



# Gwynedd Square Presbyterian Church

## The Fourth Decade: 1990-1999

By Sandy Taylor

The 1990's were years of change, challenge, conflict, and strength for Gwynedd Square. Because so much happened in so many different areas of the life of our congregation, this decade report is not chronological but broken into sections.

### ***The Road to our New Sanctuary:***

At the conclusion of 1989, the Building and Land Use Evaluation (B.L.U.E.) Committee completed their report regarding the possible expansion of our facility. Following that report, a Feasibility Study was begun to see if Gwynedd Square was in a position to move forward on the committee's findings. In September 1990, the Feasibility Study on the B.L.U.E. Committee report was completed, and it was determined that plans to expand our facility should be put on hold and we should instead establish the positions of associate pastor and assistant director of music. Late in 1991, the Feasibility Task Force, along with Diserod & Wolff Architects, completed a report to identify areas suitable for expansion and presented preliminary plans. In May 1992 Session approved "Plan D" as our plan of record for future expansion and in June 1994 reactivated the Feasibility Task Force to review expansion plans based on changes in our current needs and finances. Session approved the start of a Building Fund Campaign and in September 1995 a Church Growth and Building Expansion Committee was formed to reinvestigate the possibility of expansion.

During a special meeting held July 23, 1996, the Session approved the recommendation of this committee to begin a building campaign for the purpose of building a new larger sanctuary and an unfinished fellowship hall on the lower level, including all necessary connections to the existing structure, and making necessary renovations in the existing facilities including classroom space and offices. At the congregational meeting in November 1996, members voted to proceed with the intent to build. For several years, concurrent with planning for building expansion, a Mission Study Committee worked hard on the direction of our church and on April 3, 1997, their report was approved by Presbytery. In February 1997 an informational Kick-Off Dinner was held for the congregation at Marjeane Caterers and on December 16, 1997, Session voted to proceed with

plans for church expansion at a projected cost of 1.6 million dollars. The congregation voted on the proposed mortgage for the new building at the congregational meeting held on April 19, 1998, and a ground-breaking ceremony was held during the outdoor service on June 14, exactly 39 years from the organizational meeting which was held on June 14, 1959.

Welcomed to worship by our brass ensemble on the outdoor steps, on September 12, 1999, the first worship service was held in our new sanctuary – a very moving service which began with everyone gathered in the old sanctuary. Then, with the congregation singing all the way, we moved through the halls into our new worship space as building committee members led the procession carrying the cross, Bible, chalice, flags and other worship items which would tie the old with the new. On October 24, 1999, a very special dedication service was held in the afternoon followed by a dinner in our new fellowship hall, coordinated and hosted by our Membership & Evangelism Committee and the Deacons.

In addition to planning a new building, during worship on October 15, 1995, GSPC celebrated paying off the mortgage on the existing church buildings. During the service, we burned the mortgage agreement and the ashes have been kept in a jar, along with a copy of the bulletin, in the library. The Rev. Donald Shaw and The Rev. Paul Corcoran and his wife, Leila, attended.

### ***Our Staff:***

In October 1990, Presbytery approved the position of associate pastor and work was begun to develop a Church Information Form, the first step in seeking a pastor. On December 15, 1991, a special meeting of the congregation was held to call the Reverend Jamie Lynn Kenyon as Associate Pastor with primary responsibilities in evangelism and Christian education. She was installed on February 23, 1992 and served in this position for three years.

In October 1995 we welcomed Manisha Shendge as our new Pastoral Intern. Her major responsibilities were to be assisting in teaching throughout the Church School, assisting in Worship, and helping with youth group. Rev.

Kenyon had left our church to pursue another calling and on April 1, 1996, Manisha was called to serve as interim associate pastor, having been approved for Ordination by the Committee on Ministry of Presbytery on March 24.

