

Centenary.

1869

1969

WILLIS UNITED CHURCH

DRUMBO

— ONTARIO



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Willis United Church

The First Presbyterian Church in Blenheim	1834
The First Willis Presbyterian Blenheim	1848
The Primitive Methodist Church Drumbo	1857
The Wesleyan Methodist Church Drumbo	1861
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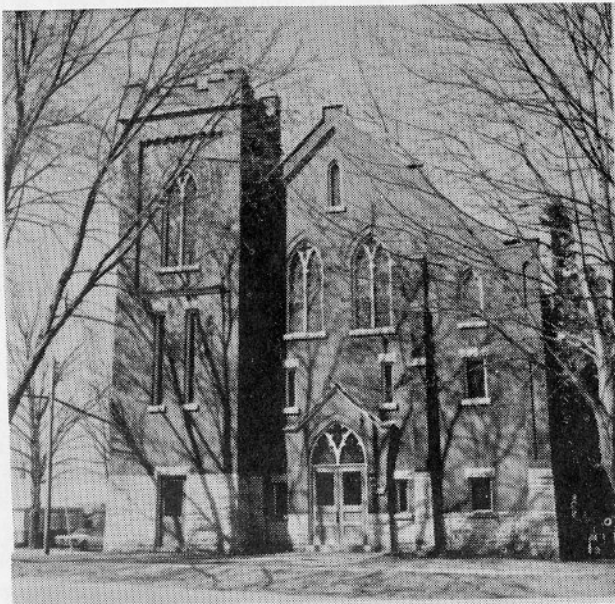
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*The History of
Willis United Church*

DRUMBO — ONTARIO

1869

1969



The contents of the book are in no way intended to be a complete account of the history of Willis United Church. It is a brief review of some of the highlights. We regret any omissions or inaccuracies that might cause any individual or church family embarrassment or disappointment.

Thanks are extended to those who furnished photographs and those who contributed in any way in the compilation of this History of Willis United Church.

The Centennial Committee express their appreciation to Miss Jessie Cowan for her time and effort in compiling this history of Willis United Church.

FORWARD INTO HISTORY
One Hundred Years
Of Witnessing
For Christ



A century of living in one community is exceedingly difficult to imagine. The conditions that existed in the social, industrial and religious life of this community one hundred years ago have little in common with those today, and yet, the life of the Church of Christ still speaks, and is relevant.

Our forefathers built on the established faith of Christians in other lands, and each generation has passed on to the next "a heritage of faith" in the "possibilities of God". Paul, speaking to the Church at Corinth, reminded his congregation of the nature of their service: "Each of us performed the task which the Lord allotted to him! I planted the seed, Appollos watered it; but God made it grow". (1 Corinthians 3:6. N.E.B.)

We pause to celebrate and reminisce; but let us not linger too long. The future beckons us to action lest the opportunity be lost. For one hundred years, Willis United Church has been growing, and before our eyes appears the panorama of pioneering men and women who in life's many and varied experiences, have sought to express that life in and through the life of the Church of Jesus Christ.

This book presents the unfolding drama of the past century, it shows the many highways taken in order that the Word of God might be revealed to us. Years from now this book will be read by young eyes not yet born; and we hope its contents will be a small testimony to our faith and a source of inspiration and action for them.

The unfolding story of Willis United Church is a fascinating narrative.

Yours in Christ,
Percy Brown, Pastor,
Willis United Church, 1969.

EARLY SETTLEMENT OF BLenheim

In 1793 the first white settler, Thomas Horner, came to the township of Blenheim which at that time was an unbroken forest, on the invitation of the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe. The Governor offered him the township if he would encourage settlers to come into Canada and help to open up the country. The first three concessions were surveyed for his accommodation and the whole township was completed by 1798. Mr. Horner built a sawmill just west of Princeton and in 1797 the first plank was sawed in the first sawmill in the County of Oxford. Mr. Horner then erected the first grist mill in the county.

The first settlers were the Loyalists who came in great numbers from the newly independent country called the United States. About a million persons entered Upper Canada alone between 1820 and 1850, Irish, Scottish, English, American, German, in about that order of numbers. They brought their original denominations with them. The Methodists, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, but especially the Methodists, went out and laboured among the people. The Presbyterians imported their leaders from Scotland and the Methodists produced their own. The communities were loosely joined in denominational groupings at first. But soon after 1867 the year of the union of the provinces the churches, which had six or more branches, followed into a union.

By 1834 all the concessions were named and the farm lots were ready for the settlers. Many of the homesites north as far as Concession 11 were taken by Scots and the Irish from the British Isles and these belonged mainly to the Presbyterian Church. The newcomers brought with them echoes of Old Land disputes as well as the Gaelic language which they valiantly endeavoured to preserve. The ministers were forced to preach the same sermon in the two languages, English and Gaelic. These early pioneers merit a special tribute for their sincerity and dedication. They insisted that a place be found in their lives and communities for the Word of God and the Christian ethic. They were men of great physical and mental energy. They are true heroes and should be held in grateful remembrance. They found this township a tangled forest, the valleys swampy and by their toil and sweat left it blooming like a flower garden.

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN BLenheim

In 1833 two missionaries were ordained in Glasgow, Scotland, one of whom, Rev. George Murray, became the first settled pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Blenheim. The closing words of the sermon given by Rev. Mitchell of Glasgow on this occasion were, "The Lord go forth with you and preserve you. Whither can you go from His presence or flee from His spirit? God is in the distant country to which you are destined, and I trust you will find him there. Depart, for God is sending you far hence to the Gentiles".

In 1834 Rev. George Murray was appointed the minister of Ayr, and Blenheim Presbyterian church, which was situated one mile east of Princeton on the Governor's Road, now Highway No. 2. Services were held in each church every two weeks. In the absence of the minister, an elder preached the sermon. He continued in his pastoral work for five years and resigned about 1840. Near Princeton he bought fifty acres of land and according to some records he gave the site for the church building on the south-west corner of his farm and contributed liberally to its erection. His mission was to organize churches and this he continued to do. He also became interested in education and in 1843 was appointed superintendent of schools in Blenheim and later of the county. He frequently returned to the church to address the Missionary Society and for baptismal services. In 1862 he still owned Lot 11, Concession 1. "Long after he retired, he preached in the churches of Galt, Ayr and Paris", writes the Hon. James Young of Galt. "His discourses were marked by much ability and were listened to with great acceptance until his latest years." This church was abandoned in 1848.

"This church, my parents attended some eight or ten years before I was born," writes John Spears, "then when we moved from the third concession to the fifth, we still attended that church. Here I would like to give you a snapshot of the first Sunday I attended that church. It was a beautiful autumn morning and we were up early to get ready for that five mile walk on foot. We were joined on every concession corner by neighbours and when we reached a certain log which was close to the meeting house, the ladies put on their stockings and shoes which they had been carrying, let down their skirts, every one arriving at the service in proper attire.

"Now you may think that these early settlers would be rather a shabby, gentil squad—not a bit of it. No man or woman ever left Scotland without their 'Sabbath claes' which consisted of a beaver plug hat and a blue black suit with a quilted Scotch collar which I have never seen surpassed in my time. Then, with regard to the ladies, they were equally well dressed, and as I cannot remember the fashions of the day, I shall just sum it up in 'Bonnie', which means everything in Scotch.

"When we got there, it was Sacrament Sunday and we had a very long sermon, to me at least, but recess came at last, and with lunch and a drink out of the old oaken bucket which swung in the well and an apple from Miss Galbraith (the first I had ever seen) my spirits revived. Then, we were called in again and had a very, very long sermon, for the old gentleman never stopped short of 'fourthly' and generally 'still further'. I arrived home at last, a tired and sleepy boy. I have often wondered since, if we were asked to take that journey today, how many of us would be in church. Not many!"

The next minister in charge of Blenheim was Rev. William

Cairncrops. Two men, Mr. Meldrum and Rev. R. Lindsay, minister in Ayr, were appointed by the Paris Presbytery to visit Blenheim. They reported that Rev. Cairncrops preached there frequently and that the people were desirous of having a congregation organized and a church building nearer the centre of the township. The Presbytery evidently approved of this request for the two men were instructed to organize the congregation and ordain elders. The building was erected before 1848 for Rev. Lindsay dispensed sacrament at this church early in that year as required by the Presbytery when there was a considerable attendance.

In 1844 there was a great disruption in the Church of Scotland. A large body of ministers and commissioners withdrew from the assembly and formed another which became known as the assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. Rev. R. Lindsay of Ayr and Rev. Duncan McRuar who accepted the charge of the newly formed Blenheim congregation, joined the Free Church of Scotland. It is not clear from the church records whether the congregation was ever a unit in this assembly.

THE FIRST WILLIS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLENHEIM

The new church was named Willis Presbyterian Church Blenheim after a prominent churchman in Upper Canada, Dr. Michael Willis. At this time he was principal of Knox College, Toronto. He was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in 1870. The records show that he conducted a service in this church shortly after it was built, also a baptism service at which he baptized in 1856 Robert Henry, son of George Wilson, yeoman, and Margaret Hills and Margaret, daughter of Thomas Cockburn, yeoman, and Allison Turner.

Willis Church was built on a half acre of land given by Thomas McCrow on the south-west corner of his farm, lot 11, Concession 4 on the middle townline. The contract was taken by Nenian Lindsay, the same man who built the first church. While the church was being built, services were held in Mr. McCrow's new barn. The district served by this church stretched from Burford on the south to concession 10 on the north, on the east to Wolverton to the bend two miles east of Richwood, and west beyond Showers Corners.

The building was no doubt a very plain wooden structure and had probably a rough-cast exterior. It was frequently necessary to replaster both the interior and exterior. The pulpit stood on a high platform with the precentor's desk or table just below it. The precentor did not have to pay rent for his seat at this desk. Oil lamps were used as chimneys and coal oil was purchased. The meetings of the session and managers were often held in the McCrow home or in the school house and these, as well as the annual meetings, were held in the afternoon.

THE FIRST MINISTER—REV. DUNCAN McRUAR, 1844-1854

Soon after Rev. McRuar began his pastoral duties, he was asked to preach in the Paris Church and this he did on Sunday afternoons. He stayed for ten years and the only source of information relating to this period is a Baptismal register. The first name entered in it is Duncan McRuar Kay. Apparently it was customary to give the minister's name to the first son to be born after the new minister's arrival.

Among the earliest entries are: James, son of Thomas Spears, yeoman, and Catherine Daniels, Con. 3, Feb. 6, 1850; James, son of Gabriel McGaw, blacksmith, and Anne McDonald, Concession 5, 1851; Duncan, son of Robert Fair and E. Millar, Con. 5, 1852; Jane, daughter of Hugh Allan and Helen Spears, 1852; Mary, daughter of Henry Watters and Helen Hill, 1853; Mary, daughter of Alexander Sparks and Hellen Ford, 1854; Robert, son of David Hogarth and Ann Brown, Con. 8, 1855; George, son of James Waldie and Isabella White, Con. 9, 1855; Margaret, daughter of John Lillico and Elizabeth Craig McEwan, Con. 9, 1855.

REV. JOHN GILLESPIE, 1855-1866

By 1855 Willis Church asked to withdraw from its connection with the Paris church. This was sanctioned as the two congregations were too far apart for the minister to do justice to the duties of two churches. In 1854 an ordained missionary, Rev. John Gillespie, was called to Willis Church, no objections having been brought forward against his character, conversation and life. He being the moderator and clerk of the session, has left behind the first record which covered a period of eleven years. A constitution was set up and is included in the records of the secretary of the managing committee. The session was composed of Messrs. Spears, Hardie, Allison, Waldie, McKenzie who remained elders until 1869, Hardie and Allison being replaced by R. Richardson and William Dickson in 1864.

THE MANAGING COMMITTEE SECRETARY-TREASURERS

Alex Murray
David Bastedo
William McGaw
John Clinton
George Wilson
James Rutherford

John Clinton, 1856-1857
W. B. Crinkley, 1858
William Dickson, 1859-1861
Robert McLean, 1861-1864
A. McArthur, 1864-1869

Church funds were collected in two ways. Two boxes costing \$1.50 to hold voluntary givings were placed near the door. These collections were used for the maintenance of the church. Evidently dissatisfied with this arrangement, the session and the managers agreed to take the usual Sabbath collection by going around with the collection box, as was done in neighbouring congregations and not at the church door. Intimation of this change was to be announced from the pulpit.

