2015
Kimberly Huxley Colbert (Administrative Assistant)	2015-2016
Lynne Klepacki (Office Manager)	2016-current

I: **WOMEN'S RETREATS**

Barbara Beck started the first Women's Retreat. For 22 years, both Barbara Beck and Joanne Henry organized 12 retreats for women, whether they were church members or not.

1994-Poconos, 3-Day Retreat, September 30 to October 2, 1994, Peace Like a River; Leader: Gayle Kerr.

1995-St. Mary's Providence Retreat Center in Elverson, PA, September 30, 1995, Spirituality in a Time of Transition; Leader: Reverend Helen Nablo.

1996-Poconos – 3-Day Retreat, October 11-13, 1996, Prayer and Poetry; Leader: Pat Schaefer.

1997-Temenos – September 27, 1997, Reflecting on God's Will for Our Lives; Leader: Ann McClure.

1998-Temenos - September 12, 1998, Longing for God; Leader: Betsy Friend.

1999-Temenos – October 6, 1999, Let Nothing Disturb You (Theresa of Aliva); Leader: Reverend Ellie Stratton.

2000-Poconos – 3-Day Retreat, September 29, 30 and October 1, 2000, Sacred Journeys-Gleaning the Spiritual from Daily Life; Leader: Gayle Kerr.

2001-Temenos – October 6, 2001, Nourishing Your Relations with God, Yourself and Others; Leader: Reverend Sara J. Davis Shapp.

2002-Temenos – November 9, 2002, The Cup of Our Life; Leader: Betsy Friend.

2003-Temenos – October 11, 2003, Encouraging the Living Word, Four Experiences of Scripture; Leader: Reverend Helen Nablo.

2014-Temenos - October 25, 2014, Nourishing our Minds, Hearts, and Spirits. Leader: Selena Brinegar.

2016-Temenos - October 22, 2016, Life Transitions: Listening to Where the Spirit Leads, Leader: Patricia Danzon.

J: ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

25th ANNIVERSARY -- 1980

On January 1, 1980 there were 618 members who celebrated our church's Silver Jubilee with a year-long series of events. A brochure was prepared which listed all scheduled events [S: ii, p243]. Bob Beck narrated a slide show in celebration of the 25th Anniversary. Bob recounted the events and the times of the church using the photographs in this history from pages 5 through 15, and many more. Dot Lewis, Reverend Jensen's long-time secretary, was honored for all the invaluable work she had done in managing the church office for so many years [S: ii, p245].

Former ministers were invited back to preach:

April 25, 1980	Pastor William Phillippe
June 15, 1980	Pastor August S. Feather*
October 19, 1980	Pastor James D. O'Brien
November 9, 1980	Pastor James R. MacDonald
December 7, 1980	Pastor James R. Tanis
December 21, 1980	Pastor Joseph L. Jensen, Jr.

*Following Pastor Gus Feather's preaching at the 10:00 a.m. service, the annual church picnic was held at the Upper Perkiomen Park.

SANCTUARY REDEDICATION SUNDAY, March 17, 1996, HYMNALS GIVEN IN HONOR (2/2)

