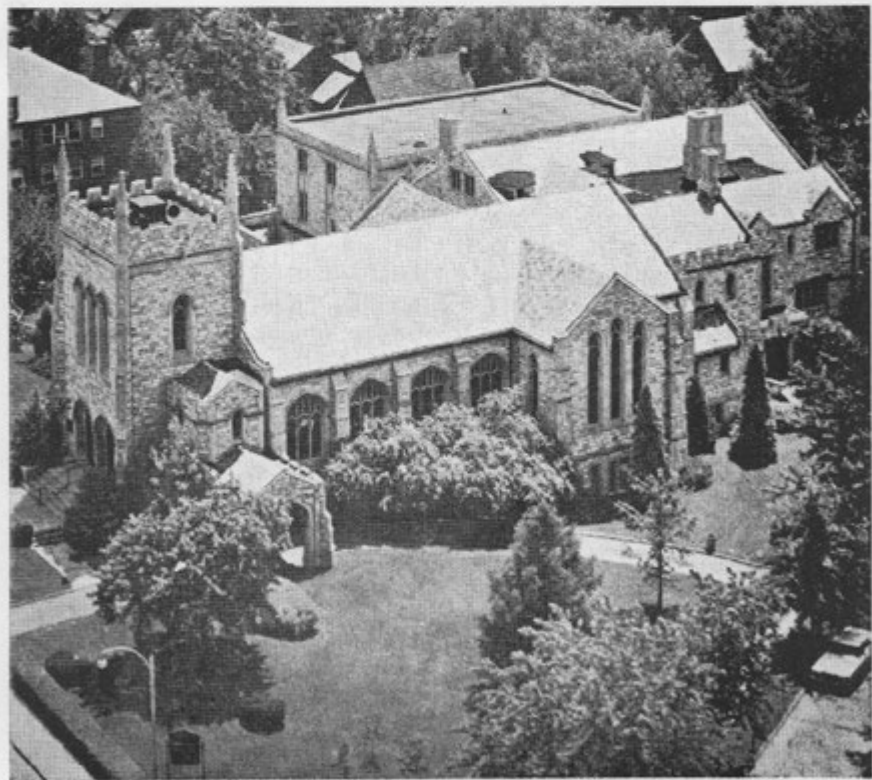


*Central
Presbyterian
Church*



A Historical Perspective

Dedication

This history is dedicated in loving memory of those committed men and women who founded Central Presbyterian Church in 1844, and to those devoted men who served as her pastors over the years:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1844-1845 | Reverend Joseph Templeton
(Pulpit Supply) |
| 1845-1849 | Reverend Alexander Van Court |
| 1850-1868 | Reverend Dr. S. J. P. Anderson |
| 1869-1895 | Reverend Dr. Robert S. Brank |
| 1895-1897 | Reverend Edward Mack |
| 1898-1901 | Reverend Archibald Fairly Carr |
| 1902-1917 | Reverend Dr. J. Layton Mauzé |
| 1918-1922 | Reverend Donald G. McLeod |
| 1923-1929 | Reverend Dr. James Luther Fowle |
| 1930- | Reverend Dr. Walter Langtry
(Pastor Emeritus) |
| 1931-1937 | Reverend Theodore S. Smylie |
| 1938-1948 | Reverend Dr. B. Frank Hall |
| 1949-1970 | Reverend Dr. J. Layton Mauzé, Jr.
(Pastor Emeritus) |
| 1970- | Reverend Dr. Andrew A. Jumper |

Central Presbyterian Church

A

Historical Perspective

APRIL 9, 1978

By

PIERRE BAPTISTE

Part I: The Early Years

St. Louis, April 19, 1844—A city of contrasts. Here genteel Southern aristocrats and Eastern industrialists mingle with brawling riverboatmen, trappers and traders. Here the latest Parisian fashions can be seen along side of buckskin and homespun. Here slavery is a firmly entrenched institution and duels are fought with savage relish on Bloody Island in sight of steamboats plying along the Mississippi.

In short, the St. Louis of 1844 was a city in the process of finding itself.

And, as Charles Dickens wrote in 1842, St. Louis was a city where "The Roman Catholic religion, introduced here by the early French settlers, prevails extensively."

In this atmosphere, in 1844 a number of members of Second Presbyterian Church of St. Louis presented a petition to the Presbytery of St. Louis asking it to organize another old school Presbyterian Church in this city. The term "old school" relates to a split that had occurred in the Church over the issue of union with the Congregational Church, the old schoolers electing not to unite.

On April 18, permission having been granted by Presbytery, prospective members were examined and received into the new Church. The next day the new members elected "the first Session of the Fourth Presbyterian Church of St. Louis, namely, Phillip Skinner, George W. Meyers, and John Suydam, and on the next Sabbath, April 21st, Messrs. Meyers and Suydam were ordained, and all three installed, and the first Communion of this Church was celebrated." Apparently even then our Church, whose name was later to be changed to Central Church, had a rare talent for expeditious organization.