Funds for the minister's stipend were raised by levying a tax of four dollars (one pound) on each member and two dollars (ten shillings) on each adherent to be paid half yearly for the use of a pew. The session withheld certificates of membership from all parties leaving the congregation until they produced a certificate from the managers that they had left no arrears of stipend unpaid.

One secretary, W. B. Crinkley, drew a ground plan of the church showing the numbers on the pews to help him in assigning the pews. The last secretary, Archie McArthur, when he was under attack by Adam Allison who felt aggrieved for being asked to take his own daughter into his pew and who also published reports injurious to the position of the secretary, alleging that the secretary had put two of his children out of the church, explained that he was only doing his duty and was unanimously sustained by the board.

The first treasurer's report from June 1856 to January 1857:

Service of Rev. Gillespie	Cash on hand	\$ 28.25
to June 1856	Amount paid Treasurer	193.50
Service of Rev. Gillespie	Sabbath Collections	43.47
June 1856 to January,	Amount paid Treasurer	38.00
1857		250.00
Travelling expenses of		
Rev. Gillespie		16.75
Precentor's fee		10.00
Wood per Thos. Spears		3.50
		<hr/>
		\$317.75
		303.22
		<hr/>
Deficiency		\$ 14.53
		<hr/>
		\$303.22

The following is taken from a directory for the behaviour of the congregation during divine service in those early days:

When the time appointed for public worship is come, let the people enter the church and take their seats in a decent, grave and orderly manner.

In the time of public worship let all the people attend with gravity and reverence, forbearing to read anything, except what the minister is then reading; abstaining from all whispering, from salutations of persons present or coming in; from gazing about, smiling, sleeping and all other indecent behaviour.

Here is a partial list of members in 1855. The figure after the name indicates the number of the pew. Those without the number probably were in arrears:

Hugh Allan	10	W. B. Crinkley	61	Edward Fair	30
Adam Allison	62	John Clinton		M. B. French	25
John Bastedo	5	Geo. Cockburn	51	Wm. Dickson	45

Dr. Clark	2	J. Lillico	28	W. Murray	59
C. Galbraith	27	A. McArthur	22	R. Oliver	53
Wm. Waldie	49	Thos. McCrow	50	A. Patullo	29
Wm. Hardie	57	Mrs. H. McCrow	54	D. Randall	47
D. Hogarth		Wm. McGaw	4	J. Rutherford	8
J. Hunter	21	Geo. Wilson	53	W. Scott	50
T. Horner	13	Thos. McKenzie	40	Thos. Spears	10
J. Irving	52	Alex McKay	55	A. Sparks	6
A. Laidlaw	37	R. S. Mann	63	H. Watters	11

A PERIOD OF RAPID GROWTH

It must have been exciting to be living during the twenty years between 1850 and 1870. The township showed a remarkable growth and advancement during those years. In 1861, the population had jumped to 6,993, 2,039 of these were Methodists, 1,597 Presbyterians, children attending school numbered 1,427. Eight post offices were established, Canning, Chesterfield, Drumbo, Plattsville, Princeton, Richwood, Washington, Wolverton.

Drumbo became a post village on the line of the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway and the plan of the village was laid out on the completion of the railway line in 1854. The sale of lots was very rapid and it soon became a village of some pretensions. The Second Division Court was set up here. It contained ten stores, a foundry, a machine shop, a planing mill, blacksmith shop, wagon, shoe, cabinet, harness, and carpenter shops, eight good hotels, three churches, two Methodist, one Baptist, and an excellent school with 110 pupils. The population was 700. The above was taken from the Christian Guardian, a well-known publication of the Methodist Church.

This was a time of great prosperity because both farm and factory had the benefit of macadamized roads, railway transport, water transport, and world markets. The Crimean War 1854-1856 raised prices. The Civil War in the United States began in 1861-1865. The North drew heavily on us for supplies especially of grain. Farmers sold their wheat at \$1.75 a bushel and brewing barley sold readily on the market. Men could earn up to five dollars in the harvest fields.

The membership of Willis Church increased rapidly, reaching 158 members and 11 adherents in 1860. In 1857 the session, considering the frequency with which applications were made for Baptism, decided that it would conduce to decency and order as well as to the edification of the church to have the sacrament of Baptism dispensed in the church on the first Sabbath of each month. Rev. Gillespie during his pastorate baptized 150 children.

The office of precentor, which, of course, could only be held by men, was next in importance to that of the minister in the Sabbath services and required musical ability. The candidate agreed to go on trial by leading the singing in a service for one Sabbath. This

was done with the aid of the tuning fork to set the pitch. The session chose the precentor and he at this time was paid twenty dollars per annum.

The precentors were:

James Whitehead, 1857-1861

James Murray, 1862-1864

Robert McCrow, 1865-1869

James McArthur, 1869-1870

In this period of prosperity the congregation had two of their employees on strike for higher wages. The caretaker of the church stated that five dollars was not enough for attending to the stoves and demanded seven. The managers considered that this was an excessive demand but consented to pay it to him provided the fires were properly looked after an hour before the time of the service, attended to during the service, that the gates be closed and fastened after the congregation left, especially during the season when animals run at large.

The cleaning woman, Mrs. Hester, claimed that she should be paid extra for the extra work involved with the oil lamps and was granted 25 cents extra each year for cleaning the lamp chimneys.

Rev. J. Gillespie was paid his stipend of 500 dollars in pounds, shillings and pence in half yearly payments. He once refused to accept a large amount of silver as payment because silver was at a discount of 4 percent. R. S. Mann, a merchant in Drumbo, offered to exchange bills for silver within ten days and a unanimous vote of thanks was given Mr. Mann for his generous offer. In 1865 a motion that Rev. Gillespie be allowed to preach in Drumbo and Princeton in the afternoon on alternate Sundays carried by one vote over the amendment that he be restricted to the service of this church only.

THE DIVISION OF THE CHURCH—REV. HECTOR McQUARRIE, 1866-1877

In 1866 storm signals were raised at the annual meeting as the chairman referred to the peculiar condition of the congregation and recommended the meeting cherish kindness and forbearance to one another in the different questions that might come before it. One question was the salary to be offered to the new minister. As the contributions had risen to 850 dollars and although a large number thought the pew rent should be lowered, the majority agreed the stipend should be 600 dollars with an additional fifty dollars in lieu of a manse. The next minister, Rev. Hector McQuarrie, married shortly after his arrival, lived at first in Princeton then moved into a rented house in Drumbo. Another important question was the continuation of services in Drumbo. A motion that the minister should preach in Drumbo every Sabbath was defeated, but the motion that services be held in Drumbo every alternate Sunday afternoon carried with a larger majority.

The congregation considered acquiring a half acre of land for

a manse, building a fence around the church, sheds for the teams, and a vestry. Money was collected for building of a vestry and work began on the foundation. The Drumbo members were not in favour of this additional building and the upshot was the foundation for the vestry was filled up and the money collected refunded.

The following is part of 'The New Outlook' editorial of June 1927. In 1867 Canadian churchmen wore heavy and stiff garb and could indulge in controversial and revivalistic debates in which enormous physical and vocal energies were expended on getting hold of the crowds at camp meetings in hot weather and at meetings during cold winter nights, competing fiercely for the souls of men and the honour of their denominations. Many evangelists visiting among the congregations, stirred dissension among them causing a division and splitting of congregations. The tendency to subdivision was hard to reverse. In the Presbyterian church there were six subdivisions. The story was not all division for in 1866 two churches, the United Presbyterian of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland United under the name of Canada Presbyterian Church. Willis Church was a unit of this church as the inscription C.P. Church 1869 shows on the cement tablet in the vestibule of the present church. In 1875 all subdivisions united under the name of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In 1868 Rev. McQuarrie at the annual meeting spoke in favour of dividing the congregation, one to build a church in Princeton, the other in Drumbo. Strong opposition was voiced by many members but finally the motion for the division was carried by a few votes only when there was a written ballot, each member signing his name under for or against the motion. The session agreed that a petition could be sent to Paris Presbytery. This was signed by no less than 69 members who wished to continue the services in the old church and strongly disapproved of the division but this was set aside by the Presbytery.

WILLIS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DRUMBO

The Canada Presbyterian Church was built in Drumbo in 1869 and one in Princeton was completed early in 1871. Rev. McQuarrie continued as pastor of these two congregations until 1876. He, at the last service at the old church on March 5, 1871, served notice that services would be discontinued and on the next Sabbath they would be held in Princeton at 11 a.m. and at Drumbo at 3 p.m. Some of the members midway between the two villages organized a small congregation at Richwood but within a few years services were discontinued and they began to attend the Methodist Church at Richwood and others decided they didn't want to join either of the new congregations and built a new church on Concession 4 named St. Andrew's Blenheim, latter better known as Showers Corners Church.

The Drumbo congregation decided to retain the same name Willis Presbyterian. A half acre of land on the north-

west corner of Pinkham and Centre Streets was purchased from William Pinkham for fifty dollars. The church was built of white brick, no doubt made in the brick yards in Drumbo, with plain plastered walls and ceiling and large frosted windows. There was a large vestibule at the front with a bench around the north and east walls and board sidewalk leading to the entrance. Some years later a white picket fence was built across the front and south side but just a good close high board fence at the rear. A platform was set in the south fence just opposite the entrance, eight feet long and three feet high with steps for the use of those who came in a buggy or democrat. Still later, sheds were built at the rear as shelter for the horses. The work, except the brick laying, was done by volunteers who arranged to work together—"bees" they were called in the early days. All this later work was spread over several years as the country was going through a depression, world wide in scope, the effects of which were shown in a great decline in the contributions especially for missionary work.

The ground plan was exactly the same as in the first Willis Church with no basement. At the west end on a high platform stood the pulpit, behind it a horse hair sofa and in front of the platform a table which was probably used by the precentor as well as the communion table. There were chairs behind this table for the use of the session. On each side of this platform the corner seats four in number were set at right angles to those in the main body of the building so that the occupiers faced toward the pulpit. Later these two corners were used by Sunday School classes enclosed by red felt curtains.

The four new chandeliers cost ten dollars and the leather pocket ladles used for the collection, one and a half dollars. The treasurer did not include in his record the cost of the building. The pews with their straight backs and narrow seats were so uncomfortable that very few fell asleep during the service. Eventually these seats were covered with a long narrow cushion but it is doubtful whether the cushion afforded much relief. Two stoves set in the corners at the rear and stovepipes running the length of the building added nothing to the church's beauty and often not enough to its comfort.

The membership increased to 135 and 67 adherents and Rev. McQuarrie baptized 105 children. Here follows the names of the first elders and first managers of the new church.

ELDERS	MANAGERS	SECRETARY - TREASURERS
Thos. Spears	R. Laidlaw	John Laidlaw, 1870-1872
William Waldie	T. Spears	Jas. Rogers, 1873-1877
William McGaw	A. Patullo	Thos. McKay, 1878-1895
William Hunter	J. Lillico	Jas. D. Cowan, 1896-1921
	J. Laidlaw	J. McK. Hall, 1921-1926
	Jas. Rogers	

PRECENTORS

W. G. Hunter, 1870-1875

Geo. Hyde, 1884-1885

Volunteers, 1876-1879

W. Murray, 1886-1887

John Spears, 1880-1883

W. G. Hunter, 1888-1893

New family names on the roll: Black, Harrison, Hall, Markle, Fleming, Kyle, Cowan, Pettinger, Pentland, Stevenson, Rogers.

Rev. McQuarrie's stipend was raised to eight hundred dollars with an additional amount to pay for house rent. In consequence of this increase, the pew rent was raised to five dollars per annum.

One childish remembrance of Mrs. K. McArthur was the amusing sight of Rev. McQuarrie walking to the stable carrying a milk pail, dressed in his long black frock coat and shiny black stove-pipe hat. He was a man of sterling qualities on whose departure both Presbytery and congregation registered a deep sense of loss of a minister who had been so exemplary in his attendance at the meetings of the Presbytery; so faithful, devoted and laborious as a pastor who stands high in the affection of his brethren and highly esteemed for his personal qualities as well as for his work's sake.

REV. JAMES LITTLE, 1877-1888

In 1877 Rev. McQuarrie was followed by the Rev. James Little, an Irishman, who became a well-beloved pastor for the next eleven years. He owned and operated a farm near Princeton. The session consisted of J. Spears, Dr. Pentland, R. McGaw. W. G. Hunter; the managers were Ed. Fair, Jas. Cowan, Jas. Hall, J. Cockburn, J. Lillico, and T. McKay.