Louis W. Gilmore Irene Gilmore	Loma Austin Hooper Margaret Hooper Markley	Yang Shan Liang Bert & Joyce Lee	Lorraine Myers John and Lynda Schmitz	Henry and Helen Reeves Gordon and Sally Brubaker	Marjorie Vogt Charles Vogt
Leslie W. Glasgow His Loving Children	Monroe Madison Houser Carol, Mark & Brooke Hurt	Loved Ones June & Ed Adams	Henry & Margaret Nace James & Betty N. Galbraith	Elizabeth Reihl David and Barbara Sikora	Lois Weherell Sharon Larson
John Gonoude Cathy Johnson	May K. Borda Ebbe & Albert B. Boda	Nanette Lutzfeld David & Donna Ray	Nephew & Niece June & Ed Adams	Jennifer Richardson John and Lynda Schmitz	Stephen W. Werlesen Wallis W. Brooks
Mary C. Greves Jeanne Greves Fee	Janet Elizabeth Jewitt James & Carol Jewitt	Robert Lee Maffett, Jr. Zandra Maffett Fennell & Children	Milton E. Nyhund The Nyhund Family	Joseph Richardson John and Lynda Schmitz	Adelaide White Sharon Larson
Harry S. Grinley John & Norman Hogerman	Tamara Lee Jewitt James & Carol Jewitt	Naomi Morris Markley Harry Morris Markley	Alva & Olof Olson Bill & Elaine Burnett	Joseph Richardson, Jr. Joyce Richardson	William K. White Sharon Larson
Mr. & Mrs. David P. Gallette Mary Lynn Gallette	Wilfred Warrick Jewitt James & Carol Jewitt	W. Claude Markley Henry M. Markley	Leah Rebecca Pociello Alfred and Rebecca Sullivan	Dr. Schuyra S. Roback Helen M. Roback	William A. White Sharon Larson
Mrs. Inez Gilbert Hallen Mike & Joanne Henry	John & Richardine Johnson G. Annor & Patricia Aokah	Steve Marouchoc Bertha Marouchoc	My Parents Two Brothers & One Sister Bertha Marouchoc	Ronald Rodenbaugh Betsy Rodenbaugh	Edward Louis Wisnefeld James & Carol Jewitt
Mrs. Bonnie Hansen Mike & Joanne Henry	Richard W. Jordan Bob & Charlotte Jordan	Mary E. McFalls Ellen & Dick McFalls	My Parents Betsy Thomson	Jeffrey R. Rodman Mr. & Mrs. William Rodman	Hazel Lovetta Wisnefeld James & Carol Jewitt
Mayne A. Harrington Alice I. Nichols	Robert T. Jordan, Jr. Bob & Charlotte Jordan	Josephine L. McGill Joanne and Bob Peel	Our Parents Don and Marian Krosner	Hilda & George Schnabel Alyce & George A. Schnabel	Kathryn M. Wier Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Eckman and Family
Donald E. Hawk, Sr. Lorraine Hawk	David & Stella Klopp Donald J. Klopp	Rev. & Mrs. Messersmith Mary Jo Klapp	Clarence L. Peel Joanne and Bob Peel	Mrs. Emma Sherman Mike & Joanne Henry	Janette Mount Wiley John & Patricia Wiszy
Elmer A. C. Hellman Bill & Elaine Burnett	Vivian Hilmer Kresaky Lou and John Blair	Florence T. Brooks Miller Bertha Spreeman	Mrs. Ruth Peer Mike & Joanne Henry	Wayne W. Simon Fredericks & Lo	Helen Wessels Williams Ralph and Alena Dusey
Beatrice Hemming The Hemming Family	Doris R. Krimer William and Donna Krimer	Katharine L. & Charles W. Moore Lois and John Blair	William Peatrose Sue & Dick Peatrose	Kenneth Spaulding Dorothy Spaulding	Clark Hawkins Workman & Nannie Fulk Workman Jim & Elouise Workman
Mr. & Mrs. George Henry Mike & Joanne Henry	Harry G. Larson, Sr. Sharon Larson	Kathryn Munnert Sue and Dick Brickley	Mr. Harold Potts Mike & Joanne Henry	Richard Spaulding Dorothy Spaulding	
Mr. & Mrs. John Henry Mike & Joanne Henry	Mildred & Thomas Lawson Barbara & Thomas McElvogue	Kathryn Munnert Stephen Brickley	Harold Potts Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Eckman & Family	Kay Straubel David & Cathy Robbins	
Ralph Denton Hirst Mark, Carol & Brooke Hirst	Paul Learnder Jeanne G. Fee	Kathryn Munnert V. F. C. Clear	Helen Root Rary David & Donna Ray	Dennis H. Sullivan Alfred and Rebecca W. Sullivan	
Allen G. Hooper Margaret Hooper Markley	Peng Yuan Liang Bert & Joyce Lee	Kathryn Munnert Jenna Brickley	Ralph E. Ray David & Donna Ray	Dot Todd James and Floisie Tait	

