

A History of the First Presbyterian Church, Wilkinsburg 1866-1983

written by Rhonda Apossos in 2016.

INTRODUCTION.

2016 marks the 125th anniversary of the Edgewood Church, and the 150th anniversary of The First Presbyterian Church, Wilkinsburg. During our celebration, we wanted to pay homage to both great churches. Indeed, there is reason to be proud of both mother churches and our current congregation includes former members of both Churches. Thus, it was with great pleasure that I researched the history of The First Presbyterian Church, Wilkinsburg (hereinafter “FPCW”).

HISTORY OF WILKINSBURG.

Following the defeat of and eventual treaties with Indigenous Americans, Religious European Settlers began building homes in what is now Wilkinsburg in the late 1700's. In 1790, Dunning McNair drafted plans for a village 2.5 miles west of the Church of Bullock Penns (Beulah). The current Wood Street marked the East end of the village. The western border was an Indian trail, now Swissvale Avenue. Initially, population growth was slow because large landowners dominated. By 1840, the first post office in the village was established under the name Wilkinsburgh (The final h was dropped and the name officially changed to Wilkinsburg in 1843).

Population in Wilkinsburg grew with each Census from 1880 through 1950. This is largely attributed to the Railroad. The main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad came through the village in 1851. By 1853, Wilkinsburg Station had four daily trains to Pittsburgh. This allowed residents access to work and Wilkinsburg was largely a bedroom community. In 1873, Wilkinsburg was annexed to the City of Pittsburgh, but returned to independent status in 1876. Wilkinsburg became a borough on October 5, 1887. This led to more growth and improvements including paved streets, street lights, fire stations and police stations.

As of 1870, Wilkinsburg prohibited Bars and Taverns. The Borough continued to ban the sale of alcohol on premises for consumption, but for a short period following Prohibition(1933-1935). In 1935, Religious Concerns as well as disorder associated with the Saloons led to a landslide vote returning the ban . Wilkinsburg remained “dry” for 80 years. It was not until 2015, that the hope of tax revenue caused voters to overturn the long ban and permit bars, taverns and restaurants to sell alcohol for consumption.¹

The 1960 Census marked the first population decline which has continued through the present day. Analysts attribute population decline to the decline of the steel

¹ The Pittsburgh Post Gazette,5/19/15.

industry and other manufacturers in the general Pittsburgh area. There was also a corresponding drop in median household income which then led to a spiraling decline in growth of any kind.

FIRST FIFTY YEARS, 1866-1916.

In its past Wilkinsburg has been called both “The Holy City” and “The City of Churches.” During its heyday, FPCW greatly contributed to both appellations.

FPCW preceded the Edgewood Presbyterian Church by twenty five years. Similar to the genesis of the Edgewood Church, the desire for a church in Wilkinsburg grew from home prayer meetings and a popular sabbath school which taught approximately 200 “adherents.”² Rev. George Taylor, a Pastor at FPCW, described the Church as the fourth child of Beulah Church. Indeed the Sabbath School was originally a mission of the Beulah Church. The Beulah Church, originally the Church of Bullock Penns, dates its first worship to 1758, although it was not formally recognized by the Presbytery until 1784. In 1866, the Beulah Church was described as the center of religious interest for miles around.³

However, as happened in Edgewood, the residents of Wilkinsburg desired to have a church closer to home. Rev Taylor described Wilkinsburg at that time as a scattered hamlet populated by settlers and explained home-makers “could not build homes and at the same time enjoy conveyances.”⁴ Thus, it was felt that due to difficulties with travel, especially in inclement weather, a Church in Wilkinsburg was needed. According to Rev Taylor, the preliminary meetings which led to the organization of the Church were the “center of interest in the town.”⁵ All the “leading citizens” supported the movement, the most active part being taken by Edward Thompson and the Rev. John M. Hastings, a former pastor of Beulah.

In April 1866, the Presbytery of Blairsville granted a Petition presented by John W. Milligan and approved the request for the organization of a Presbyterian Church in Wilkinsburg. The Committee on Organization consisted of Rev. Adam Torrence, Rev. Benjamin L. Agnew, Rev. James Davis, Duncan Hamilton, D. H. Shyrock, and John Haymaker.