During this period of depression the session permitted the congregation to hold tea meetings, tickets to sell at 25¢, and the proceeds to be used for the maintenance of the church. At one of these meetings the Honourable Oliver Mowat was the guest speaker and entertainment was supplied by singers from Paris.

Strong protests were voiced against desecration of the Sabbath by the running of railroad trains on that day and a still stronger one against running of an excursion train between London and Port Stanley on Sunday. This action was called flagrant iniquity on the part of the Railway Corporation.

New families on the roll: C. E. Baxter, Jas. Ronald, Chas. Taylor, Jas. McLaren, J. Pollock, R. Alexander, Mrs. Kilgour, Mrs. Jamieson.

When Rev. James Little left in 1888, the Presbytery and congregation put on record their high testimony of the value of his ministerial work. He had proved himself to be a good theologian, a faithful preacher and a diligent pastor, always ready to do his share of the work and in all relationships with his brethren he had been most agreeable and helpful.

THE SACRAMENT SABBATH

The members of Willis Church were predominantly Scottish. This is very evident from the names of those who held the farms. They were a thrifty folk. The church records show that they practised their unobtrusive frugality in all church affairs as well. They were also a religious folk. Sunday after Sunday the farmers and the villagers gathered in the church—it was the centre of the community. To be an elder was to be assured of high social standing. To speak Gaelic was a distinction. With this Presbyterian background the high day of the church year was not Christmas; nor was it Easter. The day that stood out and remained in memory was Sacrament Sabbath. The day was called Sabbath in a more spiritual way—Sunday in a more secular way.

The Sacrament was observed four times a year. It was an event of several days. It was a period of meditation, thanksgiving and humiliation. These days of preparation were regarded as an integral, not an optional part of the solemn occasion. On the Thursday preceding the celebration, men gathered to the church to join in a service not unlike that of the ordinary Sabbath. On Saturday a much larger service was held attended by the entire membership. There was always a visiting minister, which gave them a change. This service was important for the "tokens" were distributed to the intending communicants. These were usually lead, some rectangular, others round like a coin—on one side a replica of the table, on the other the words "In Remembrance". The people filed past the minister coming down by one aisle and leaving by the other. The token was placed on the outstretched hand and was received with reverence.

When the time for the celebration was come during the Sabbath service and during the singing, the elders moved forward to the table, the communicants moved into the centre pews while the others with the children occupied the side pews. The elders carrying the bread and wine began their walk down the aisles. The plates journeyed along the pews and the silver chalice, the single goblet, passed from hand to hand following the plates. A silence brooded over the congregation.

Children always felt a deep response to something that could only be thought of as Holy. The congregation felt lifted out of the daily relationship into a relationship created by the table. One felt himself in the midst of the warmest fellowship on earth. The Sacrament, observed and felt, the visible fellowship of the Lord's table, exerted often the greatest influence on the child's mind when making his decision to join the group in the centre of the church.

OLD CUSTOMS PASS AWAY

At this point in the church history, there was a growing movement for change especially among the newcomers and the young people. The old customs were beginning to pass away. They protested

against the exclusive use of the Psalter, the singing of the Psalms in metre and desired to use the Bible songs and hymns in the service. When the Presbyterian Book of Praise was published in 1895, the session agreed that it should be used and advised each member to purchase his own copy but they supplied a copy for the pulpit and one for the organ. This book contained both Psalms and hymns. In 1892 a motion to use an organ in the church service was carried in a ballot vote 36-12. In many congregations there was a split into the organ group and the anti-organ group. The anti-group maintained that there was no place for "artificial music" in the worship of God. This change was more than some could endure and so they retired in protest. Willis Church purchased an organ for 82 dollars, the freight charge was 97 cents. The pews were removed from the south-west corner, a platform built to accommodate the organ. They invited Jessie Rogers, a music teacher, to be the organist and paid her twenty dollars per annum.

The custom of standing for prayers and sitting for the singing was European, and was continued here. Gradually the reverse became more common. Some persisted in using the old until there was only one left in Willis Church who did so to the end.

Communion was held only three times a year and only one Preparatory service was considered necessary at which the new communicants were received by the session into the fellowship of church membership. Tokens were replaced by communion cards. Annual church reports were printed from 1890 on to the present. The minister was granted a month's holiday with pay. In 1897 pew rent was collected for the last time and so after many attempts over the years to change to the voluntary system of contributing, it was accepted. Shortly after, envelopes were used for the contributions which were to be regarded as an act of worship to be offered on each Sunday. It was about this time they bought two new collection plates. No one would be more pleased with this change than the minister whose salary was now paid monthly in advance.

REV. W. K. SHEARER, 1890-1920

Two years passed without a regular minister. In 1890 Rev. W. K. Shearer accepted the call to this church and began the longest pastorate in the church history. During those thirty years, Rev. Shearer and his wife greatly enriched the spiritual and cultural life of the whole community. Mrs. Shearer was an accomplished musician of high rank. She gave piano and organ instruction to many young people. Both of them were excellent Sunday School teachers, Rev. Shearer in charge of the senior Bible Class and Mrs. Shearer of the older girls' class. One cannot estimate the lasting impression they made through their moral character, exemplary life, their Christian faith and teachings on a whole generation of young people.

New names on the roll: J. Gibson, D. Mackie, A. Harmer J. J. Meggs, J. Gatten, Dr. Mitchell, T. Beattie, William Easton, A. Erb, A. Knox, Jas. Paxton, Jackson Clark, J. Sippel, J. Ladwig, Andrew Easton. The session: J. Spiers, Dr. Pentland, R. McGaw, J. Ronald, J. D. Cowan replaced Dr. Pentland in 1895.

In 1902 the house which the minister occupied, owned by D. Hogarth, was bought to serve as a manse. Rev. Shearer was the last horse and buggy minister. The stable was torn down after he left and a garage built. In 1910 the minister's stipend was increased to \$1000 and the first mention came of a new church as the present church needed extensive repair. This matter was set aside for a few years. New names: B. Cadwell, W. G. Barr, J. Cook, J. Haines, J. Harmer, V. Clark, Mrs. Jas. Campbell, Mrs. Brown, William Kloss, L. McDonald, Mrs. H. Krueger, C. Buck, R. D. Dayman, Mrs. McKinley, W. Nicholl, J. McTavish, R. Patterson, Mrs. Darnley, G. Bawtinheimer, Mrs. Sippel.

THE SECOND WILLIS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In 1914 the congregation decided to canvass the members to ascertain what amount would be subscribed for the erection of a new church or for the reparation of the old. The canvass showed that more money was subscribed for a new church and the motion to make the vote unanimous for a new church was carried with jubilation. The building committee selected was Dr. Mitchell, Jas. D. Cowan, chairman, A. L. Easton, secretary-treasurer, McK. Hall, George Law, W. Murray. The motion that members sign five promissary notes of equal amount to be paid June 1 for the following five years was carried without a dissenting voice.

In April 1915 the invitation from the Baptist Church to hold services and meetings there for the next eighteen months was gratefully accepted. The old building was taken down, nearly all by the voluntary service of the members, adherents and friends of the congregation. They then turned in and prepared the ground for the new building in the same way. Gravel and sand for the walls was donated by Jas. D. Cowan and John Gibson and was hauled to the site by the same voluntary system. All brick, cement, lime, stone, and lumber was teamed from the railway station in the same way. Much credit is due to many for their services given so freely in preparing for the new building and helping along all the way through.

Work was begun on the new building built of grey rock-faced stone and Milton red pressed brick in May, and the corner stone was laid on June 29 by Major G. R. Patullo who was at one time a member of the church. The building seats between 350 and 400 people and there is a spacious basement used for the Sunday School and for a kitchen. The interior is just as attractive as the exterior. The woodwork, seats,

table, pulpit are all in oak and the seats are most comfortable. The total cost of the building was \$11,288.43.

The opening took place September 17th, 1916. The dedicatory service was conducted by Rev. Dr. Gibson of Knox Church, Woodstock. Both morning and evening the building was crowded to the doors.

The public meeting was arranged for Monday evening, tea being served from 6 to 8 p.m. An attractive programme was rendered consisting of vocal music, solos, duets, quartettes and readings by the Maple Leaf Quartette of Galt, instrumental music by the Cortese Orchestra, addresses by Rev. Messrs. Nicholson, Cockburn, Gordon, also by E. W. Nesbitt, M.P., Major G. R. Patullo, Mr. N. W. Rowell, Chairman was G. A. Woodside, Moderator of Presbtery. Adults 50¢, children 35¢.

Contributions were received from friends outside the church: Myrtle Laidlaw, the communion table; Clara Meggs, a chair for the pulpit platform; Isabel Law, a chair for the platform; Mr. and Mrs. Barr, the pulpit; Mrs. C. K. Currey donated a Karn organ and the large chair for the platform. The beautiful motto on the arch over the pulpit was donated by Mrs. W. K. Shearer and stands as a fitting testimonial of her contributions to the spiritual life of the congregation.

A stained glass memorial window, a fine work of art, was donated by Major G. R. Patullo in memory of his wife and a similar one by friends, some of of these being Jean Alexander, Taylor Baxter, William Baxter, Donald J. Cowan, Rev. P. McLaren, Mrs. R. Crozier, R. Hawke.

Other conventional windows were donated by Drs. Henry and Hugh Harrison; Mrs. Bastendorf and Mrs. Gatten; Mr. and Mrs. McK. Hall and sisters; Mr. and Mrs. J. Gibson, a patriotic memorial, in memory of their sons, James and George, who fell in the First Great War; Mr. and Mrs. George Law; Mrs. and Mrs. Jas. D. Cowan and family; Messrs. Alex and Stanley Murray; Mr. Jas. McLaren and family; Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Lillico and sisters; Dr. Mitchell and family.

Katharine Hall, Marguerite Harmer, Bessie Gibson, Alex McLaren were the first children baptized in the new church. The first marriage solemnized in the church was that of Edna Hodgson and Marshall Daniels in 1929 when the session presented the bride with a Bible.

The trustees granted permission to mortgage the property for three thousand dollars to secure part of the money now borrowed in 1916. In this year too, individual cups were first used in the communion service. The whereabouts of the old Chalice and flagon used in the communion service is still a mystery. One cannot help but suspect that they were sold! In 1920 all subscriptions had been paid in full which speaks highly for the business qualities of the building

committee and the willingness of the subscribers to meet their obligations when due. There was still a debt of \$1,400.

Rev. Shearer resigned in 1920. He took a small charge in Brantford and in 1925 retired from his duties of the ministry. For thirty-five years he had been an active and loyal member of Paris Presbytery and held an honoured place in the esteem and affection of his congregations. He was always recognized as a Christian gentleman and a preacher far above the average.

REV. ANDREW LANE, 1920-1925

The next minister was Rev. Andrew Lane who stayed for five years. His success in the church was partially due to his work with young people. He organized the St. Andrew's Club which met regularly and had printed programmes for each year. These meetings were so successful that older people became interested and were invited to attend.

In 1924, ten years after the work began on the new church, the last debt was paid. At the June anniversary the actual burning of the mortgage, arranged as a form of worship, was performed by John Spiers and Edward Fair. These men were chosen on the basis that they were the two oldest members. It must have been a moment of great satisfaction and joy to those who had given so much time, hard work and such generous contributions to complete their undertaking. Now fifty-four years later we pay our tribute to them as we worship in the beautiful sanctuary so lovingly contrived by them and occupy those "comfortable" seats.

In October of the same year, it was the setting for the designation service of Miss Christina V. Baxter as a Missionary of the Cross. The following is, in part, the report of the moderator of Willis Presbyterian session, Rev. A. Lane, of this occasion: Miss C. V. Baxter was designated a Missionary of the Cross in Willis Church. She is to serve in the Gwalior Mission, India.

The auditorium was completely filled. Rev. A. Lane presided. Rev. W. K. Shearer representing the Paris Presbytery put the designation questions and offered the designation prayer. Rev. J. Wilson of St. Andrew's Church, Hamilton, addressed the newly-designated missionary and Rev. R. P. McKay, secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, addressed the people. Miss Baxter was presented with an English Bible, a Bible in Hindi, a writing portfolio, wardrobe trunk on behalf of various organizations. Dr. Richard Davidson, of Knox College, Toronto, fittingly brought a great meeting to a close with prayer and the benediction.

Many young people joined the church during the ministry of Rev. Lane, bringing active membership to 155 and there were 40 baptisms. The congregation expressed regret at the removal of Andrew L. Easton and family to Ayr. He had served as choir leader

for eight years and ten years as secretary-treasurer of the building committee which duties and responsibilities he had performed with great ability and faithfulness.