18

19

20

40th ANNIVERSARY -- 1996



Bob Peel was the chairman of the event, aided by committee members James Tanis, Pat Wiley and Joanne Peel, in organizing the year-long activities in celebration of our 40th Anniversary [S: iv, p141]. Activities started on March 9th with an auction to benefit the elevator fund [S: iv, p183]. March 17th brought Rev. Jensen preaching and rededicating the sanctuary; former choir members were invited to participate in the service. The 7:00 p.m. "Evening of Song" in our church sanctuary, featured local soloists and musicians. It was a concert of classical and sacred music, with some popular music included as well. Tickets were \$5.00 each, and all proceeds went to Laurel House, a shelter for women and children. The inviting reception that followed was amazing, thanks to our wonderful church members. Pastor Mike was our master of ceremonies, and he donned a tuxedo for the concert! April 14th Rev. Phillippe participated in the worship service, with an afternoon reception which followed at the home of Lee and Nancy Sellman.

A time capsule was assembled, including pictures of each of the Sunday school classes, sealed, and dedicated during the worship service. It was placed in the Narthex (relocated to the office wing in 2018) and will be opened on the occasion of our 75th Anniversary.

There was a celebratory picnic with our own Sandy Rodman dressing up as a clown, a letter from our founding pastor, Rev. Phillippe, speeches, a group photo, and special items for purchase [S: iv, p196, p206, p218].





40th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Quoting Reverend Phillippe's letter to the congregation on March 17, 1996,

Dear Members and Friends of The Valley Forge Church:

It is most difficult for me to know precisely what to say at this time. I am tempted to reminisce, recalling the windy March day in 1955 when Carolyn and I stood in the middle of the field that is now The Valley Forge Shopping Center and tried to imagine where the church would be. Dr. Herbert Braun, then Synodical Superintendent of Missions, kept encouraging us saying the cows would not be in the middle of the church, but that the valley would be filled with homes instead. Obviously, this has come to pass.

With deep emotion I recall the opening service of our church on December 18, 1955. This was my first experience conducting services in a church of my own. How warmly the people responded and how encouraging this was. The days that followed were filled with times of real sacrifice on the part of our early members as they gave not alone of their money, but generously of their time and talent, and this foundation has made possible what is being dedicated today.

But I believe the most important thing I could say on this day of dedication is to ask you to join with me in a prayer that we realize the fact that this material building, beautiful as it is, is useless unless it is filled with the presence of God. The presence comes only as the individual worshipers brings it with him in his heart and then takes forth from this place the desire to go and have real compassion and give of himself in Christ's service.

May the years to come find the sacrifice of our present members real material for the future work of Christ's church in our community and in our world.

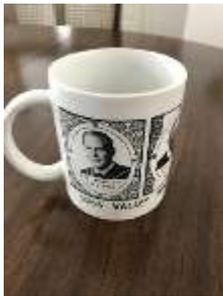
Sincerely,

William R. Phillippe



The Time Capsule at the left was dedicated during the worship service on April 28, 1996, concluding the year-long 40th Anniversary Celebration [S: iv, p218]. It is to be opened in 2030 upon the occasion of The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church's 75th Anniversary.

To commemorate this milestone, the following items were created and sold: mugs with the photos and dates of service of Rev. Phillippe, Rev. Jensen, Rev. Sale and Rev. Dunfee; a white plate trimmed in gold with a picture of our church on it. Those photos are courtesy of Lynda Schmitz. The ornament sold in celebration of the church's 40th Anniversary is courtesy of Martha Coleman. In addition, a special booklet was created that listed various activities being held throughout the year [S: ii, p243].



50th Anniversary – 2005

The Golden Anniversary of the founding of The Valley Forge Church, now named The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, was a statement to the success of both the church leaders and the congregation. The church celebrated this auspicious occasion in many ways, which reflected on what the church means to its members and the community at large, that touched the hearts and minds of everyone involved.