On May 10, 1866, the representative committee met in the old Academy building on Center Avenue - between North and Wallace Avenue- for the inaugural worship service of the Church. At the close of Service, twenty-seven charter members were

²George Taylor, *A Brief History of the First Presbyterian Church, Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania*, Reed & Witting, 1916.

³ *A Brief History*, pg 17.

⁴ *A Brief History*, pg. 18.

⁵ *A Brief History*, pg. 19.

dismissed from Beulah and admitted into the new Church: Edward Thompson; Lydia Thompson; John Semple M.D; Nancy Semple; I.G. MacFarlane; Margaret MacFarlane; John MacFarlane; Luke Davison; Nancy Davison; Mary M. Jackson; Mary M. Deitrich; Elizabeth Young; Mary Book; John W. Milligan; Joseph R. Milligan; Mary M. Milligan; E. McNair Horner; Mary Horner; John R. Bracken; Elizabeth Bracken; Sarah Miller.; Isabella Miller; Margaret Miller; Elizabeth Miller; Martha McManus; Margaret Johnston; and Elizabeth Taylor. Two elders were elected: John Milligan and Dr. Semple.

Worship continued in the Academy building for the first three and a half years of the Church. During this time, the Church did not have its own pastor. Nonetheless, FPCW persevered. Members contributed each week to cover the cost of a pastor for the next Sabbath and despite the lack of a pastor, thirty seven new members were admitted to the Church, thirty from other churches and seven on confession of faith.

FPCW installed its first pastor, the Reverend Samuel M. Henderson on November 26, 1867. Rev. Henderson remained at the Church for over 10 years tendering his resignation on July 3, 1878. During Rvd. Henderson's tenure, 272 members were added, 182 from other churches and 90 upon their confession of faith. In 1868, three additional Elders were installed.: Robert S. Davis, John Cree, and the Honorable Moses Hampton. FPCW was now one of the flourishing suburban churches. The Sabbath School was described as the very life of the Church and during Rev. Henderson's tenure, attendance doubled.

On April 29, 1869, a new church building was formally dedicated for worship. The land - on Sixth Avenue near Wood Street - was a donation from Wilkinsburg's benefactor, Hon. James Kelly, who was given a choice pew in the Church. Construction took approximately one and a half years at a cost of over \$9,000. The building was a brick edifice, sixty-five feet long, forty-five feet wide, and equipped with a very useful basement where the Congregation worshipped beginning in January 1869 until the superstructure was completed. The Rev. S. F. Scovall, the pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, preached the sermon and many local ministers participated in the service. The worship service was well attended. According to Rev. Taylor, "the only drawback to the day was the existence of a considerable debt. No one but those who experienced that siege of sacrifice, of self denial, and of hard work can ever understand the real value and true cost of such an undertaking." ⁶

Throughout the late 1800's FPCW continued to grow both during short terms when the church was without a pastor, but especially when a Pastor was at the helm. Rev. John Irwin was installed as the second Pastor on July 9, 1879 where he remained through June 10, 1884. During his ministry, 111 new members were added to the roles of the Church. On January 1, 1885, the Reverend Samuel H. Moore was installed as Pastor . He remained at FPCW until his resignation on May 1, 1895. During this time, 880 new members joined the Church. The Sabbath School attendance grew to

⁶ *A Brief History*, pg. 28.

652. Reverend Taylor boasted that the elaborate Christmas entertainments had become the standard for other schools in the vicinity.⁷

During this thriving period, the Church Building was so packed the building was enlarged to double its seating capacity. In May 1887, worship was held in the new structure. Again Rvd. Taylor noted only one drawback, the debt incurred, "Of the \$18,000 which the edifice cost, only \$5,000 had been raised at it's completion. But to the people of the village this new church spelled progress ... To the members of the Church it was a venture which for those days revealed their great faith and set them apart as a people with a true Christian confidence."⁸

The Church then expended great energy in fundraising activity. Women's groups held A Grand Bazaar in the auditorium before seats were installed which raised over \$1,000. Additionally, they held many suppers in an effort to liquidate the debt.

The Church also remained active in its outside mission work. The Foreign Missionary Society grew in membership and works. FPCW also organized the Women's Home Missionary Society on January 10 1879. This was an outgrowth of the Pastor's Aid Committee and was organized in response to a growing problem in the Pittsburgh vicinity and the urging of the General Assembly in 1875.⁹ A new mission the "Moore Band" was organized on January 20, 1889. This group raised money for mission work, furnished a room at Presbyterian Hospital, and aided many small charities.