CHURCH UNION—REV. JOHN RICHARDSON, 1925-1936

Rev. John Richardson began his pastorate in 1925 and stayed for eleven years. He became at once involved in the problems of union of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. There was a Methodist Church in Drumbo and one in Richwood. As no vote on church union had been taken in Willis Presbyterian Church, according to the act incorporating the United Church of Canada, this congregation became a unit of the United Church. The situation in Drumbo and vicinity called for some action on behalf of the session.

The following resolution was forwarded to the other unit of the United Church in the village: We, the session of Willis Church, send fraternal good wishes to you. We are now different units of the same church, the United Church, and we wish to express our desire for an amalgamation of our forces in the Lord at as early a time as is possible. We humbly suggest, that if it meet with your approval, a meeting of the officials of your congregation and of the session of Willis Church be called, for the purpose of framing a document setting forth our joint desire.

The reply from the Methodist Church: We, the officers of the sister United Church reciprocate the fraternal good wishes extended to us in your letter of June 6th and gratefully appreciate the desire expressed for an amalgamation of our forces in the work of the Master, sincerely believing this is to be the logical course consistent with the spirit and principles of the United Church of Canada.

While the situation in which we find ourselves at the moment may not appear to lend itself to an immediate amalgamation in view of the rights of other units of the church, which may be concerned, nevertheless, we are ready and willing to join our forces with you as soon as the machinery of the United Church becomes operative in affecting the amalgamation.

This letter was signed by Ida Snyder, Mary E. Hodgson, Albert Hearn, Superintendent of Sunday School, Henry Burgess, Norman Gray, Congregational Representative, Will Landreth, Con. Rep., John Passmore, steward, Hugh Allan, steward.

There were conferences of the Princeton, Drumbo and Richwood officials to discuss ways and means of working out the basis of union. It was not until June, 1926 that Willis Church and the Richwood Church were united in one charge under the pastorate of Rev. J. Richardson and the Richwood Church assumed the responsibility of the Princeton charge in regard to the manse and became a unit in the Oxford Presbytery. So ended a long associ-

ation with the Princeton Church in the Paris Presbytery—a period of 57 years.

The Inaugural Service for the amalgamation of Willis and the Drumbo Methodist Churches was held in June. The names of former Methodists joining the Willis Church congregation were read out and placed with the membership roll of Willis United Church. Hugh Allan, H. D. Bawtinheimer, and Norman Gray were inducted as elders to serve along with Andrew Cockburn, W. A. Lillico, C. L. Wilson, Dr. Mitchell in the first session of Willis United Church.

Some of the former Methodists who joined at this time were: Allan, Hodgson, Wilkinson, Passmore, Prentice, Blumenstein, Bawtinheimer, Snyder, Palmer, Cook, Hearn, Codlin, McTague, Gray, Galbraith. The first young people to join Willis United were Irma Kloss, John Kloss, Isabel Bawtinheimer, Lloyd Stevenson.

THE METHODIST CHURCH

The Baptists and Methodists were the first to organize their churches in Blenheim Township. It is very difficult for anyone to consider the conditions existing in Blenheim in 1793. A Methodist preacher wrote in his journal that he was amazed at the size of the trees growing in the forest, elm, maple, beech, ash, basswood, wainut. He was sure that the soil would be very fertile and prophesized that this country would be a rich and prosperous one. The itinerant preacher made his way over the trails on horseback except when he had to dismount to scramble through on foot. His possessions were a horse, his Bible, a saddle-bag and umbrella swinging from the saddle. Often a suit of clothes was his year's salary. When word arrived weeks ahead of the preacher's coming, arrangements had to be made for a meeting place. It was difficult to find buildings suitable. Mills, stores, sometimes homes or barns between whose logs the daylight streamed through on all sides and of course without fires and this too during the rigors of winter were used. In summer, camp meetings were held out in the open.

By 1857 the Methodists far outnumbered any other denomination in the township. This church, divided and divisive, increased rapidly across the whole country. It was a poor frontier settlement that did not boast two or more of the following: the Primitive Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Methodist New Connexion, the Wesleyan Conference of Eastern British North America, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Bible Christian Church. These were not the only ones.

The first church built in 1857 in Drumbo was the Primitive Methodist at the cost of \$800 with a seating capacity of 200. The minister was Mr. W. Bee who resided in Drumbo. The Wesleyan Methodist Church built in 1861 at a cost of \$1,200, had a seating capacity of

250. This building was later used as a warehouse by Alex Markle, blacksmith, near the 7th line bridge.

Some time later these two congregations apparently joined forces, probably in 1884, when all Methodist branches were united into one Methodist church and built a new church in the western part of the village on Matheson Street. It was a frame building and later bricked in with white brick. From 1887 Drumbo was on the same circuit with Richwood, Wolverton and Washington. Later, about 1922 when the Wolverton and Paris Plains Churches were closed Drumbo and Richwood joined the Ayr circuit. After union this building was closed in 1926, later sold and used for various purposes until it was bought by C. Bawtinheimer and torn down in 1966.

About 1895 the first mention of Epworth League, the Methodist Y.P.U., is found in the records. The following were contributing members in 1897: D. S. Cullen, W. G. Barr, J. J. Pickard, L. B. Kenny, Frank Tate, Mrs. W. Sutton, Jas. Prentice, A. Prentice, D. Wait, Jas. Herbert, Mrs. A. Markle, Miss Brown, W. H. Wegenast, Mabel Fritch, Mrs. Hanson, Jas. Milton.

The preaching was enthusiastic, the singing vigorous. A keen interest was taken in the social problems of temperance and gambling, in the Sunday School, by the young people. In 1914 the Sunday School had 82, cradle roll 11, adult Bible class 26, and the superintendent was W. G. Fahner. In 1926 Mrs. G. Hodgson became president of the Ladies' Aid Society and Mrs. Ida Snyder president of the Women's Missionary Society in Willis United Church.

Some of the Methodist ministers in Drumbo from 1895-1925 were: McIrvine, Hobbs, Voaden, T. Albert Moore, Richardson, Eddy, Hall, Clark, Hill, Waddell, Copeland, Cavers, Morrow, Holley, Long, Railton, Yoeman, Stevenson.

The period of the great depression lasted for about ten years 1929-1939 and of course the church had its difficulties too for the managers were forced to canvass for funds but it was fortunate in having two capable ministers at that time. The deficits were large each year as high as \$475. New families, too, joined: J. Harmer, Mrs. McVittie, G. H. Wallace, R. Fry, L. E. Peterson, William Landreth, A. MacKie, Stuart Murray, Mr. and Mrs. Stott, J. E. McTavish, Mr. and Mrs. Fowler, Dr. and Mrs. Hawkins, Mrs. Thompson.

For two successive years the Drumbo Softball Team won the provincial rural softball championship and each year a congratulatory banquet was held by the citizens in their honour in Willis Church. This was an outstanding event in the village.

Rev. Richardson performed his pastoral duties with great faithfulness. He was an able preacher and much loved even beyond the congregation he served. He was for eleven years secretary of Oxford Presbytery.



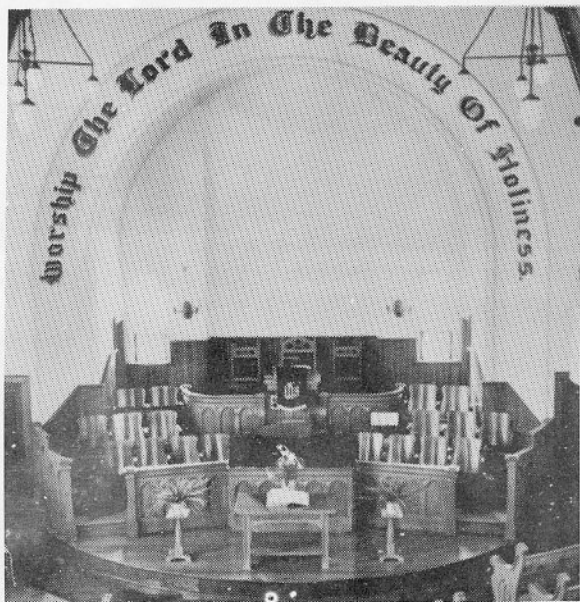
THE MANSE



THE BOARD OF STEWARDS



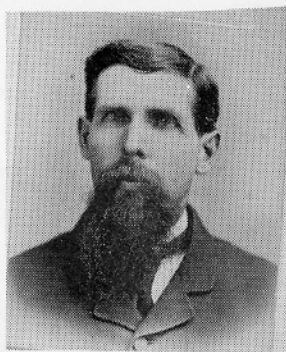
THE SESSION



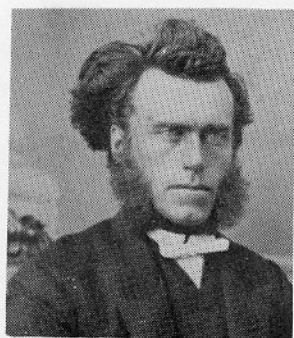
WILLIS UNITED CHURCH



Rev. Trevor Richards



Mr. John Spears



Rev. Hector McQuarrie



Rev. A. M. Manson



Rev. Andrew Lane



Rev. G. P. Gregersen



Mrs. Geo. Strickler



Rev. W. K. Shearer



W. H. Cowan



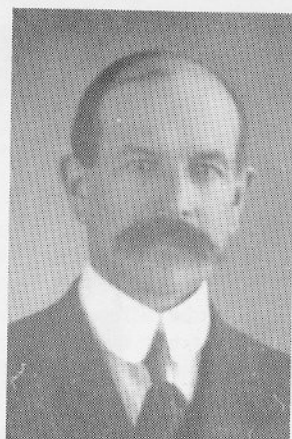
Rev. John Richardson



Mrs. Ray Harmer



Mrs. Geo. Spiers



Dr. J. A. Mitchell



Margaret T. Cowan



Miss C. V. Baxter



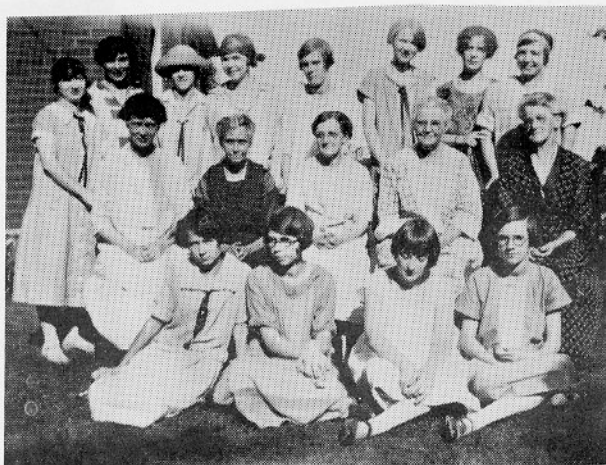
Mrs. Murray Scott



Mrs. K. S. McLaren



Alex McLaren



The Margaret McKellar Mission Band
(about 1926)



THE CHOIR



UNITED CHURCH WOMEN



W. A. Meeting, Feb. 1957

REV. J. E. HOGG, 1936-1944

Rev. J. E. Hogg was a retired minister when he came to Willis Church in 1936 but he had plenty of energy and enthusiasm for his pastoral work. His sermons were carefully prepared and forcefully delivered. He was the leader of the senior Bible Class and a wonderful asset to the Young People's Society, taking charge of the worship service at each meeting. The choir wore used black gowns with white collars for the first time. The church building was decorated for the first time. The annual meetings were held in the evening preceded by dinner served by the ladies. Rev. Hogg received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Victoria College for his effort in the building of new churches in the West and also at Southampton and Clinton.

The session: G. H. Wallace, clerk; Hugh Allan; C. L. Wilson; William Gibson; A. Cockburn; George Spiers; William H. Cowan.

The managers: L. E. Peterson, chairman; B. Cadwell; L. McDonald; R. C. Cowan; G. Hodgson; A. McLaren; R. Harmer.

New names on the roll: Jones, Kennedy, Hambly, Bell, Bigham, Strickler, Macey, Hamilton, Hildred, Piggott, Tottle, Etherington, Cameron, Morrow, Booker, Reid, Scott.

FIVE MINISTERS, 1944-1958

In 1944 Rev. J. W. Moores followed Dr. Hogg as pastor. Rev. Richardson and Dr. Hogg were former Presbyterians who supplied their household furnishings. United Church congregations were charged with furnishing the manse. For the first time the congregation undertook this task and a redecorating and insulation job was done as well. A manse committee of both men and women was set up to furnish the manse. For the first time religious moving pictures were shown in the Sunday School auditorium. The preparatory service, regarded as an integral part of the Sacrament for a hundred years, was at this time discontinued.