We started as a Mission Church, so it was appropriate that Elder William (Bill) Hoffman organized the “50/50 Fund”, which had a goal of raising \$50,000 in recognition of our church’s 50th Anniversary. Session transferred \$2,000 from the Alternative Gift Market Fund to the 50th Anniversary’s 50/50 Fund. When \$30,000 was received, \$1,000 was given to 32 different charities. These funds were distributed on Rededication Sunday, January 22, 2006, when some of our previous pastors returned to VFPC [S: v, p314, pp327-328]

In celebration, Margaret “Peg” Elliott, Chair of this Anniversary, arranged for a booth at Upper Merion’s Annual Fair in May. Sweatshirts were made with the image of our church on it and sold. Green colored, Flea Market Aprons were created with the logo of our church; they have been used ever since. The picture directory was updated as part of this celebration [S: v, pp306-309].



The Neighborhood Meals on Wheels (which resides in the Christian Education Building) offered their congratulations on our 50th Anniversary, and offered financial assistance if and when the steps to the Christian Education Building were repaired [S: v, p321].

Other notes of interest:

- October 30, 2005 – A concert by the Bel Canto Children’s Choir
- November 2005 – the Country Fair and a covered dish dinner.
- December 4, 2005 – a re-creation of the first Valley Forge Church’s Worship Service. Reverend William Phillippe, our founding pastor, preached [S: v, p319].
- The Knitters provided 85 Oxfam (children’s pattern) Sweaters. They were dedicated and sent to Oxfam, England. Oxfam is a confederation of 20 independent charitable organizations focusing on the alleviation of global poverty, founded in 1942 and led by Oxfam International.

K. “COFFEE CHATTER” REPLIES: A publication of the thoughts and opinions of members of The Valley Forge Presbyterian Church

This is a transcription of the membership responses, in 2011, to the six questions asked by Reverend Donald Wassinger while they sought a new pastor, and while he prepared them for the arrival of that next pastor. These comments were as-presented in the original free-flow format (typos included); no names were included.

Part One:

1. Offer one of your Fondest Memories at the Valley Forge Church. -

A Good Friday service: The lights gradually went out, Ben Magdamo sang "Were You There?". That was when Jesus' sacrifice became real for me; hands-on mission trip to Pearlinton, Miss.; incredible mix of people (Like at Tom Baker's memorial service); roller skating with the church family, and watching Joe Jensen play with the kids and families; Christmas Eve services with readers' drama and returning college students; adult discussion class on Sunday mornings; singing and bell-ringing; the group that met with Joe Jensen alternating as adults and then as families; moved by those who spoke after their mission trip to Zambia; youth group each Sunday and youth group retreats; my wedding and my daughter's baptism, being a youth leader; getting married; being part of the Pearlinton, MS Mission trip; being the elder for my grandchildren's baptisms; officiating with Joe Jensen at my grandchildren's baptisms; bringing Blair to church and having Flossie Tanis doting over her; Spaulding memorial service; people working together to maintain the church; amazing welcome from the congregation; when ordained, the support felt amazing; when the church cross was struck by lightning; the diverse group of people; coming as a six year old when pews were full and church was vital; when Joe J. asked during a sermon if anyone had ever met an angel; being married by Ed Sale; good memories of Joe J.; Mike Dunfee's vacation memories used as illustrations in his sermons; meeting Leo on the Mission Statement Committee and learning that liberals and conservatives at church can be friends; renovation of the chapel and Fellowship Hall when everyone joined in; the [50th anniversary](#); the Barbeque; Lenten services with actors and readers; Beck-led Christmas pageants; youth group with Jim MacDonald; church school bus; our daughter's wedding; our son's ordination; heterogeneous small group ministries like Connect 8; homogeneous small groups like the woman's Bible study.

