



Gwynedd Square Presbyterian Church

The Third Decade: 1980-1989

By Sandy Taylor

The year 1980 marked the fifteenth year of Paul Corcoran's position as pastor, the completion of renovations to the organ, and the purchase of a piano for the sanctuary. The Interpretation and Stewardship Committee of the Session was split to make individual committees of Property, Membership, Mission Interpretation, and Finance. The refugee project continued and grew by providing housing (the manse as one source), jobs, tutoring, and other services as needed. GSPC was the host church for of the annual North Penn Hospital Auxiliary Christmas Caravan, providing special music and refreshments.

In 1981 the youth groups, under the direction of Seminarian Jennifer Byler, adopted foster grandparents at the Gwynedd Square Nursing Home and raised money to sponsor two foster children in the Philippines. Our refugee resettlement program expanded again to include friends and relatives of previously sponsored refugees. Vacation Bible School was held for the first time in many years.

In an effort to increase visitor and member visitations, the Reverend Lois Goodman was employed to assist our pastor one day a week, providing visitors with information about Gwynedd Square and making much needed contact with inactive members.

A significant change for Presbyterian throughout the country occurred in 1983. The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (of which GSPC was a member) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) voted on reuniting into one body, and on February 22 all the presbyteries of the UPC and the PCUS voted on the subject of reunion. The outcome was UPC 122 in favor and 0 against and the PCUS 39 in favor and 8 against. It was now assured that the so-called northern and southern Presbyterian churches would become one church and be known as the Presbyterian Church (USA). It had taken 113 years to be reunited. In May the General Assemblies of the two individual groups met in Atlanta, Georgia, to ratify the vote of its presbyteries.

Later that year our pastor, Paul Corcoran, published his book, "With All Due Respect,

Humorous Insights on Holy Happenings," and many in our congregation could see themselves in one or more of his stories. And, in keeping with our commitment to share our facilities with others, the Sunday School classrooms which had been vacated by Easter Seal Society were now home to the local Headstart Program.

The Anniversary of Gwynedd Square was celebrated at a special worship service on Sunday, June 10, 1984, followed by a banquet on June 12 for the congregation at the Family Heritage Restaurant in Franconia. Musical selections by the choir, a sing-a-long, the presentation of a special matching gift to the newly-born Japanese Christian Church, introductory remarks by Paul Corcoran, and remarks by guest speaker, The Rev. Donald Barnhouse, made for a festive celebration.

For the first time in our history, a pulpit exchange was arranged and in the summer of 1985, Paul Corcoran and the Rev. Derek Richmond changed places. Derek and Mavis Richmond arrived from West Wickam, Kent, England, on June , and Paul and Leila Corcoran traveled to the Emmanuel United Reformed Church, a combination of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches of England, in a southern suburb of London. Derek was a wonderful pastor as he carried out the required duties of his position, and he and Mavis became great friends to many families in the congregation.

In the fall of 1985 two Princeton Seminary students came to GSPC; Douglas Elder to work with the youth groups and Edward Washington to direct the adult education programs and assist Rev. Corcoran with visitation. A special fund-raising drive by the Interpretation and Stewardship Committee helped finance a new roof for the church, and Orff instruments were purchased through donations to the Florence Breitmeyer Memorial Fund for use primarily by the children's choirs to enhance their music experience.

Through our commitment to the refugee project, by the beginning of 1986, GSPC had sponsored 50 Cambodians and co-sponsored 16. Hay Seng Ea became a U.S. citizen on May .

Sadly, on February , Paul Corcoran announced his retirement, effective July 31, 1986. By fall, a Pastor

Nominating Committee had been formed and the Rev. Tom Wray became our interim pastor. In appreciation of Paul's many years of service to Gwynedd Square, a "remembrance quilt" was made by women in the church and a "cash" gift was collected, part of which went to tickets for their return trip to Israel, and most of which was put into the Paul and Leila Corcoran Fund, an investment fund created through the Presbyterian Foundation. (Paul recently gave the quilt to Gwynedd Square as a gift for all to enjoy. It is hanging in the Knox room.)

In 1987, the first GSPC endowment fund was established through the PC(USA) Foundation as the result of a significant gift by the Estate of Mildred Roe. Mildred was a beloved and extremely active member of our church, and was greatly missed by all who knew her.

The Mission Interpretation Committee challenged the congregation in 1987 by initiating a new process for determining the mission budget. They determined that the mission budget be 23.5% of the total budget for 1988, with the hope of increasing that amount by 1.5% yearly until the goal of 33% was reached.

Later in 1987, a significant manse renovation project was undertaken by our members in anticipation of the arrival of our newly called pastor. Then on March 27, 1988, The Reverend James Barber was installed as our third pastor, and he and his wife Barbara and their two grown sons moved into the manse.

Due to increased membership and a desire to return to one worship service, the B.L.U.E. (Building & Land Use Evaluation) Committee was convened in 1988 to study the possibility of building a new and larger sanctuary – a plan that was built into the original design of our church. The vote taken after their report put on hold those plans.

The Interpretation & Stewardship Committee introduced the concept of a Faith Pledge in 1989 as a new approach to the financial giving of our members. Each member was asked to make a "faith commitment" to the church, the amount of which was known only by the members and their Lord. (The amount of giving actually increased in 1990 after the Faith Pledge was begun.)