Dr. Symington replaced Rev. Moores in 1947. The minimum stipend was raised to \$2100 as prosperity returned after the Second Great War. In 1950 at the time of the Old Boys' Reunion, a memorable service was held in the church with a record crowd in attendance. Rev. A. Lane was the guest minister.

In 1951 Rev. H. Cragg succeeded Dr. Symington and brought with him his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Norris and their family. This energetic young couple were leaders in the church work. Mr. Norris was particularly interested in working with young boys and he set up a Tyro club. An outstanding anniversary service was held, conducted by Rev. Cragg's son from McMaster University.

The session: G. Spiers, W. H. Cowan, C. L. Wilson, W. Gibson, O. Fleming, A. McLaren, H. Kennedy, R. C. Cowan, clerk, and W.

Cockburn. In 1959 Charles Sippel and C. Cadwell replaced W. H. Cowan and R. C. Cowan on the board of managers.

The managers: L. E. Peterson, chairman; R. C. Cowan; W. H. Cowan; J. Clark; L. McDonald; R. Harmer; J. Cook; M. Dayman; L. Etherington; O. Fleming; H. Kennedy; J. Higgins. George Strickler and M. Scott replaced H. Kennedy and J. Higgins who left the church shortly, having given freely of their time and talent in maintaining the work of the church.

In the three years 1953-56 that Rev. A. E. Millen was pastor, the congregation was faced with the fact that the Karn organ, after 40 years of use, was worn out. At first, for several years, it was operated by Norman Baxter pumping a wooden handle which provided wind for the vocalian. When a blower was attached, his services were no longer needed. It was decided to canvass for funds for a new organ. A Connsonata electric organ was installed, costing \$3,250, a much higher price than the first one.

In 1956 Rev. Trevor Richards came to Willis Church from Quebec. Both he and his wife, who were born in Wales, came to this new land as young immigrants, and spent two years preaching in the West. Rev. Richards believed that it was his responsibility to build up the congregation. That he was successful in his efforts was shown in the well attended church services. The congregation regretted that his stay with them was short. He has frequently returned for anniversary services.

At this time there were 156 names on the roll, new ones being Vance, Butcher, Richardson, McIntyre, Mrs. Hewitt, Mrs. B. Kennedy.

REV. A. MANSON, 1958-1965

Rev. Alex Manson was inducted as minister in July, 1958, a reception being held after the service and he stayed for seven years. In 1960 his salary was raised to \$4,000. Then the congregation became involved in the Oxford Presbytery project to build a students' residence at Westminster College, London, St. David's Church, Woodstock, and to help Five Oaks, Paris, to present radio and T.V. programmes. The amount allotted by the Presbytery to the congregation was fully paid by 1968.

The session: C. L. Wilson, W. H. Cowan, W. Gibson, R. C. Cowan, W. Cockburn, A. McLaren, O. Fleming. C. Cadwell and Charles Sippel replaced L. Wilson and W. H. Cowan in 1962; S. Cowan and J. Richardson replaced R. C. Cowan and W. Cockburn in 1965; and R. Sparks replaced J. Richardson in 1967.

The managers in 1960: R. Peterson, C. Sippel, C. Cadwell, M. Scott, L. Etherington, George and Douglas Strickler, H. Butcher, N. McIntyre, W. Hildred, S. Cowan, J. Markle, D. Cadwell, Larry Etherington. In 1962 Mrs. R. Harmer and Mrs. A. Piggott were the first

women to be appointed to the official board. Later Mrs. B. Kennedy and Mrs. H. Clark were appointed to the board. Mrs. Stanley Strickler replaced Mrs. Clark in 1967.

In 1964 at the June Anniversary Service, a large congregation heard an inspiring address by that eminent minister, Rev. Crossley-Hunter.

Some repair to the building was done at this time. The plaster in the hallway and auditorium under the tower was loosened and damaged by a leakage in the tower roof and some protection was required for the stain glass windows. This was a costly job, \$75 for each of the large windows and \$65 for the small ones.

Rev. Manson and family left in 1965 to become pastor of the United Church in Armstrong, B.C., leaving behind memories of a happy and fruitful association in their pastoral work with the congregation. They gave unstintingly of their time and talents in their earnest endeavours to deepen the spiritual life of the community.

THREE MINISTERS, 1965-1969

Rev. G. P. Gregersen stayed for two years and was diligent in his pastoral work. Mrs. Gregersen served temporarily as superintendent of the Sunday School for some months and their twin sons, Brian and Bruce, assisted in the young people's work and the choir. He organized a mid-week Bible study group and held a Centennial Sunday service and Christmas evening services.

Rev. Gordon Harris accepted the call to the church in July, 1967, but unfortunately he became seriously ill in October and Rev. Gaye of Thamesford took charge of the congregation until January, 1968. Mr. Percy Brown, a lay preacher from Hamilton, was engaged as pastor. He has undertaken both his duty as a pastor and his studies with great energy and communicates to his congregations his own Christian faith and his enthusiasm for the Christian life and service.

Secretary-treasurers have been: 1926-1960, Oliver Fleming; 1961, Norman McIntyre; 1962, Jack Richardson; 1963-1968, Stuart Cowan, secretary, Ralph Sparks, treasurer.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

In the early church the missionary zeal of the congregation was very apparent in forming missionary societies. Willis Presbyterian Missionary Society was organized in 1863 to afford the congregation an appropriate channel for the exercise of their benevolence in contributing of their means for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom of the Canada Presbyterian church at home and abroad.

The first officers were: Rev. J. Gillespie, president; W. Dickson, vice president; J. Whitehead, secretary-treasurer; committee, R. Stitt, R.

Richardson, R. Fair, A. Laidlaw, A. McArthur. Two ladies were appointed each year to serve under one of the five committee men to canvass in each of five districts for missionary contributions. The ladies chosen that year were from the McCrow, Spears, Patullo, Laidlaw and Wilson families. The collection amounted to \$170.70. This money was allocated as follows: Knox College, \$80; Home and Foreign Missions, \$70; French-Canadian Mission, \$10; widows and orphans fund, \$15; and Kankakee Mission, \$20. A meeting of members was held annually to hear the report and speeches on the missionary work of the church by visiting ministers. In the second year a fund for aged and infirm ministers was added.

By 1869 the contribution had risen to \$229.80. The last sentences in this report have a familiar ring: A vote of thanks was presented to the lady collectors. The evening was fine and the house crowded. By 1880 the contribution had dropped considerably and the officials were not reported for ten years or more. Perhaps this was due to the period of depression.

THE CENTRAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY

As soon as Rev. Shearer arrived in 1890 the Central Missionary Society was formed with officers: Rev. Shearer, president; Jas. McLaren, vice-president; D. A. Hogarth, treasurer; Margaret McLaren, secretary. The canvassing was done by the ladies as before. Four meetings were held each winter to present the work of missions. These meetings were fairly successful but it was difficult to get members to take hold of the work. The Sunday School and the Young People's Society began to contribute to this society. Officers in 1900 were: Chas. Taylor, president; Andrew Easton, vice-president; E. Fair, treasurer; and Kate McLaren, secretary. Contributions were \$123.75.

In 1908 a small green envelope inscribed Schemes of the Church put an end to canvassing for missionary funds. W. A. Lillico was secretary-treasurer from 1907 to 1915. This was the last entry in the secretary's records. In 1917 missionary contributions were collected in the duplex envelopes marked Missionary and Maintenance fund. In 1940 Jackson Clark was treasurer and receipts were \$246.32. In 1951 Mrs. W. H. Cowan was appointed secretary-treasurer and has held this office ever since, receipts were \$569.38. This work is in the future to be under the direction of the Department of Stewardship Services.

THE WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The Women's Foreign Mission Society of the Canada Presbyterian Church was formed in Montreal in 1876 but it was not until 1885 that the Paris Presbyterial Society was formed. In 1887 two officers of the Presbyterial came to hold a meeting at the home of Dr. Pentland when an auxiliary was formed. This meeting was well attended, and Mrs. Pentland was elected president, Mary Tennant secretary,

Richardson, R. Fair, A. Laidlaw, A. McArthur. Two ladies were appointed each year to serve under one of the five committee men to canvass in each of five districts for missionary contributions. The ladies chosen that year were from the McCrow, Spears, Patullo, Laidlaw and Wilson families. The collection amounted to \$170.70. This money was allocated as follows: Knox College, \$80; Home and Foreign Missions, \$70; French-Canadian Mission, \$10; widows and orphans fund, \$15; and Kankakee Mission, \$20. A meeting of members was held annually to hear the report and speeches on the missionary work of the church by visiting ministers. In the second year a fund for aged and infirm ministers was added.

By 1869 the contribution had risen to \$229.80. The last sentences in this report have a familiar ring: A vote of thanks was presented to the lady collectors. The evening was fine and the house crowded. By 1880 the contribution had dropped considerably and the officials were not reported for ten years or more. Perhaps this was due to the period of depression.

THE CENTRAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY

As soon as Rev. Shearer arrived in 1890 the Central Missionary Society was formed with officers: Rev. Shearer, president; Jas. McLaren, vice-president; D. A. Hogarth, treasurer; Margaret McLaren, secretary. The canvassing was done by the ladies as before. Four meetings were held each winter to present the work of missions. These meetings were fairly successful but it was difficult to get members to take hold of the work. The Sunday School and the Young People's Society began to contribute to this society. Officers in 1900 were: Chas. Taylor, president; Andrew Easton, vice-president; E. Fair, treasurer; and Kate McLaren, secretary. Contributions were \$123.75.

In 1908 a small green envelope inscribed Schemes of the Church put an end to canvassing for missionary funds. W. A. Lillico was secretary-treasurer from 1907 to 1915. This was the last entry in the secretary's records. In 1917 missionary contributions were collected in the duplex envelopes marked Missionary and Maintenance fund. In 1940 Jackson Clark was treasurer and receipts were \$246.32. In 1951 Mrs. W. H. Cowan was appointed secretary-treasurer and has held this office ever since, receipts were \$569.38. This work is in the future to be under the direction of the Department of Stewardship Services.

THE WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The Women's Foreign Mission Society of the Canada Presbyterian Church was formed in Montreal in 1876 but it was not until 1885 that the Paris Presbyterial Society was formed. In 1887 two officers of the Presbyterial came to hold a meeting at the home of Dr. Pentland when an auxiliary was formed. This meeting was well attended, and Mrs. Pentland was elected president, Mary Tennant secretary,

and Euphemia Laidlaw treasurer. These were the officers during the following 25 years: president, Mrs. Shearer, J. McTavish, Lillico; secretary, A. Lillico for 15 years, Mrs. C. E. Baxter; treasurer, Lizzie Erb (Mrs. George Clark), Kate McLaren for ten years, Mrs. Mitchell. Strangely enough the work among the North West Indians was considered foreign and boxes of clothing for the aged and children were sent to them. The repacking of these supplies was done in the C.P.R. freight shed. They had a thankoffering meeting in the fall after which a supper was served for their families.

The Women's Home Missionary Society was organized in 1905 with president, Mrs. J. D. Cowan; secretary, A. Lillico; treasurer, M. Knox. Members were Mrs. Shearer, Meggs, Mitchell, Muma, Fair, Knox, Currey, Alexander, Baxter, Taylor, Birley, Misses Knox, A. Harmer, A. Lillico, Jennie Baxter, Agnes Paxton. These two societies met on the same afternoon in the church for some years. Programmes were kept simple and rarely was a meeting allowed to go beyond the length of one hour. The day of prayer was always observed and the thankoffering of the H.M.S. was held in the spring; so now there are still two thankofferings in the year. In 1910 the first study book, *Strangers Within Our Gates*, was studied in the meetings. In 1913 the two societies united under the name Women's Missionary Society. Two leaders were appointed for each meeting, one to deal with a foreign and one with a home topic. Each member was given a mission field or hospital for adoption and was expected to report on it. The Missionary Monthly, the W.M.S. publication, was of great assistance in supplying information about the mission fields and in preparing programmes.

There was another group, the South East Auxiliary. They preferred holding their meetings in the homes. The first officers were: Mrs. J. Stevenson, president; Mrs. French, secretary; E. Mackie, treasurer. Some of the members were Mrs. J. Gibson, Mrs. William and Mrs. Charles Gibson, Mrs. B. Cadwell, Mrs. Goodwin and Mrs. Johnson.