2. What one thing do you miss the most at the Valley Forge Church? -

Silent prayer before Pastoral Prayer; substantial youth fellowship; a large part of the congregation working toward the same goal/project (e.g. Habitat); Christmas Eve with

everyone back in the pews; Bob Enoch's joyful leadership; the youth group; respect for each other's time, communication; spontaneous singing of "Faith of Our Fathers"; more special music; pastor-led Bible study; adult Sunday School; bigger congregational participation; large quantities of children; singing the Lord's Prayer; holiday suppers; some of the older hymns and the classics; plain old pot luck suppers without any program; pizza/movie nights followed by discussions; parties at the State Hospital; dinners for Fortnighters at the Carver Center; the old hymnal; people we've lost; less diversity in the congregation; more volunteer musicians; the women's retreat; special "spiritual emphasis" programs; family camping; the men's breakfasts; the multiple staff; the ladies' banquet; the church school bus; our bus trips with patients from Norristown State Hospital.

3. What "Ideal Moment" in the life of the Valley Forge Church lingers in your senses, the season, the smells, etc.? -

Easter always a special season. Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunrise Service (especially with other congregations). Good Friday used to be held alternately with the Baptist Church during Mike Dunfee's ministry; sounds, music, happiness of the praise service on Bounce Back Sunday; Christmas Eve 11pm service with sanctuary full, music from congregation and choir, "Silent Night" and midnight Merry Christmas!; the special ministry of James Tanis; Good Friday about 3 years ago when I was struck by the profound sadness at what Jesus experienced in his short life, waiting for Easter to come; it was the 70's and 80's when there was a full church on Sundays and it was packed on the holidays, people talked to each other as friends and really cared about one another; a bigger congregation; children's pageants; house to house visitation conducted by church members; Christmas Eve when it snowed and the congregation filled the choir loft; Habitat for Humanity Work Project; Easter when we had to set up extra chairs and the chancel was covered with lilies; Maundy Thursday circle at the end of the service; Lenten soup and bread suppers; One Night at a Time program; the Good Friday cross and Tenebrae service; the Christmas fair and Holiday Dinner; the Christmas pageant without Joseph; Bear Creek Mountain when the kids all skied down the mountain at the same time; the [40th anniversary](#) celebration.

Phase Two:

1. What is your Greatest Joy at the Valley Forge Church right now? -

The many friends, especially Tuesday morning Bible Study; spiritual nurturing through sermons and music; children and their families; Lynne K. working with and enjoying the kids in the Children's Sermon; musical groups; the way we carry on and the way we support one another; the care and concern of fellow members; being a youth leader to the high schoolers with the youth on mission trips, to see another side of the teens as they open themselves to the experience and to God and become His servants; having stable pastoral leadership; adult Bible studies; Sunday worship; sense of community; being part of the church family; support in times of need (cards, visits, meals); welcome received when returning after being absent; being able to bring my disabled spouse to worship; Marilyn Knox; strategy with the Deacon Shepherding program; our Connect 8 group that still meets; friends who pray for one another; number of kids in the Children's Sermon; FROGs; Vacation Bible School; Marty, the choir with the organ and piano to sing with.

2. What Qualities, Gifts and Personality Traits would you like to see in our next pastor? -

- The combination of the best features of all VFPC's pastors!
- Bible-preaching that applies principles of scripture to our lives today.
- good listener who keeps confidences confidential
- good administrator who listens to leaders (elders/deacons/staff); not a dictator
- one who leaves their politics out of their preaching
- considerate of the hearing-impaired members in the congregation
- one who comes to VFPC because they feel "called of the Lord" to do so
- one who visits sick, grieving, etc.
- strong personal Christian faith
- compassionate, friendly leader
- able to minister to all age groups
- inspiring preacher
- optimistic for future church growth
- committed to providing alternative worship experiences
- passionate about music and its importance in the worship life
- comfortable in the pulpit
- welcomes children
- flexible, but able to stand their ground
- warm and caring
- wise
- uniter, while respecting different points of view
- personal relationship with Christ that yields a vision for the church
- musical and worship ability to lead congregation to "blended worship"
- healthy sense of humor
- inclusiveness
- down-to-earth personality
- no heavy-handed evangelism
- self-confident
- a true feeling of closeness to Jesus Christ that pervades his/her whole being and invites you in
- ability to compromise and not just go his/her own way
- reaches out to people no matter who they are or from where they come

