

## **A Brief History of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church**

Our church traces its origins to 1833, when the Reverend Samuel A. Martin then pastor of the Christ Presbyterian Church of Lebanon saw the need for a Presbyterian Mission Sunday School in the southeastern part of the city. Through his vision, The Good Shepherd Sabbath School was organized in a stone farmhouse at the corner of Fourth and Willow Streets.

As the number of interested students increased it became necessary to provide for larger accommodations. More space was obtained by using the Burrowes Elementary School located next to the stone farmhouse on Willow Street.

In 1855, the Presbytery of Westminster took action to support the work of The Good Shepherd Sabbath School by call of the Reverend Edison A. Lowe to jointly supervise it as well as the mission at Derry in Dauphin County.

As attendance continued to increase and space became increasingly limited it was decided to seek support for the construction of a new building. Contributions were received from not only members of the Lebanon mission but also from Christ Presbyterian Church and other friends in Lebanon and Dauphin Counties and elsewhere. With funds in hand the congregation decided to purchase the adjacent land at Fourth and Spring Streets and build a new church. Construction commenced in June 1886, and was completed for the first use in January, 1887. All costs for the new church were fully paid by subscription.

The Presbytery of Westminster organized the new church which became known as Fourth Street Presbyterian Church on February 8, 1887. The Reverend Edson A. Lowe was ordained and installed as the first pastor. When the building was dedicated the church had 36 charter members and a Sunday School numbering approximately 90.

In December 1911, Reverend Leonard Hynson introduced a revision in the way the church financed its operations. His plan involved the establishment of an annual budget formulated by the Trustees and approved by the Session. The congregation was then solicited for subscriptions (pledges) for weekly offerings to pay for the operating needs of the church. The plan was unanimously approved by the congregation and implemented in January, 1912. During the first year the new system was highly successful. Pastor Hynson's concept for funding the needs of the new church evolved into the Stewardship Campaigns that are still conducted each year.

Through the first half of the twentieth century the congregation continued to grow and the Fourth Street church building became increasingly crowded. In 1948, a Planning Committee was appointed to evaluate the possibilities of an expansion. After extensive study, the Fourth Street Presbyterian Church took a bold step and determined that it would be necessary to move to a new location. In 1953, when the Reverend Harry Geisinger was minister, the first tangible step toward this end was taken when the congregation approved the purchase of property at the corner of South Twelfth and Poplar Streets at the very edge of Lebanon.

A building committee was appointed and in 1956 plans were approved for a new church building. The Reverend Ralph Snyder was then minister at the Fourth Street Presbyterian Church. The cornerstone was laid in 1958 and in April 1959 the new building was dedicated at a total cost of \$382,476.46. A generous response from the membership augmented by several large bequests once again made it possible to begin services in a building entirely free from debt. In what must have been a very spirited debate, the congregation voted 175 to 144 to change the name of the church from Twelfth Street Presbyterian to St. Andrews Presbyterian Church.

For the next forty years the church building served the congregations well with no structural changes, a tribute to the wisdom and planning of the original building committee. The Trustees of the church, with careful regular maintenance, kept the building in excellent condition in spite of heavy use by church and community nearly every day of the week.

In 1988 under the Pastoral leadership of Reverend Richard L. Cassel, a Visioning Committee was established to examine the challenges facing St. Andrews. Membership was static and the church population was "graying." We needed to reach out and attract young people and families to continue our rich traditions into a new century. With the support and prayers of the congregation we called Pastor John M. Woodring to be St. Andrews' first Associate Pastor ministering especially to youth and families and hired Lisa Hamme to be our Youth Director.

It was also clear that the church building needed to be reevaluated. After considerable study, a Building Committee was established and an architectural plan prepared. The plan provided for complete handicap accessibility, additional facilities for Christian Education, a large practice room for musical groups, a chapel, an expanded gathering/fellowship area, library/conference room and offices. The plan was presented and approved enthusiastically by the congregation.

A building fund was begun in 1999 and the congregation responded generously, fully subscribing the estimated cost of just under \$1,000,000. In addition to the building expansion and renovations the work included the replacement of the heating/air conditioning system, refreshed landscaping, and numerous maintenance improvements throughout the building and grounds. Ground was broken in the spring of 2000 and on St. Andrews Day 2000 we celebrated the completion of the project.

The Reverend Steven M. Gribble began his ministry at St. Andrews in November, 2003, and served until November of 2012. In September, 2004 a new Praise service was started with worship time Sundays at 8:15 a.m. with a traditional service at 11:00 a.m. At this time a new emphasis was put on Small Group Ministry. Many groups such as a grief group, sewing group, men's group and others were started and many continue today.

In 2006 a committee was formed to plan a renovation to the sanctuary and expansion of the parking area. In 2007, in consultation with a professional designer, the chancel area was redesigned, new carpet, additional lighting, and a complete new sound and video system were installed. This was funded by a capital campaign that raised approximately \$400,000.

During the 200-2012 period, the church and its members participated in many missions throughout the community, such as Free Noon Meal, Habitat for Humanity, Lend a Hand projects and many others. St. Andrews also continued its long-standing tradition of contributions to Presbytery and General Assembly mission.

Reverend Jonathan Speck is the current interim minister while a Pastor Nominating Committee is searching for a permanent Head of Staff.