At the Presbytery meeting on February 18, 1997, the Rev. Lori Kosinski was approved as our Parish Associate and Manisha's contract was extended. On April 26, 1998, the Reverend Lesley Blair was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor. Lesley served through difficult years as some conflicts arose, resulting in Jim Barber's retirement in August 1999. The Reverend Steven Garstad was called as interim pastor beginning October 1, 1999 and served for three years until the Reverend Dave Poland was called our new pastor. Lesley left Gwynedd Square in October 2000 to be married and move to Texas.

In January 1991 Session approved the hiring of Claire Eckert as our new assistant music director. Claire joined the staff on February 1 and was responsible for the children's choir program. At this time Session also approved having two Sunday morning worship services beginning March 3 for a three-month trial (8:30-9:15am and 11am-noon). The early service would be exactly like the 11am service, but with solo vocalists and not the entire choir. This trial schedule was extended until the summer schedule began and then in September was changed to 8:15am early service, 9:15am Sunday school, and 10:45am second service. Following Claire, the Assistant Music Director position has been held by Lynn Simons, Cathy Linch, Abbie Lampe, Sharon Bisio and Nanci Landes.

***Other Points of Interest:***

In 1990 Session voted to replace the Presbyterian Worshipbook (much to the delight of everyone!) with the newly published Presbyterian Hymnal. This new hymnal, dedicated on September 30 and still used today, contains 600 hymns, psalms and spiritual songs, is organized by season rather than alphabetically, and includes notations if the text is from scripture.

In the summer of 1990, Pastor Jim Barber and his wife Barbara traveled to Salt Lake City, Utah, to attend General Assembly, Jim as a commissioner for the Philadelphia Presbytery on the Educational Ministries Committee and Barbara as a volunteer at the Christian International Gift Shop. At this General Assembly, the newly written Brief Statement of Faith was approved and now appears

in the Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

In November 1990 an energetic and dedicated group remodeled the front of the sanctuary (in about two weeks!) to provide additional congregational seating and space for our growing choir. Risers were built across the front of the sanctuary, placing the choir loft in a position facing the congregation and on each side of the pulpit, using chairs rather than pews. An added benefit was that the stairs which had led to the centrally located pulpit (and which were difficult to negotiate for some of our guest pastors and also members when they served as lay assistants) were removed as the risers became the stairs leading to the pulpit, which was moved slightly forward and remained in the center. Some of the original choir loft pews were moved to the front of the congregational seating area to provide 15-20 additional seats. In addition to moving the choir, the organ was moved from its location near the "overflow" seating area of the sanctuary to the place between the congregational pews and the new choir risers. This location also provided an opportunity for some in the congregation to observe the hard work and talent required by an organist to play multiple keyboards and foot pedals.

In 1991, session approved the organization of the GSPC Mariners, an adult organization for fellowship, service and devotion. This group has become our C-Farers.

In 1996 when the Rev. Derek Richmond, along with his wife Mavis, traveled to the U.S. for a visit, Derek (our English exchange pastor from the summer of 1985) preached at Gwynedd Square on May 12 followed by a reception in their honor.

In anticipation of our construction project, in early 1997 a Mission Study was completed after many hours of work by a dedicated committee.

Other "firsts" and special events in this decade of our history include: first annual Easter Egg Hunt sponsored by C-Farers; "Lend a Hand" Auction raised \$6,700 to benefit worldwide and local charities; TAGS (Together at Gwynedd Square), an "over 50 group" was formed; weekly play group established; playground built by members under the direction of Ty and Judy Emerson; members painted and refurbished many areas of the church in addition to completing repairs to the steeple and building new front steps; the first GSPC website was launched in 1999. Also in 1999, our wonderful

Mason & Hamlin piano was purchased to support worship during the time our original organ was being disassembled so that some pipes and other parts could be used for our new organ. This excellent instrument would also be used in our new

worship space while our new organ was being built, and then to support worship in addition to the organ for many years to come.