From 1915 to 1940 the presidents were: Mrs. K. S. McLaren, Mrs. A. Easton, Mrs. Meggs, Mrs. J. Gibson, Mrs. Hodgson, Mrs. Laidlaw, Mrs. G. Spiers, Mrs. H. Krueger.

In 1940 there were 13 life members and 25 annual members, among them, Mesdames J. Hogg, A. Allan, M. Dayman, N. Moyer, C. Cross, J. Reid, E. Baxter, H. Watters, L. Wilson, O. Gibson, J. French, Misses Meta Taylor, Margaret Cowan, Agnes Paxton, Ethel Cowan. Their meetings were held in the afternoon in their homes. In the period 1941-1961 Mrs. L. E. Peterson, Mrs. A. Piggott, Mrs. W. H. Cowan, Mrs. W. Cockburn were among the presidents. The officials in the last year of its existence were Mrs. A. Piggott, president; Mrs. H. Butcher, treasurer; Mrs. R. Peterson, secretary.

Each year bales of used clothing were packed and shipped to Toronto and Korea—quilts and layettes made by the members—food

boxes shipped to India. One of the busy women in charge of this supply work for some years was Mrs. Margaret Vance. All contributions were voluntary. A bursary fund was arranged in 1959 in memory of Mrs. L. E. Peterson who was at that time president of the Oxford Presbyterial.

This society flourished for 75 years mainly because it was a group of consecrated women, steadfast in their purpose of maintaining their spiritual faith and showing their love and compassion for others not so fortunately situated as they themselves were. It is indeed unfortunate that most of the records of this society have been lost.

THE MISSION BANDS

The Tena Baxter Mission Band was organized by Margaret Cowan in 1926. Boys as well as girls up to fourteen were members of this Band. During the early years the officers were:

LEADER	SECRETARY	TREASURER
Margaret Cowan	James McLaren	Cameron Cowan
Ethel Cowan	Glenn Taylor	Alex McLaren
Nellie Haines	Stuart Cowan	David McLaren
Ruth Murray	Donna Cowan	Florence Pellow
Margaret Klosz	Meta Taylor	Giles Patten

When it was disbanded in 1961 Mrs. Stuart Cowan and Mrs. Ralph Sparks were the leaders. It was one of the most successful mission bands in our church history. Miss Baxter kept in touch with them all through the years she served in India thus stimulating a greater interest in mission work. Christmas concerts, pageants and bazaars were held and plays produced to help raise funds. Many devoted women served as leaders of this Band.

In 1907 Mrs. C. A. Muma organized the Loving Workers Mission Band for young girls and the meetings were held at her home on Saturdays. Little is known or remembered of what was done at the meetings but what was eaten is well remembered—chocolate fudge candy. The first officers were Pearl Alexander, Addie Meggs and Hazel Mitchell.

In 1915 Mrs. W. A. Lillico became the leader of the Whatsoever Mission Band and carried on the work until 1933. The next year Mrs. W. Gibson was leader followed by Ethel Cowan, Norma Fry and Ilene Gray. The name was changed in 1923 to The Margaret McKellar Mission Band. Some of the members were Wilma Bawtinheimer, Helen Mitchell, Anna Easton, Lillian Haines, Margaret Klosz, Blanche Cadwell, Marjorie Gibson, Kathleen Gray, Aletha Galbraith, Esther McVittie, Ethel Lamont, Meta Taylor, Frances Balkwill, Jeanette Cockburn. In its later years it became the Young Women's Evening Auxiliary presided over by Mrs. O. Gibson, Hope Allan, Mrs. J.

Markle. As the membership dwindled it was decided to merge with the W.M.S. about 1940.

In 1947 a Baby Band was formed with Mrs. Sarah Krueger as superintendent. Fifty-four were on the roll in 1950 and receipts from the mite boxes and collections were \$11.68. Leaders were Mrs. H. Kennedy, Mrs. S. Strickler, Mrs. A. McLaren, Mrs. S. Cowan, Mrs. L. Etherington. There are no reports after 1961.

A C.G.I.T. group was organized in 1942 to 1944 with ten members and Bess Dayman and Kirk Murray as officials, and again in 1952-1955 with Mrs. H. Clark as leader. After this time it apparently lapsed and was started again under the direction of Mrs. A. Manson in 1962. The purpose of their meetings was for worship, mission study and recreation. They contributed to the M and M fund and to Indonesia. The annual candlelight vesper service was always enjoyed and their entertainment for those in the nursing home much appreciated and the mother and daughter banquet an outstanding event in the year. It was an interdenominational community group. Mrs. Allan Scott, Mrs. W. Davidson and Mrs. H. Clark followed Mrs. Manson as leaders.

Mrs. Manson had a group of Explorers as well. Later Mrs. A. Lawrence was in charge followed by Mrs. D. Strickler and Mrs. P. Middleton. The average attendance is eighteen. Their studies include such subjects as Being an Explorer, The Lord's Prayer, Learning to use my Bible, What Makes a Home.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The early records contain very little information about the Sabbath School. Rev. George Murray had one in 1835. The conclusion is that a Sabbath School was started as soon as a new church was organized. One entry states that Rev. D. McRuar preached the Word of God with faithfulness and power and was particularly efficient in his Bible Class instruction. The Senior Class was always in the hands of the minister. There were no Graded Lessons or printed lesson helps and little teacher training. Teachers met weekly to receive instruction by the minister in the preparation of each lesson. Study of the Scripture and the memorization of the Catechism was always insisted on. Prizes were sometimes given to diligent pupils. The evidence of the thoroughness of the instruction is the sturdy character built up by some of the early teachers. In 1862 Sabbath School collections were donated to missions. In 1867 it was agreed that Sabbath School would reopen on May 15. Evidently it was not held during the winter and moreover one wonders at what time it was held for there were two church services on the Sabbath in those early days.

From 1869 there was one church service only in Willis Church and Sunday School was held during the hour previous to the church service. By 1890 it was agreed that Willis Church would have the morning service as Princeton Church preferred the afternoon service. Sun-

day School was held in the church at 10 a.m.

There was a library in connection with the Sunday School, maintained by subscriptions from the congregation. It was in use until 1918. The cupboard used to house the books is in the Sunday School auditorium. The superintendents, each of whom served for fifteen years and more were: Robert McGaw, Jas. D. Cowan, W. G. Barr, C. L. Wilson, Stuart Cowan. Mrs. Shearer formed a singing group in the Sunday School, the beginning of a choir, to learn the hymn tunes. The last Sunday in each month was a Missionary Sunday, with the offering dedicated to support mission work.

Many served as teachers throughout the years, the names of only a few being recorded: Mrs. W. A. Lillico, Addie Meggs, Meta Taylor, Emily Law, M. McKinley, Mrs. Darnley, L. Wilson, R. Wedge. Many young people, too numerous to mention, acted as secretary-treasurer. The attendance in 1916 averaged 40; in 1940 it had dropped to below 30; today it is more than double the above. The teachers, devoted in their faithful endeavours to instruct and guide the young in the Christian faith, merit our highest tribute. The present staff: Harvey Murray, superintendent; Mrs. Frances Peterson, secretary; David Kennedy, treasurer; teachers, Harvey Murray, Mrs. B. Kennedy, Mrs. Mary Cowan, Mrs. Frances Strickler, Mrs. Wilma Duncan, Mrs. Janet Sparks, Mrs. Blanche Milton, Mrs. Ellen Cleaver.

For years the Sunday School required monetary support from the congregation but today it is self-supporting. Every year it contributes to the Mission Fund liberally (Halifax Port Workers) and supports various projects such as replacing worn out hymn books for the church, a name plaque on the exterior of the church, blackboards for each classroom, donations to the Korean orphan, a guest book presented to the church as a gift for our Centennial celebration. The Sunday School staff meets during the year for discussion on the work. Films and lantern slides are used frequently for special day programmes. Some of the highlights are the Mother's Day and Christian Family Week programme; Rally Day and Promotion Day when the certificates and seals are presented for good attendance. Mrs. N. Moyer left a legacy for an award to a pupil under twelve for the best attendance and for a framed picture of Christ and a light above.

The Vacation Bible School which has been arranged by the Baptist Church for fifteen years has always been shared by the Sunday School. Picnics with sports programmes, weiner roasts and toboggan parties are social events greatly enjoyed by everyone. The Christmas Tree concert held for many years in the Township Hall was a programme in which every pupil made his appearance on the stage. This was the highlight of the year for the pupils—complete with Santa Claus attending to give out a gift to each and every pupil. This has been replaced by a Christmas supper open to the pupils, their parents and the congregation, followed by a short programme.

A memorial fund set up in memory of Robert Scott was used

to purchase the electric clock hanging in the Sunday School auditorium and to refinish the old Communion table and for the plaque affixed to it.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES

A Young People's Society has functioned for a very long time but when it was first organized is unknown. One existed in 1890 when Kate McLaren was secretary and the young people were complimented on their work. In 1894 they wanted to have a leader of music for their meetings but the session thought the step unwise and out of harmony with the object of the society and likely to lead to division in the congregation. Helen McLaren, Mrs. Meggs, Jean Alexander, Jessie Rogers, Andrew Easton were secretaries who gave the report at the annual meetings. They donated funds each year to missions.

St. Andrew's Club under the guidance of Rev. A. Lane became very active and enthusiastic. A programme printed in 1923 outlined the topics for seven months. Bible study conducted by the minister was interspersed throughout the year's programme. Recreation and games had their share of each meeting. Jessie Mitchell, president; Minnie McTague, vice-president; Stanley Gibson, secretary; Margaret Cowan, Gertrude Harrison, Margaret Walker, Oliver Fleming, councillors. Some of the subjects discussed that year were: Youth's Guide Book of Life; The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood; How Can Young People's Work Help Our Church?

A group, The Better Builders, was active for the next ten years under the direction of Rev. Richardson and Rev. Hogg. The Bible study proved to be very helpful and inspiring, and about half the programmes were recreational. They had debates and used lantern slides for programmes, held skating parties and Valentine and Hallowe'en socials. Some of the officers were Cecil Cadwell, Lloyd Stevenson, Ruby Wolff, Mabel Peterson, Jeannette Murray, Kathleen and Ilene Gray, Alice Landreth, Alex McLaren.

Following this period there was a society for a few years with Ruth Murray and Bess Dayman presidents and secretaries Alma Jones and Ruth Hildred. A Christmas play and one called Wildcat Willie were produced to raise funds for their contribution is listed at \$48.79. After a lapse of fifteen years a Young People's Union, an interdenominational group, was organized and programmes sponsored by the Baptist church. Their carol singing at Christmas has always brought enjoyment to their listeners. They raise funds to support their Korean orphan by various means, car washes, doing odd jobs for householders, a walkathon ten miles to Princeton and return. They held a Sunrise service at Easter and take part in a musical festival for Oxford County Young People's Unions. The officers for 1969 are Louise Cowan, president; Mark Davidson, vice-president; Karen Davidson, secretary; and Janice Hall, treasurer.

Five of this group attended the annual Toc Alpha Conference

on alcohol and drug problems during the Christmas vacation at Niagara Falls and their experience was most rewarding.

THE MUSIC IN THE CHURCH SERVICE

Since the early days of Christianity a crowning glory of the Church of God has been the power of spiritual song in her worship and life. Generation after generation have lifted their voice in song. A book of common praise is a sure link with past generations and our fellow Christians today.

In 1871 The Book of Psalms was issued by the United Presbyterian Church in Canada and revised versions of this book are included in all later hymnals. In 1880 The Hymnal of the Presbyterian Church was first published and used in Canada. In 1897 a new hymnal entitled The Presbyterian Book of Praise was published and was divided into two parts. The first part contained selections from the Scottish Metrical versions of the Psalms. The second part was a new edition of the Hymnal of the Presbyterian church. Willis Church used the Book of Psalms almost exclusively right into the 20th century. During the great revival, evangelists made the singing of new hymns such as 'The Great Physician now is near', very popular among the young. The older people remained decidedly prejudiced against evangelists and new hymns. When the Presbyterian Book of Praise was published, the session at long last agreed to its use in the church service and in all other meetings. Interest in the singing of hymns became strong and children were taught in the Sunday School. Strangely enough, in Willis congregation there was no strong opposition to the use of an organ in the church service.

In 1918 a new hymnal entitled The Book of Praise was issued to prepare Presbyterians for union. The first section contained 134 songs from the Book of Psalms, the second 250 songs entitled 'For the Young' and modern English hymns. The Hymnary published in 1930 contains fewer Psalms which are placed at the back of the book and used as responsive readings. It contains spiritual songs representative of the Church Universal and a greater number of modern songs.