- good at communicating with others, not just from the pulpit
- personable
- interested in the congregation and not just in their own agenda
- provides care to the hurting
- has a love for God that is contagious
- open to all ages
- someone who doesn't want to change everything right away
- lives in the area
- a family person whose family participates in VFPC
- wants to be involved in the community
- wants to hold existing members as well as grow youth and families in the congregation
- enjoys home and hospital visitation
- able to get people to sing
- outgoing
- uses humor in the sermon
- draws in personal commentary
- makes eye contact when preaching
- gets involved with church activities
- short and sweet
- shepherding pastor
- gives attention to music in the church
- not tied to the pulpit when they preach
- challenges us to think and flex
- good teacher

3. Imagine you had the power to change one thing immediately at the Valley Forge Church. What would you change? And what one long-range goal would you set for the congregation? -

Re-assess the Library with "print media" going through such a change in our time; compel the young families who joined under Hope to come back!; create a caring/understanding spiritual atmosphere to enhance and encourage more support for hands-on mission activities beyond church community; blended worship, long-range to add a contemporary service; to attract young families and grow the congregation; long-range to re-work Sunday morning schedule so that worship and Sunday school do not meet at the same time; to involve the young families in activities with long-term members; provide childcare when church is hosting evening activities; get the shut-ins out to church if possible; sponsor a "bring-a-friend-to-church" Sunday; make adults more interactive with the children; more community participation- open dinners and meetings with "outsiders"; the communication between session members, and the whole working attitude, for more congregation activities where there is church family participation; make the pastor more visible in the sanctuary; we'd sing the Lord's Prayer more often; add more visitation; would put the announcements in the body of the service and not at the beginning; would vary the worship style; would grow our mission involvement; finish the building as it was designed (connecting the two structures); get rid of the Christian rock music played before the service; put church politics in the background; get a new coffee maker; would add air conditioning; do kitchen renovation; increase community outreach; bring in new people through hospitality; revive the holiday dinner; make the church more fiscally stable; make the church inviting to those without a church home; fix VFPC's public presence; adopt Central Presbyterian Church in Norristown; give a symbol or gift to baptized children; a clear faith system in the congregation willing to do serious theological inquiry.



Valley Forge Presbyterian Church, founded 1956, King of Prussia, PA

Once a tiny village midway between Paoli and Norristown whose only distinction was its unusual name, King of Prussia became a huge business and industrial center, surrounded by residential development by 1960. The reason for this dramatic change was the completion of the Schuylkill Expressway, linking Philadelphia to the Valley Forge interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike at King of Prussia. In anticipation of this development, the UPNA Presbytery of Philadelphia received aid from the denomination's Board of Missions to begin a new church development in the Candlebrook area in June 1954. The response to the ministry led to the organization of the Valley Forge Presbyterian Church on March 7, 1956. Within 5 years, church membership was over 700 and Sunday school enrollment was over 800.

In the last 60 years, King of Prussia Township's population has grown and grown, and turned over, becoming quite diverse. In addition, there has been even more expansion of shopping malls and businesses in the township, especially along Rt. 202.

Today, Valley Forge Presbyterian Church is blessed to still count a few founding members in its congregation. In late 2016 Valley Forge called a new, young pastor, Reverend Timothy Dooner, and is confidently looking forward to the next chapter in its life and mission, just as the Presbytery of Philadelphia is pointing with hope to its next 300 years.

This brief history was recently updated as a part of the Presbytery of Philadelphia's 300th Anniversary Year of Celebration and Witness.



Valley Forge Presbyterian Church
191 Town Center Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406
610-265-2420
www.ValleyForgePres.org
www.PCUSA.org