However, the ladies of the Church believed they had more to offer and took the Park Place Mission under their wing. The Park Place mission grew out of a home sabbath school where Lavinia Smith taught Josephine Reed and a small group in her home but which had grown into a full Sabbath School, acquired a building and came under the tutelage of the Sixth United Presbyterian Church. In 1882, a Committee of twelve ladies of FPCW was appointed to fundraise for a Park Place Chapel. The first check of \$50 was donated by Mr. H. C. Frick and the Chapel was dedicated on October 1, 1882. In 1888, the school became a formal mission of FPCW where it thrived. Eventually, a Committee was appointed, applied for application, and the East End Presbyterian Church was organized. This Church first worshipped together in the Chapel on June 5, 1894. In 1914, the Church merged with Grace Presbyterian Church to form Waverly.¹⁰

During this time, two outside events occurred which impacted FPCW. In 1870, a new church was organized in Swissvale which founding FPCW member John W. Milligan joined. In 1869, there was a reunion of the Old and New School branches of the

⁷ *A Brief History*, pg. 48.

⁸ *A Brief* pg. 50.

⁹ *A Brief History*, pg. 40

¹⁰ The Pittsburgh Press, May 18, 1929,pg 5.

Presbyterian Church. Subsequently, the Presbytery reorganized its boundaries so that FPCW became part of the Pittsburgh Presbytery.

In the late 1800's the population growth in Wilkesburg coupled with a religious fervor sweeping the Nation,¹¹ led to an explosive increase in Church membership. Reverend Thomas Parry was Pastor of FPCW between April 23, 1896 and October 18, 1905. During Pastor Parry's tenure, 1901 members were added, 1117 by letters of dismissal and 784 by profession of faith.

The result of this too large church was the formation of two new churches. The first group to declare its independence was the Cavalry Church, located on Montiere and Swissvale Avenue in Wilkesburg, organized on May 4, 1903. The Second Church called "Second Church" was organized on October 27, 1903 in the Penn Hall of Wilkesburg, later moving to South Avenue and Mulberry Street in Wilkesburg. This building later became the home of the Mulberry Presbyterian Church.

Although, the splits were difficult, FPCW rose to the occasion and supported both churches until they became independent. Pastor Trumbell Lee served the Church between November 1906 and his death on May 4, 1913. Pastor Lee dealt both with the timeless issues of shepherding his flock as well as contemporary issues where he also served as chairman on the General Assembly's Committee on Temperance. Rev Lee was followed by the prolific church historian Reverend George Taylor who became pastor on December 30, 1913. Initially, Church life continued as it had in the past. In 1914-1915, the Sabbath School membership was 709. However, Pastor Taylor's ministry was largely occupied by the World War.

WORLD WAR I, 1914-1918.

Long before the U. S. declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, FPCW felt the impact of the Great War. Not only was the congregation stunned by World events, but many of the members joined the Allied Forces before the U.S. did. Likewise, FPCW men were quick to act following the U.S. declaration so that prior to the first draft being put into operation during the month of September, 1917, thirty percent of FPCW men were already enlisted.

During this time in history, there was no attempt made to keep the Church out of the politics of war. Instead, Rev. Taylor, the Pastor during the War, described "In time of war the emotion uppermost in the hearts of a people is the spirit of patriotism. " ¹² Accordingly, the Church hosted the American Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., and other groups aiding in the war efforts.

Additionally, in 1917, FPCW sponsored a Series of lectures designed to promote intelligent patriotism: "British Empire: The Problem of World Power;" "France: How

¹¹ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Yale University Press, 1972.

¹² George Taylor, Jr., *Our Defenders*, FPCW, 1921, pg. 13.

a Nation Grows;" "Austria-Hungary: The Problem of Races;" "German Empire: A Study in Social Solidarity;" "Russia Autocracy and Revolution;" and "The Balkans: The Problem of Small States." In 1918, the general subject was "Smaller Nationalities that will present a problem at the Peace Table." The five nations discussed were Alsace-Lorraine, Bohemia, Poland, Armenia, and Palestine.