With a membership of 32, the Church worshipped for the first years

in a small frame building on the southwest corner of Sixth and St. Charles streets. Its first elected pastor was Alexander Van Court. In 1846 the Church's name was changed to Central Presbyterian Church and, two years later, a move was made to a newly constructed facility at Eighth and Locust streets.

What was it like to be a Presbyterian in those early days? An early Central Church document gives us some rare insights.

"The state of the religion had become low, and was growing worse. There were several cases of discipline for disorderly conduct among the members. Some had been attending the Theater, others went to dancing parties, and others frequented billiard saloons.

Another section reads:

"The Session organized themselves into a working body. They divided the congregation into districts, one of which was assigned to each member, who was expected to visit each family in his district, and they were called on at each stated meeting of Session to make report of their diligence in that behalf. They were also required to look into and report the conduct of members, so the Session might know how each member was living. As a result of this, two members of the Church were cited to appear before Session and answer to the charge of habitual neglect of the ordinances of God's house. After being summoned the second time, and failing to answer either summons, they were expelled from the privileges of the Church. There were other cases of discipline also about this time — one for attending a masked ball and one for drunkenness."

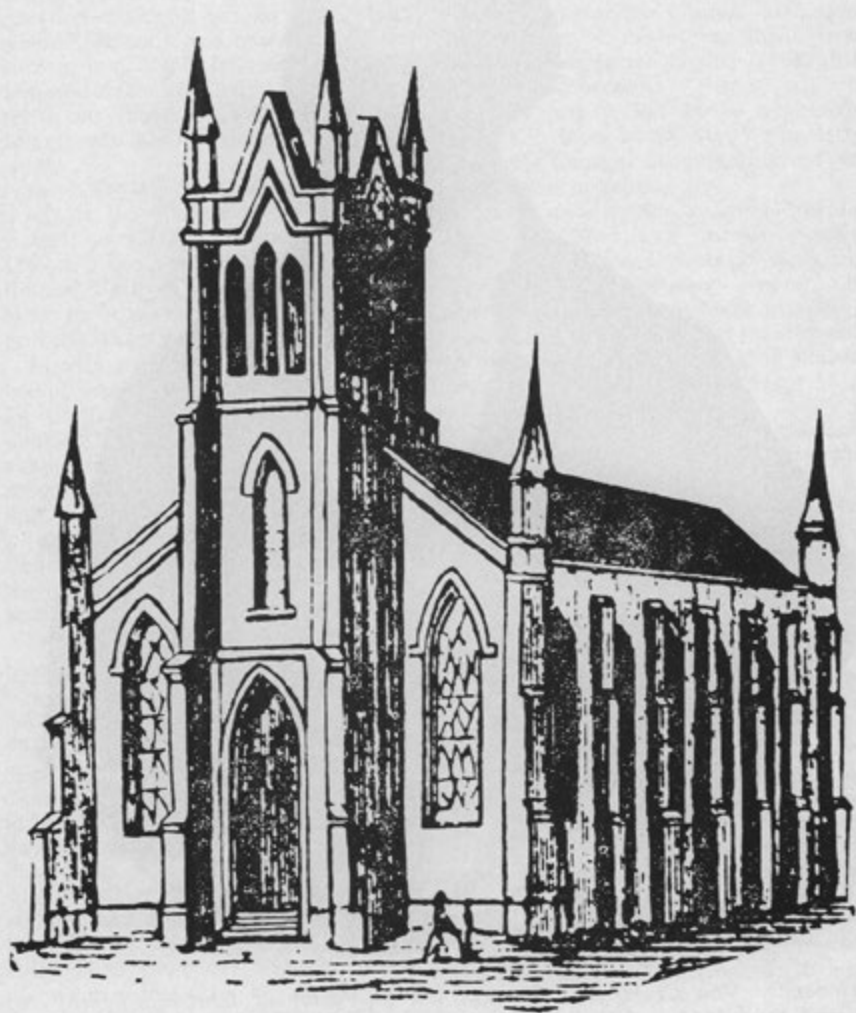
Also present in those early years of our Church was the grim specter of death. In the Spring of 1849 a Cholera



Alexander Van Court was the first elected Pastor of Central Church. He served from 1844 to 1849 when he passed away during the cholera epidemic.

epidemic struck St. Louis. Probably brought to the city by steamboat, it left virtually no family of the congregation untouched. The city's efforts to combat the disease were at best

feeble, consisting of an appropriation of \$50,000, an order to burn coal on every street corner in order to lift the dread winds thought to bring the disease, and a virtual state of martial



This building housed Central's congregation from 1848 to 1873. It was located at the corner of Eighth and Locust Streets.

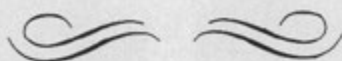
law. All religions in the city joined in days of fasting and prayer. When the epidemic abated that fall, Central found many of its pews empty and its Pastor, Van Court, struck down.

