



## “In His Name We Build”

J. Layton Mauzé, Jr.

The Session moved quickly to replace Dr. Hall. Within five months, the search committee recommended J. Layton Mauzé, Jr. The congregation unanimously agreed, and on January 30, 1949, Dr. Mauzé was called to be Central's eleventh pastor.

Although over thirty years had passed since Dr. Mauzé's father had served as pastor, he was fondly remembered. After leaving Central, Dr. Mauzé, Sr., served a congregation in West Virginia and then returned to the Midwest when called to the Central Presbyterian Church in Kansas City. He often visited St. Louis and preached several times at his former church. He was asked to return to Central following Dr. MacLeod's resignation, but declined. The whole church mourned his death on April 25, 1937.



*Dr. J. Layton Mauze. He followed in his father's footsteps by attending the same seminary and serving in the same churches in which his father had also ministered.*

Layton Mauzé, Jr. was born in 1908 during his father's years at Central. Like his father, he was a graduate of Union Theological Seminary and Westminster College. He also followed his father's footsteps in his ministry, serving only churches in which his father had served: First Church in Huntington, West Virginia; Central Church in Kansas City; and Central Church in St. Louis. In his formal acceptance of Central's call, Dr. Mauzé acknowledged the magnitude of the task facing him. "It is well that you should know," he wrote, "that I would never have consented to touch it but for two things — a growing awareness in regard to it of Divine constraint and direction, and the knowledge that you were completely unanimous and enthusiastic in extending the invitation." This would prove to be a successful match; Dr. Mauzé would serve Central until his retirement.

Churches throughout the United States experienced an increase in membership following the Second World War and Central was no exception. In the fall of 1951, the church began holding two Sunday morning worship

services (9:30 and 11:00). The nursery and Sunday School programs were extended to accommodate young families in the midst of the “baby boom.” Responding to the need for additional space, Central embarked on a \$400,000 capital funds campaign in 1952 to erect a new Children’s Building [the current nursery and early childhood wing]. If churches did indeed have personalities, as the Session had suggested years before, the title for the campaign, “In His Name We Build,” came to characterize Central throughout Dr. Mauzé’s pastorate. The leaders of the church understood that they were not building for themselves, “but rather for others - that they might live more abundantly.” “This is our task today,” they proclaimed. “For each generation must project itself, through faith, into the future. Let us arise and build, to match the faith of our fathers, and their deeds of yesteryear. Then we shall continue to be a church of vision.”

1952 was a signal year in the life of Central. In addition to the decision to build, the congregation celebrated the final payment on the old building debt by burning the mortgage on March 20. A difficult chapter in the church’s history was finally closed. During the same month, the congregation approved a rotation plan for the board of elders, similar to the one adopted by the diaconate in 1940. The following September, a short entry in the Session minutes noted that Dr. Mauzé presented a survey of conditions at the Des Peres Presbyterian Church. Des Peres was one of several struggling churches in the St. Louis Presbytery that would be helped by Central in the coming years.

The Children’s Building was dedicated on May 22, 1955, along with the newly built Childress Chapel. Dr. Mauzé reiterated the importance the church attached to Central’s building program:



*The post-war baby boom put pressure on the church to expand its facilities, as is evidenced by this Sunday School class filled to capacity. Construction of a new Children’s Building was begun in October of 1954.*

*The burning of the mortgage on the Hanley Road building, March 20, 1952. Reported The Centralian, “With grand ceremony, the mortgage was burned by Oscar Rexford, Fielding Childress and John Raeburn Green, sons of those who served on the Building Committee of the New Central Church back in 1930.” Others pictured are Edwin J. Spiegel and Dr. Mauze.*

*Here in Central we must take seriously the two-fold command of Jesus in regard to his disciples. The Master's injunction was that his followers were to be both the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." Every traveler in Europe is impressed with the overshadowing prominence of cathedral-like structures. Here, however, the churches had been content to be dwarfed by the temples of business, believing, of course, that religion was the leaven which lifted the spirit of business and society. Now at last the Church is coming to combine the function of the light on the hill with that of the salt of the earth. We are determined that men shall see the source of our inspiration and glorify "our Father which is in heaven."*