During the War, FPCW Services were marked with a special poignancy as the Church prayed for the members in battle and recognized those men on leave. When a service member did appear for worship, they were asked/permitted to address the Congregation. Rvd. Taylor recalled, "The tone of the Services, the word of recognition to the men in uniform on brief leave, the addresses from those who had seen life in the trenches and had experienced the heat of the battle, together with the calls of the Liberty Loans, the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A., all directed the energies of the Church to one end - winning the war."¹³ On the Sabbath morning of January 6, 1918, a Service flag was dedicated in the Church, the gift of Mrs. Luman Hagan. At that time, FPCW had 58 members in the service. The Sermon began, "Today, we are to dedicate this Service Flag, and put behind these fifty-eight, who are carrying the colors for this Church, the formal consecration of our lives." Reverend Taylor described that the dedication service "brought a new zeal into our patriotism."

The War also impacted the duties of the Pastor. In February 1918, Pastor Taylor was released from FPCW to serve as a voluntary chaplain and went to work at Camp Upton. In July and August 1918, Rev. Taylor was responsible for religious works at Markleton Hospital which he oversaw from afar.

In May 1918, the Church at its annual congregational meeting decided to send a letter to each of the members in service - which numbered 88 at this time. The letter concluded, "It (the letter) has been blessed by our prayers, and is followed by our confidence in you, and our willingness to do anything that you may fight a victorious cause in this present war." Only one FPCW member failed to return home. Henry Tounsand Carpenter was killed in action on November 2, 1918 at Villers-Devant-Dun. France during the engagement along the Meuse-Argonne front.

With the signing of the Armistice, there was an increased interest in honoring those who had served. On May 25, 1919, a bronze tablet (plaque) was unveiled for Henry Tounsand Carpenter with a special service and sermon. Mr. Carpenter had been a senior at the University of Pittsburgh when he enlisted in the Aviation Service. In his sermon, Rev. Taylor preached "It was God's will that he should fall, and God will place upon the broken hearts of the home the healing hand of His only begotten Son. To us he is not dead. He has only entered into that great cloud of witnesses who abide with us as an unseen power in our work."

On February 29, 1920, the Service Flag was demobilized at a special service where a photograph of each of the 124 service members was to be given to the Church. The

¹³ *Our Defenders*, pg. 13-14.

Service was one of the largest in the history of the Church for the purpose to express the deep abiding gratitude to the “Defenders” for their service to the nation.¹⁴ “To this end, then, we demobilize our Service Flag, believing that our part in this World War has left in the nations concerned a new dynamic for a better world, a world in which all men will have the privilege to grow great and strong, as God intended them.”

The Church took another step to honor and memorialize its service members when it commissioned a bronze tablet from Hermon A. MacNeil, a well known sculptor of the time. Rvd. Taylor explained, “memory is short-lived and the things which are common knowledge for people living in their details become buried history as the years go by.”¹⁵ The tablet was unveiled on November 20, 1921.

Rvd. Taylor described the plaque as one of the finest Memorial Tablets erected by any religious organizations. He explained:

“This declares that the outcome of the World War has not yet been revealed to humanity, but that there has begun in the nations of the world a process of reconstruction by destroying the foundations upon which the social structure of the old world was built and by making possible the creation of a new world on the rock bottom of a freedom of opportunity for the peoples...”

BETWEEN THE WARS, 1919-1938.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, FPCW remained a beacon of activity for its members and the Community. The Church hosted a multitude of events ranging from the Women’s Christian Temperance Union to Evangelical Services. Again during this period in our history, there was a great religious enthusiasm. Local newspapers advertised many church activities (pancake dinners, bazars, card parties, plays, bingo) and revivals throughout Western PA.¹⁶ The Women’s Home and Foreign Missionary Society met at the Church in March 1929.¹⁷ On October 5, 1929 a singing quartet of the FPCW advertised a bridge challenge.¹⁸

Likewise, Reverend Taylor was active at both FPCW and the greater community. In November 1929, he presided at a service at the First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh for the inauguration of Dr. Gaius J. Slosser as a Professor at the Western Theological Seminary. On May 19, 1929, he assisted in a Service where the cornerstone of the Waverly Church was being laid.¹⁹ Also in 1929, Rev. Taylor was elected the President of the Sabbath Association of Western PA.²⁰

¹⁴ *Our Defenders*, pg. 22

¹⁵ *Our Defenders*, pg. 23.