C. K. Currey, for more than twenty years, was in charge of the service of song, being the last precentor and the first choir leader and he was paid for this service. This choir was organized with the consent of the session in 1912 but the singing of solos, duets and quartettes was forbidden in the service.

Benches and chairs were provided for the choir in the corner behind the organ. Some of the members were Mr. and Mrs. C. K. Currey, Mrs. George Spiers, Mrs. A. Laidlaw, Mrs. J. Meggs, Edward Fair.

In the new church, the choir sat in full view of the congregation. Some of the faithful members under the direction of Andrew Easton and Roland Fry were Mrs. George Spiers, Mrs. J. Meggs, Mrs.

George Hodgson, E. Fair, K. S. McLaren, Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Doxsee, Donna Cowan, Meta Taylor, Mrs. R. C. Cowan, Mrs. Addie Murray, Ethel Cowan, G. H. Wallace, Esther McVittie, Norma Fry, Stuart Cowan. Permission was granted for the wearing of choir gowns. These were black with white collars for the ladies. The ruling against singing solos and duets was withdrawn.

Mrs. Charles Sippel has been organist and leader from 1947 up to 1969 with two short breaks in those twenty-two years. At these times Mrs. R. Harmer and Mrs. C. Cadwell took charge and in 1968 three high school girls, Carol Cowan, Mary McLaren and Kathy Scott, and Roy Milton until Mrs. Sippel's return at the end of 1968. Some years ago Mrs. Howlett assisted at the organ also, for a short time. Others who sang in the choir in this period were: Mrs. C. Cadwell, Mary Lancaster, Marion Gibson, Bess Dayman, Doris Hambly, Shirley Routledge, Peggy Cameron, Jean Hanke, Harvey Thaler, Jean McDonald, Lois Doxsee.

A junior choir was organized and white surplices were made for the children. For three years this choir sang over Brantford radio on the Sunshine Kiddies programme and for the John Noble Home in Brantford. The choir often supplied music for the churches in the area on anniversaries. Soloists were Dianne Peterson, Carol Cowan, and Katherine Scott. In 1963 mothers of the members, with the help of the U.C.W., made blue gowns for the intermediate choir. During the winter toboggan and skating parties and sleigh rides were enjoyed.

The choir which has always given so freely and willingly of its time and talent in leading the congregation in the worship of praise deserve an expression of our sincere appreciation of its contribution to the worship service acknowledged in the warmest terms.

ORGANISTS

1893-1900—Jessie Rogers
1900-1904—W. H. Cowan
1904-1908—Jennie Baxter
1908-1912—W. H. Cowan
1912-1915—Mrs. R. H. Westman
1915-1918—Cassie Stringham
1919-1925—Mrs. Birley
1926 —Hope Allan

1927-1946—Mrs. Cross
1940-1942—Mrs. Howlett
1947-1969—Mrs. Charles Sippel

CHOIR LEADERS

1893-1912—C. K. Currey,
(Precentor)
1912-1916—C. K. Currey
1917-1926—A. L. Easton
1927-1946—Roland Fry
1947-1969—Mrs. Charles Sippel

THE LADIES' AID SOCIETY

A petition signed by a number of women to organize a Ladies' Aid Society for the purpose of helping either to build a new church or renovate the old was granted. The first president was Mrs. W. H. Cowan and the first report was read by Mrs. A. Laidlaw at the annual meeting in 1915 showing \$644 in the treasury. In the next twenty-five years these women filled office of president: Mrs. L. Wilson, Mrs. J. Meggs, Mrs. C. E. Baxter, Mrs. Darnley, Mrs. R. C. Cowan, Mrs. Hodgson,

Mrs. J. Harmer, Mrs. McVittie, Mrs. Cross, Mrs. George Spiers. The ladies busied themselves with quilting, sewing, and knitting for Red Cross war work, purchasing the choir gowns, the carpet for the pulpit platform, catering for banquets, strawberry festivals, St. Patrick suppers. In 1932 the name of the society was changed to the Women's Association. Then came the box socials, hard time parties, bazaars, amateur plays which gave the players and congregation great enjoyment. In early days these would have been forbidden by the session. They proved successful enough to be produced in the surrounding villages thus adding to the treasury.

One of the highlights for forty-eight years was St. Andrew's Dinner. Charles E. Baxter suggested that the congregation celebrate this day, St. Andrew's, with a banquet. The idea caught on among the Scots and some of them went so far as to send to Scotland for sprigs of heather to wear on that occasion. The first one in 1902 was held in George Law's implement warehouse. This was the oldest public building in the village, the first Baptist church and has been lately torn down. The highlight for Jennie Baxter that night was the honour of carrying in the haggis around the tables to the sound of the pipes. Another was the singing of Scottish songs by the Hogarth brothers, one of whom during the singing rested one foot on the seat of a chair. On reading the menus, one fact is clear to us that these were sumptuous feasts.

The programme consisted of music supplied by local and outside talent and of speeches given by ministers and public men among whom were Dr. Sutherland, formerly of Princeton, now of Embro, and Hugh Allan, both members of Parliament; Rev. Brown of Ayr who complained in his toast to the ladies that he had often toasted the ladies but had never been able to persuade anyone of them to turn Brown.

From 1904 to 1916 the dinners were held in the Township Hall and from then on, in the church basement equipped with a kitchen. The ladies' work in serving dinners was made much easier. They had anniversary dinners and entertainment, the proceeds of which the session decided would be applied to the church debt but the ladies could have all the credit. This debt was fully paid amid great jubilation after ten years of hard work.

The next twenty years, 1940-1960, were busy ones for the following officers: Mrs. R. Harmer, Mrs. J. Reid, Mrs. George Strickler, Mrs. Piggott, Mrs. Vance, Mrs. C. Cadwell, Mrs. E. Yeandle, Mrs. M. Scott. In 1945 the ladies were charged by the session to furnish the manse with good ordinary furniture. Ever since, two are appointed to serve on the manse committee. They continued to raise funds by catering for banquets, the Lions' dinners, Fair Board meals, holding bake sales and in the last few years, barbecues. They contributed to the purchase of a piano for use in the church, the electric stove, new set of dishes,

new flags, kitchen cupboards, the Connsonata organ, oil furnaces for the manse and church.

In 1962 the Women's Missionary Society and the Women's Association united under the name United Church Women. Mrs. Murray Scott was the first president of this united group, followed by Mrs. A. Piggott, Mrs. D. Duncan, all of whom filled their office most capably, ably assisted by other officials Mrs. R. Harmer, Mrs. H. Clark, Mrs. L. Peterson, Mrs. R. Milton.

The allocation for mission work has always been met by voluntary givings.

After about 50 years of service, the floor coverings in the church looked very shabby indeed and it was decided to cover the vestibule with linoleum, the stairs with vinyl and the church aisles with red carpet. The front door of the manse was remodelled and storm windows added greatly to the comfort of its inhabitants. In 1963 the senior citizens of the community for the first time were entertained to a turkey dinner followed by a short period of singing and games. This has been continued as it was thought that they enjoyed themselves.

In 1968 there were 50 members, 40 active and the sum of \$1,813.94 was raised.

This year the U.C.W. had the floor of the Sunday School classrooms and auditorium refinished. As it was the floor in the church built in 1869, it is a century old and no doubt will last another century.

United Church Women for this centennial year 1969 have for president, Mrs. Jack Cleaver; vice-president, Mrs. Douglas Strickler; secretary, Mrs. Roy Milton; treasurer, Mrs. Jack Weeks.

THE 50 - 50 CLUB

The 50-50 Club of Drumbo and Richwood charge was formed by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Norris in 1951 during the time Rev. H. Cragg was minister.

The aim of the club was: To promote Christian fellowship among married couples in the church and community; To assist the minister and church officials in all church activities and co-operate in all community projects and world endeavours.

At the first meeting of the club on November 28, 1951, it was decided that the first project would be to present a play. The play *Hen Pecked Henry* was presented twice at Drumbo and other places too, and proved to be a great success.

Assistance has been given to the Sunday Schools, Tyro Club, United Church Training School, Five Oaks Camp, the Manse, Centennial Building Fund, and donations to help children to attend Sunday School camps.

The club has been responsible for one church service during the

minister's holidays and this arrangement is still in effect. Annual events that everyone enjoys are a weiner roast in the summer and a banquet in November. In 1965 the club instituted a refreshment booth at Drumbo Fair and this has been very successful.

Members have travelled many miles via speakers, slides and movies and have visited all the continents except Australia. Many people have spoken at meetings and some of the subjects have been: Oxford County Health Unit; First Aid; Cancer; Grand River Conservation; Mr. R. Nixon on politics; Medicare; Six Nations' Reserve; Origins of the Bible; Children's Aid Society; Life Insurance; County Board of Education.

Presidents from Drumbo have been: Mr. and Mrs. H. Kennedy; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sippel; Mr. and Mrs. R. Harmer; Mr. and Mrs. E. Yeandle; Mr. and Mrs. J. Richardson; Mr. and Mrs. G. Strickler; Mr. and Mrs. A. McLaren.

OLD FAMILIES IN WILLIS CHURCH

It is interesting to note that there are children attending Willis United Sunday School, the sixth generation of the early settlers. Some of the family names have disappeared such as McKay, McArthur, Murray, Allan, Fair, Patullo, Spears. There are descendants of the Dickson, Scott, Lillico, McCrow families still living in Blenheim Township and descendants of the Cockburn, Sparks, Stevenson, Hogarth, Scott, Watters, and Wilson families are members of Willis United today.

C. Lorne Wilson is the oldest member of Willis United Church, still living here, aged 90 years. His grandfather, George Wilson, was a member of the session and a manager in the first Willis Church, and his uncle, Robert, was baptized by Dr. Michael Willis. He himself served as superintendent of the Sunday School and elder for many years. His brother, J. D. Wilson, was for years a lay preacher, taking services when the ministers were away on holiday. His wife, the former Alicia Muma was active in the women's work. His son, Howard, and grandson, Robert, have rendered service too in various ways. One which is much appreciated today is the use of one of their Southern Ontario Trailways buses to carry rural children to and from Sunday School. Three of his great grandchildren, Douglas, Sandra and Judy attend Sunday School at the present time.

In 1834 Thomas Spears (early spelling of Spiers) attended the first Presbyterian church on the Governor's Road. Members of this family gave devoted service to Willis Church and were particularly interested in its mission work for 118 years. His son, John, lived to the age of 90 years and attended the first church as a very young boy. He later wrote, in collaboration with Edward Fair and Robert McCrow, an account of his first Sabbath service in that church, part of which is included in this book. John was in office most of his life, either as a manager, or elder or precentor. It would be a safe con-
jec-

ture to state that he missed few Sabbath services in those 90 years. His grandson George was also an active member of the board of managers and of the session. George's wife, the former Maud Rutherford, contributed in the service of song for many, many years as well as in the women's work. At her death she wished a memorial to the Spiers family to be presented to Willis Church and this took the form of chimes attached to the organ whose music can be heard outside the building as well, a most fitting memorial for this family. A small bronze plaque suitably inscribed to the memory of the Spiers family was placed on the choir railing in front of the organ.

The Cockburn family was among the first settlers and active members of the first Willis Presbyterian Church. Edward became a minister, taking his training at the University of Toronto and Knox College. His first charge was in Uxbridge, then in Paris where there were two Presbyterian churches. During his ministry there was a union of the two and the present church built. He was moderator of the Paris Presbytery, preached in Willis Church in 1875, took part in the induction service of Rev. W. K. Shearer in Willis Church in 1890. Later he was appointed librarian of Knox College.

Arthur and Andrew Cockburn were members of Willis Church, Andrew a member of the session for several years. John T. Cockburn who decided at the division in 1870 to join Willis Church, was a captain in the Brant Dragoons, Canadian Militia. He served on the session. His son, Wilfrid, attended the Sunday School of St. Andrew's Blenheim. He joined this church and was a member of the session, teacher in the Sunday School, a member of the choir, a capable debater in the Young People's Society. After his removal to Drumbo, he served as an elder in Willis United and his wife, the former Emily Watson, has always shown great interest in the Women's societies.

The family name, Lillico, does not appear on the church roll today, but there are descendants living in the township. The first one, John, usually called Jock, lived east of the townline on concession 9 and made a journey of five miles or so on the Sabbath to attend service in the first Willis Church. Naturally he strongly favoured the building of the second Willis Church in the village of Drumbo. He was a member of the session all his life. He steadfastly refused to change the custom of standing for the prayers until finally as the years passed he was the only one of the congregation to stand for the prayer and sit for the singing. During Rev. Shearer's twenty-minute prayer, one often saw him, just as a horse does, relieve the strain by shifting his weight from one foot to the other.