*Flag bearers lead the processional at the dedication service of the new children's wing in 1955. At the dedication, Dr. Mauze said, "The new Children's Building which we dedicate today offers to the congregation of Central Church and to this community one of the most modern and efficient religious education buildings in the country."*

In the middle to late 1950's, Central spearheaded efforts to revitalize the Des Peres and Bonhomme Presbyterian churches. Although the historical roots of both predated Central (Bonhomme was established in 1816 and Des Peres in 1832), neither had grown into truly viable churches. Under the leadership of Dr. Herbert Watson, Superintendent of Home Missions for the Presbytery, Central contributed \$8,000 toward the salary of Des Peres' first installed minister in 1954 and gave substantial aid in funding the church's own building program. The new Des Peres church, located on Clayton Road, was dedicated in 1962.

Likewise, Dr. Watson recognized the potential of a Presbyterian church further west in the county and discussed with Dr. Mauzé the possibility of developing the Bonhomme church. Older Centralians were familiar with the church. In 1920, a Sunday School program was begun at Bonhomme, staffed primarily by Central members. By the mid-1950's, however, Bonhomme's membership had dwindled to two sisters, whose aunt, Miss Annie Yokel, had left a large sum to the church in her will. In 1956, Dr. Watson, Dr. Mauzé, and Mr. Alfred H. Kerth, executor of the estate and a member of Central, selected a site for a new building, one-half mile west of the old Bonhomme stone church on Conway Road. Central supplemented the Yokel bequest with its own financial contributions. Construction of a chapel, education building and manse were completed in 1959 and Dr. Mauzé preached at the dedication service held that November.

Central also worked with Dr. Watson in developing the Dardenne Presbyterian church. Like Bonhomme and Des Peres, Dardenne was an historic church (Dr. Langtry had preached the sermon on the church's

125th anniversary in 1944) that had fallen on hard times. In her history of the Dardenne Church (located near O'Fallon, Missouri), Elizabeth Audrain Watson paid tribute to Central: "Much gratitude is given to Dr. Layton Mauzé, Jr. and to Dr. Andrew Jumper, ministers of the Central Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, and to that great congregation, for their encouragement and substantial financial help during the late 1960's and the early 1970's. Without Central Church, such rapid progress [in building up the church] could not have been possible."

In addition to working with the Presbytery in renewing older churches, Central began plans in 1966 for developing a brand new church to be located on Ladue Road at Mason. As work on the building progressed, Central called Rev. Vern Trueblood as an assistant pastor for the expressed purpose of organizing the new church. By October, 1968, the church had a name - Kirk of the Hills - and increasing attendance on Sunday mornings. It was formally organized on April 13, 1969, and now has a thriving congregation of over 1200.

Dr. Mauzé understood the vocation of the church to be that of "earnestly striving to bring individuals to a reconciliation with God and a saving knowledge of His son, Jesus Christ." This was to be accomplished through a program of evangelism, missions and education. When he reviewed his twenty-one years of ministry at Central, he singled out the building programs, benevolence giving and support of foreign missionaries as evidence of the church's commitment to evangelism and missions. In addition to the new children's wing, the church's commitment to education had been extended to a preschool program begun in 1957 under the leadership of nationally-known educator, Dorothea Pflug. Impressed with the education his grandchildren had received at the "Central School for the Young Years," Mr. Stanley Jackes made available to the church the thirty-acre site that in 1962 became Centreat.

Central also began seeking to "bring the church back onto a level keel." By the mid-fifties, the Southern Presbyterian Church, as a denomination, began responding to a changing society in ways its more conservative constituents, including Central, found increasingly at odds with the Church's historic mission. The denomination's membership in the National Council of Churches met with persistent conservative opposition throughout the 1950's and 1960's. Opponents voiced concern over possible Communist influence and questionable patriotism in the



*Central was instrumental in providing the resources and leadership to help struggling churches in the 1950's and 60's. The Bonhomme and Des Peres Presbyterian Churches in West County are two such churches.*

Council and over involvement in social issues, including the civil rights movement.