¹⁶ The Pittsburgh Press, 11/20/29, pg 2.

¹⁷ The Pittsburgh Press, 3/21/29, pg. 14.

¹⁸ The Pittsburgh Press, 10/5/29, pg. 11.

¹⁹ The Pittsburgh Press, 5/18 29, pg 5.

²⁰ The Pittsburgh Press, 11/5/29, pg 14.

WORLD WAR II, 1939-1945

During war time, people again turned to the Church. In 1940,1941, FPCW offered a multitude of adult education classes and Sabbath School attendance was substantial.²¹ By 11/22/41, the Nation was becoming quite concerned with the European War and two Local Pastors teamed up with a Rabbi to discuss the effect of the war on churches.²²

Rev. George Taylor retired as Pastor on July 9, 1944. The next Pastor James Robert Speer was not installed until 2/1/45.

On March 24, 1945, the Post Gazette reported the church news between an article titled "Patton Men Across the Rhine" and an article announcing that the German defenses were completely demoralized.²³ At FPCW, Rev. Speer's sermon was entitled "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" The Post Gazette further reported that 100s of Pittsburghers would be attending Palm Sunday Services with renewed hopes for Peace.²⁴

LAST YEARS, 1946-1983.

The Board of Trustees minutes throughout the late 1940s and 1950s largely address insular concerns. In June 1947, there was a reference to budget woes so that the Trustees requested additional funds from the Congregation by means of their weekly giving.²⁵ However, the vast majority of issues addressed at the meetings were quite mundane, eg. the Sexton suffered a work injury; a new back door was needed for the manse; the Youth were not permitted to host a Saturday meeting as this violated Church protocol; and funds were not available for improvements to the manse as requested by the Pastor's wife.²⁶

Contrary to this insular focus, in 1946, the three Boards of the Church agreed to defer a Building Improvement project so that FPCW could instead focus on The Worldwide Restoration Fund for the Building of the Christ Community Abroad and the special call for funds by the Presbytery of Pittsburgh.

In 1948, the Building issue resurfaced and following a Congregational Meeting, a Building Finance Committee was organized. A letter was sent to the members soliciting contributions, "We feel that you recognize the physical needs of the Church Property, at more than 50 years old. Among the needs for capital expenditures are modernization of the kitchen, new sanitary plumbing, new entrance at the rear of the Church auditorium from the basement and erection of partitions for an additional

²¹ The Pittsburgh Post Gazette,1/20/40, pg 5; and11/22/41 pg 18.

²² Ibid

²³ The Pittsburgh Post Gazette,3/24/45, pg.4

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, FPCW, 6/16/47

²⁶ Minutes of the Board Of Trustees FPCW, 4/14/48

Church Office. Among the immediate maintenance items are washing the walls, replacement of cement floor and organ tuning.”²⁷ The goal was to raise \$150,000.

Funds were raised and the work was conducted one project at a time. In 1948, the Clerk of the Session wrote thanking the Board for their foresight and praising the value of the work done to date.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was reference in the minutes to some members having difficulty in meeting their pledges. One member sent in stocks to be sold in an effort to cover his uncollected pledge. A Loyalty Committee had been formed to canvas members regarding pledges. Nonetheless, the Session requested that Benevolence be increased in the 1961 Budget.²⁸ At this same time, the Church decided to follow the modern trend and have members make one pledge covering both benevolence and general funding.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Church had to contend not only with the population decline in Wilkinsburg but also with the overall decline in nationwide church attendance. Likewise, the Session minutes record a drastic decline in Pittsburgh Presbytery members.²⁹ Declining FPCW membership arose from transfers and death but also from many former members complete inactivity. To adjust, FPCW sold property and created a planning task force. This led to the recognition of multiple Church goals which in turn led to more task forces.

On October 12, 1981, Task Force IV presented a report to the Session which was ultimately shared with the Congregation. The report attempted to address the question of “Where the Church is going?” The Task Force first analyzed “What is the Church?” concluding that the Church is the body of Christ with Christ as our head.” “As Christ’s body, we are called to be an extension of his work. “ This section of the report ended, “In order to better understand what has been happening to our church and what our future opportunities are, we will look first at what has happened to our community.”