His son, Walter, showed the same interest in the church, occupied the same offices as his father had. Walter's wife, Mary McLaren, was a devoted Sunday School teacher and missionary worker, especially with the Mission bands for many years.

One of John Lillico's grandsons was Dr. Richard Davidson, who was born in Blenheim Township, Concession 11, and received

his training at the University of Toronto, Knox College and in Germany. He joined the staff of Knox College as a professor of Old Testament studies and later became the principal of Knox College. He frequently preached in Willis Presbyterian Church. When union came in 1925, he was appointed principal of Emmanuel College. After retirement he became interested in the ecumenical church.

Richard Davidson, the second, chose the same life work as his father and served in various charges, one of them in Sydenham United Church which King George and Queen Elizabeth attended when they spent a Sunday in that area. Later he moved to Toronto as minister of Fairlawn United Church and is at present the minister in charge of St. Andrew's United Church. We welcome him as guest minister at our centennial celebration in the knowledge that it is most fitting for him to conduct this service in the church of his great grandfather.

James Sparks probably attended the early church on the Governor's Road, certainly was a member of the first Willis Church. When this congregation was divided this family joined the Presbyterian congregation in Princeton as this church was nearer their home. Two of the next generation, Earl and Ralph, joined Willis Church in Drumbo. Ralph has served as a steward and is now treasurer of the church, and a member of the session. His wife, the former Janet Folster, is co-treasurer, a teacher in the Sunday School and has been a leader in Mission Band work. His four children, Catharine, Margaret, James, and John are the fifth generation of this family connected with this church and will be among its leaders in the future.

Four years after Willis Presbyterian Church was built in Drumbo, James D. Cowan joined this congregation and for many years served as secretary-treasurer, member of the session, superintendent and secretary of the Sunday School, chairman of building committee. His wife, the former Elizabeth Taylor, was an active member of the Ladies' Aid Society and the Women's Missionary Society. A bronze plaque was dedicated in Willis United Church in 1936 by Rev. Hogg, presented by their son Judge Donald J. Cowan as a memorial of their devoted service.

Their daughter, Margaret, has been a life-long member of this congregation and her interest centred mainly in young people's work. She gave of her time and talent as a Sunday School teacher, a leader in the Young People's Society, Mission Band work and in all the endeavours of the W.M.S.

Two sons, William and Dick, have lived their lives in close connection with the congregation, faithfully carrying out their duty in the office of elder and steward for many years.

One grandson, Stuart, has followed the footsteps of his forebears as teacher and superintendent in the Sunday School, steward and secretary of the church, member of the choir and of the session.

Three great granddaughters, Carol, Louise and Jane are con-

tributing to the spiritual life of the congregation in the service of praise and in Young People's endeavours.

In 1886, James McLaren and family came to this community and settled on a farm on the seventh line, just west of the village. They became staunch supporters of Willis Church for four generations. James was particularly interested in mission work and for some years was president of the Central Missionary Society, and his daughters Helen, Margaret and Kate acted as secretary of this society for many years.

His son, Peter, graduated from Knox College in 1891 and was pastor of several congregations among them Bellwood, Strabane, Shakespeare, and Russell. He frequently preached in Willis Church and in 1915 was the pulpit supply during the minister's holiday. After retirement for the last five years of his life he worked with the British and Foreign Bible Society in Toronto.

Another son, Kenneth Stuart, served as a manager of Willis congregation and for many years was a choir member. Mrs. K. S. McLaren, the former Annabelle Harmer, was a faithful servant of the church all her life, nor was there a more devoted worker in the missionary society. Many have happy memories of their association with her in this work, of the fun they enjoyed at the picnics and meetings at her home.

One grandson, Alex, has been for years a member of the session and is now clerk of the session, a steward, a worker in the Sunday School, a member of the choir and is now chairman of the centennial committee.

Two great granddaughters, Mary and Margaret, are gladly contributing their share of the church work and particularly in the service of praise.

Dr. J. A. Mitchell came to Drumbo in 1895 and for all the years he was here, was a faithful servant of Willis Church. He served as elder, trustee, a diligent member of the building committee who worked full time at this undertaking. It was due to men of this calibre that the church was so expeditiously and so beautifully built. His wife, Elizabeth Scott, also devoted much time to the welfare of the local congregation and the mission work at home and abroad. Their family as well shared in all the church endeavours. Their daughters, Hazel, Mrs. Allan Wedge, Jessie, Mrs. Andrew Lane, Marion, and Helen, Mrs. Fred Gibson, placed a bronze tablet in Willis Church in memory of the dedicated service of their parents and to the glory of God.

SERVANTS OF THE CHURCH

Miss C. V. Baxter, a servant of the church at large, writes the following brief resume of her work in India:

In October 1924 I left Montreal and after spending a week in

Manchester, England, waiting for a ship at Liverpool, I reached Indore, Central India, December 10.

For language study of Hindi, I lived at Jhansi, Northern India, studying with a teacher or pundit, then attended language school in Laudour in the hills, passed the first year examinations in September, 1925, written and oral.

After union in June, 1925, I chose to be transferred to the Central India field of the United Church of Canada. My first assignment was the charge of the primary school and the Girls' Hostel at Dhar and supervision of two Bible women for evangelistic work in Dhar.

After the first furlough in 1930-1931, I was appointed principal of the Teacher Training Classes in Indore and supervisor of three day schools. This was my main responsibility with the addition of secretarial duties of the Educational Commission and later associate secretary of the Mission which entailed all official correspondence with the W.M.S. Dominion Board. For some years I was editor of a Hindi Sunday School weekly paper called "Rays of Light".

During the term 1947-52 I acted as substitute for colleagues on furlough in charge of the school and Girls' Hostel at Ratlam until the first Indian principal was appointed there. Then I was in Kharua with responsibility for the Middle School, Girls' and Boys' Hostel, a ward used mainly for maternity cases, the supervision of fields, gardens, oxen used for watering fields and gardens and drawing wood. Next, for two years, I was treasurer of the Mission responsible for all funds from Canada, checking all accounts, pay sheets and paying salaries of all missionaries helped by a well-qualified Indian assistant.

My last term was again in Indore in charge of the Teacher Training classes, supervising the Primary section of the High School and two day schools in the outskirts of Indore and one in the city of Mhow.

I left India in April 1959 for my final furlough and retirement in 1960.

Mr. Hugh Allan was a great layman of the United Church of Canada. He, early in his youth, became a member of the Methodist Church at Richwood, the superintendent of the Sunday School, and a leader in every good work in the community. After union he continued to serve the church as elder and steward. He was an outstanding Bible Class teacher and for many years a Lay Preacher, occupying pulpits frequently with great acceptance. His name became known to all, who knew him as a synonym for integrity and willing, friendly helpfulness.

Rev. J. E. Hogg, as the keynote of his tribute to his friends, used the words from Zech. 11:2 "the cedar is fallen". He referred to

Mr. Allan as stalwart, stately, big not only in physique but also in intellect and spirit.

Forty years ago these were some of the active member families: Kloss, Fry, McDonald, Hodgson, Campbell, Scott, Strickler, Wallace. Oliver Fleming who has set a record of 34 years service as secretary-treasurer, L. E. Peterson serving as steward whose wise counsel helped to bring the church through ten years of depression and a son Robert as steward and trustee and a grandson Lewis as steward.

It is reassuring to note that in the last twenty years there are just as many devout standard-bearers as in the past, among newcomers: Booker, Butcher, Etherington, Hambly, Macey, Milton, Hildred, Kennedy, McTavish, Duncan, Piggott, Vance, Weeks.

Several well-wishers have left generous bequests to Willis Church: Miss Mary McCrow; Miss Isabel Clark; Miss Adeline Harrison; Mrs. Gertrude Moyer; Mrs. Emma Birley; Mr. William J. Baxter.

In 1889 Mrs. J. Walker gave the church a handsome silver baptismal bowl.

A silver chalice and paten were given in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Gray by their family this year.

A cross has been given by the members of the Hodgson family in loving memory of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Hodgson.

We realize now that down through the church century there were members of this congregation who generated spiritual power, love, and compassion and that they have left their mark on the rest of us. The church was the moving spirit behind the first schools and universities set up in this country. Many of the leaders in the colleges are minister's sons today. There is scarcely a humanitarian enterprise in Canada that the church didn't initiate. First hospitals, first senior citizens' homes were church operated. The church produces sound and high-hearted men and women.

Dr. Sigmund Samuel, the Jewish philanthropist, often said that it was by inherited faith, enriched by personal development that a man reaches an abiding sense of public obligation.

THE CHURCH'S FUTURE

Just as there has been a phenomenal change in man's way of living and in church customs, so we must prepare for greater change in the future. In an article entitled *The Church's Future*, published in 1967, Dr. Cox of Harvard Divinity School has written in part: "The real issue is how we get from denominations to the ecumenical church." He uses these words "our doomed denominational Christianity". "God's main intention is not the renewal of the church but the renewal of the world. The main focus of concern should be the restoration of man to his manhood, the restoration of the community, and the reconstruction of a bent world to a fully human place. Therefore our interest in the renewal of the church must be a secondary one.

'If we devote our energies and God's to this mission, we are

directly engaged in the work of God and he will take care of the renewing of the life of his people. Hardly anyone today is willing to dispute the fact that the Christian Church is undergoing an unprecedented transformation. We are in the middle of a big change and we can expect to see the development of more distinctive Christian styles of life."

With good heart this congregation has dedicated itself to a year of spiritual uplift in preparing for the centennial celebration in 1969 when the consecration of a memorial tablet as our tribute to the early pioneers will take place.

ROLL OF HONOUR

1914 - 1918

Francis Alexander Law
Alexander James Gibson
George Milne Gibson
Donald Taylor Baxter
William Daniel Ronald
Gordon Campbell Ronald
Pierre Roberston Alexander
Arthur Gordon Cowan

James Chrysler Kilgour
James Allan Wedge
Robert Samuel Stevenson
Thomas Mackie
Oliver Fleming
Oliver Taylor Gibson
Alexander Erb Clark
Ernest Donald Taylor

1939 - 1945

Hubert Birch
Hugh Clark
Bud Cohen
Arthur Duncan
Norman Gibson
Stanley Hodgson
Howard Kennedy
William Cook
W. Cameron Cowan
David McLaren

Harry Krueger
Robert Krueger
McBeth Murray
Robert Pipe
Rodman Prentice
Floyd Stevenson
Earl Sparks
John Murray
Glen Taylor

Harvey Thaler
Charles Thompson
Charles Wallace
Roy Baker
Francis Stott
James Stott
Lyle Wallace
Howard Wilson
Owen Baxter

MEN WHO PAID THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

Frank Law
James Gibson

George Gibson
Chrysler Kilgour

Charles Wallace
McBeth Murray

THE MINISTERS FROM 1869 - 1969

Rev. Hector McQuarrie	1866-1877	Rev. H. H. Cragg	1951-1953
Rev. Jas. Little	1877-1888	Rev. A. E. Millen	1953-1956
Rev. W. K. Shearer	1890-1920	Rev. Trevor D. Richards	1956-1958
Rev. Andrew Lane	1920-1925	Rev. Alex M. Manson	1958-1965
Rev. John Richardson	1925-1936	Rev. G.P. Gregersen	1965-1967
Dr. J. E. Hogg	1936-1944	Rev. Gordon Harris	1967-
Rev. J. W. Moores	1944-1947	Mr. Percy Brown	1968-
Dr. T. A. Symington	1947-1951		

THE SESSION

Percy Brown, pastor; Alex McLaren, clerk of session; Charles Sippel;
Stuart Cowan; Ralph Sparks; Ray Harmer; Harvey Murray.

HONORARY MEMBERS — C. L. Wilson, R. C. Cowan, O. Fleming
TREASURER — Ralph Sparks.

BOARD OF STEWARDS

Harold Butcher, chairman; Harvey Murray, secretary; Joe Markle;
Douglas Strickler; Murray Scott; Fraser Hanna; Jack McTavish;
Lewis Peterson; Mrs. S. Strickler; Mrs. George McMurran

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Robert Peterson, Ray Harmer, J. McTavish.

ORGANIST & CHOIR LEADER

Mrs. Charles Sippel, A.R.C.T.

CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

Alex McLaren, chairman; Mrs. R. Harmer; Murray Scott; Joe Markle;
Harvey Murray; David Milton