Central's leaders agreed with these concerns. For several years, the Session had a standing committee on anti-communism. Dr. Mauzé preached often on the declining moral consensus and increasing social upheaval in the country. "Frequently," he wrote, "I have borne down heavily on godless Communism and have emphasized the tremendous importance of freedom and democracy in the world and our keen need for a deeper patriotism in this country. I have stood for law and order and have cracked down heavily on kooks and some of the silly and stupid things they have stood for." In a sermon delivered in 1968, Dr. Mauzé averred:

*My friends, "conservative" is a great and honorable word, and I'm proud to be so labeled. I will stand with the responsible conservatives of history, beginning with Moses and coming down to today's solid, law-abiding citizen, who still believes in the Ten Commandments; who prefers a useful job to a handout; who doesn't want his government to do anything for him that he can do for himself; who is dedicated to "raising his kids right; and who is proud to be a 'flag-waver' because the American flag symbolizes opportunity, individuality, integrity, legality, dignity, and the ultimate fulfillment for the human personality."*

Central was personally caught up in the turmoil of the times when it was one of several St. Louis churches disrupted in June, 1969, by members of the Black Liberation Front. The group entered the church during a Sunday morning worship service and asked to read a "Black Manifesto" and demanded "reparations" from church members. Dr. Mauzé dismissed the congregation and there was little, if any, interaction between the groups. The Session took steps to secure the church property (the stained glass windows were covered with a protective plastic) and requested an injunction against the militants, but they did not return.

Harkening back to one of the historic keystones of the Southern Presbyterian Church, that of the spirituality of the church, Dr. Mauzé declared that the basic solution to all of America's ills was to "get right with God." He decried what he perceived to be the secularization of Chris-



*Doyne Christine Neal, choir director and organist at Central from 1920-1968. Well-known for her dedication to a top-quality music program, she drew many to the church. The story is told that she fell ill while playing the organ at the 1967 Christmas concert and while she clutched her chest with one hand, she continued to play with the other. A back-up organist slid onto the bench and finished the concert (apparently without missing a note). She died in March, 1968.*

tianity. "No danger confronting the church today," he said, "is more sinister than its overemphasis on the purely temporal and material aspects of human life...Unfortunately many churches in the main have been preoccupied with social issues, and have forgotten that their solution rests basically on the moving, cleansing power of Christian character, personality and spirit."

By the late 1960's, the Southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS) was moving inexorably toward union with the Northern Church (UPCUSA). At the congregational meeting in December, 1969, Central members listened to a young minister from Texas who was deeply involved in the denomination and as concerned as Dr. Mauzé with the direction in which it was going. Conservatives had already begun to discuss withdrawal from the denomination, but the speaker suggested a middle course and renewal from within. In January, 1970, the young man from Texas, Andrew Jumper, joined with Dr. Mauzé and thirty-one others to form the steering committee of a new organization, the Covenant Fellowship of Presbyterians (CFP). The CFP sought the middle ground, declaring that its purpose was one of reconciliation and renewal of the church through the Holy Spirit.

The following month, Dr. Mauzé announced his retirement from the ministry for health reasons. In a brief statement to the congregation, he praised Central as a church standing "in a disillusioned and uncertain world as a great practical demonstration of religious cooperation, unity and Christian Faith." "I thank God for it and you," he continued, "and for all the happy associations we have had together in these past 21 years...My earnest prayer is that you will make the future of Central great. Stand by this church! And I plead with you to give my successor the same wonderful support you have given me. He will no doubt be a younger man. Allow him to grow. Pull out of him by your spirit and attitude and loyalty all the best that is there." Ever gracious, Dr. Mauzé concluded with the prayer that the God of all grace make the next twenty-one years better than the last. He and his wife, Sue, moved to North Carolina and then to Florida, where he died in 1988.