The Report then analyzed the Borough of Wilkinsburg and FPCW itself. The Task Force first outlined the population decline in Wilkinsburg:

1960	30,066
1970	26,780
1980	23,669

²⁷ Letter of FPCW Building Finance Committee Chairman, E.B. Roberts, 2/20/48

²⁸ Minutes of the Board of Trustees, FPCW, 10/24/60.

²⁹ Minutes of the Session, FPCW, 11/14/77.

Additionally, the Task Force noted the change in racial makeup of the Community; decline in school age children; increase in the retirement age population; and migration of the higher income working adults. Interestingly, the railroad which had initially contributed to Wilkinsburg's population growth, was now seen as a detriment where the tracks acted as a physical barrier between the east and west sides of the Community.

Regarding the analyses of FPCW, it was highlighted that the membership had decreased from 1558 in 1960 to 397 at the end of 1980. From 1975 to 1980, the Church roll declined by 156. The estimated average age of each member was 63 with the largest age group in the 70-79 bracket. Moreover, 50% of the members did not attend worship nor regularly partake in communion.

Although the Church building was described as being in good repair, at approximately 75 years old, the Task Force conceded it was not accessible to individuals with physical handicaps and was not well insulated.

The financial situation was even more alarming:

	Regular Contributions	Total Income	Expenses
1976	\$64,013.	\$82,450.	\$84,958.
1977	\$68,215.	\$90,794.	\$95,291.
1978	\$70,459.	\$90,572.	\$93,833.
1979	\$67,646.	\$84,950.	\$93,966.
1980	\$63,452.	\$98,625.	\$117,56.

It was obvious to all that the Church's expenses had exceeded their income for well over five years. Accordingly, FPCW used its entire contingency fund which had been created in past years when there was surplus money. Additional property was sold. Capital investments had also been raided and liquidated when needed.

Another sign of the times, was a decrease in size to multiple Church organizations. The Session was decreased from 21 to 18 in 1978 and although there was a full membership in 1981, the Session was finding it very difficult to get members for its committees. Filling membership for the Board of Deacons was even more difficult. This Board was also decreased from 21 to 18 in 1978. However, in both 1980 and 1981, the Nominating Committee was unable to fill the Deacon vacancies and there were 12-13 deacons in 1980 and 1981. The Choir was decreased in size but still noted to greatly contribute to Worship. An Adult Sunday School was the full extent of the Christian Education; there was no Youth Fellowship and no Youth Sunday School since 1974 due to lack of participants. Regarding the Women's Association, there were 3 women's circles in 1981, decreased from 13 in 1960. Due to the age of the members, the number of meetings for the Association was dropped from 10 per year to 4. However, these women worked hard and raised nearly \$10,000 with their two

yearly fundraisers. This compared to the group raising \$6,000 in 1960. Moreover, in 1980, the women gave over 50% of the funds raised to benevolence.

Following the report of Task Force IV, the Congregation was queried and six options were presented to Session and eventually the Congregation:

- I EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF A MERGER;
- II DISBAND AS A CHURCH;
- III CONTINUE AS WE ARE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE;
- IV COMMIT OURSELVES TO BECOMING A GROWING CHURCH;
- V RELOCATE IN SMALLER BUILDING;
- VI DEVELOP COOPERATIVE MINISTRIES WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Given these choices, it is not surprising that FPCW voted in favor of exploring a merger. Dr. Stewart Lawrence was the final Pastor at FPCW installed on 2/8/76 and remaining through the merger. In July 1982, FPCW sent out letters to seven local churches raising the topic of possible merger. Among the churches chosen was Edgewood Presbyterian Church.³⁰ Following meetings with and attendance at Worship services at the various churches, the merger committee outlined the advantages/disadvantages offered by each prospective church merger. On January 4, 1983, the Session voted in favor of exploring possible merger with Edgewood.³¹ At this time FPCW members totaled 351, although only approximately 1/3 of this number had attended recent Worship. Negotiations progressed well and on March 14 1983, Session unanimously approved a motion that five members be elected to serve on a committee for merging the congregation of the FPCW and the Edgewood Presbyterian Church and forming a new church.³² Thus, FPCE was created....

As we continue the mission of our Church, let us remember those that have come before us and continue the good works initiated by the many great men and women of FPCW and Edgewood Presbyterian Church.

³⁰ Minutes of the Session, FPCW,9/13/82

³¹ Minutes of the Session,FPCW,1/4/83

³² Ibid, 3/14/83