The Civil War also left its mark on Central Church. Missouri was a divided state, and Central Church was a mirror of those divisions. The 1883 History of Central Presbyterian Church records:

"The war came on, and there was great diversity of opinion among the members. The Pastor was arrested and tried by the military authorities. Many of the members left the Church and joined other Churches with which they were more in sympathy. There were few or no additions to the Church.

"But the war at last came to an end; yet there was still left a feeling of estrangement in the breasts of many of the members of the Church. There were those in the Church on both sides of the political questions then agitating the country, who loved the Church, and who would not allow their differences in such matters to break up their long cherished Christian fellowship. But still there was not that cordiality of love and friendship that had been in olden time."

Central Church had survived plague and war. The embryo formed by 32 members had become a body with its sinews toughened and strengthened in the crucible of adversity and constant steadfastness to God and His Word.



Part II: Coming of Age

The Civil War was over, the South groaning under the burden of a harsh reconstruction. St. Louis, firmly in the Northern camp both politically and philosophically by war's end, was booming. Many of the industries that had sprung up for the production of war goods rapidly converted to peace time production. The westward expansion was in full bloom. There were plows to be made and wagons and fence wire and thousands of other implements needed to subdue a wild

In a way, Central Church was both victim and beneficiary of these startling changes. In 1873 the building that had housed the congregation at Eighth and Locust streets had been rendered unsafe due to the construction of a rail tunnel along an adjacent street. Fortunately, two years prior, the congregation had purchased property and erected a small Chapel at Lucas and Garrison streets. With the building at Eighth and St. Charles doomed, Central operations were



Interior and exterior view of the Central Church at Lucas and Garrison. Built at a cost of \$145,000, the financial burden of the loan for the building severely hampered Central operations. Photo in insert is of Rev. J. Layton Mauze, father of our present Pastor Emeritus.

frontier. And St. Louis, long a jumping off place, became a manufacturing and distribution center as well.

During the 1870's St. Louis boasted a population of 330,000. It had about 3,000 manufacturing firms with a work force of over 40,000. And, in 1874, the final link was forged. On July 4th, Mrs. Julius S. Walsh christened the "Illinois and St. Louis Bridge," better known as the "Eads Bridge."

transferred completely to the little Chapel.

The facilities were inadequate. There was nothing to do but to build again. Plans were drawn up, contracts let, and construction begun. The result was a magnificent structure that stands to this day, still being used as a Church.

Built at a cost of \$145,000, the building was a costly one and its fi-



The St. Louis Fair featured rides in this automobile, one of a host of technical innovations which attracted worldwide attention to St. Louis. The official "View Book" of that time confidently predicted that "this is the machine that, in all probability, will occupy a place at the great International Exposition of 1950."

nancial burden on the Church was nearly ruinous. The 1883 Central Church Year Book records:

"But the Church was now approaching a period the most trying and critical in the history of its existence. There had been a very large debt contracted, and the interest thereon and the necessary expenses of the Church were considerably more than the revenues, so that the debt was constantly growing. Various schemes were devised to remedy this state of affairs, and different opinions were entertained concerning the different methods proposed.

"In December, 1877, the Church was incorporated, against the earnest protest of some of the members. For a year or more the state of the Church was very unhappy.

"During the summer of 1879, several meetings of the congregation were held to devise means, if possible, to reduce the debt, which all felt must be done if the Church was to live. It was even thought best, by a large number, to sell the Church; but this was strongly opposed by others, and so sharp had the controversy become, that the pastor (Dr. R. G. Brank), thinking that his usefulness here had

well nigh ceased, tendered his resignation, and asked the congregation to join him in an application to the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relation. A meeting was held, but instead of joining the request, voted unanimously to refuse, and earnestly requested Dr. Brank to withdraw his resignation, which he did."

Apparently this meeting, stormy though it undoubtedly was, became the catalyst for greater dedication and effort on the part of the congregation. Dr. Brank launched a fund raising drive the following year, which raised the \$21,000 necessary to pay off the current obligation and apparently set the precedent for subsequent successful fund raising efforts even up to this time.

During this period Central Church became a regular stopping off place for many noted evangelists of the era. Church records note visits by such noted personalities of the day as Moody, Sankey and Dr. Edward Guerant "resulting in quite a few conversions." Church membership at that

time totaled about 450, and Church records note that:

"During all these years the great body of the Church had maintained a consistent course of Christian conduct, have given liberally of their substance . . . A prosperous and well ordered Sabbath school has always been maintained. Out of this school have gone seven ministers of the Gospel . . . And two more are now in training to become ministers."

St. Louis burst into the 20th Century with a zeal best demonstrated by the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition (World's Fair), described by a local View Book somewhat immodestly as "without a peer in history." Probably this view is not too far off the mark even to this day. In addition to exhibits from every state and many foreign countries, it featured a penultimate gathering of the latest in 20th century technology and gimickry.

The times they were a'changing. And the seeds were being sown for further change at Central Church.



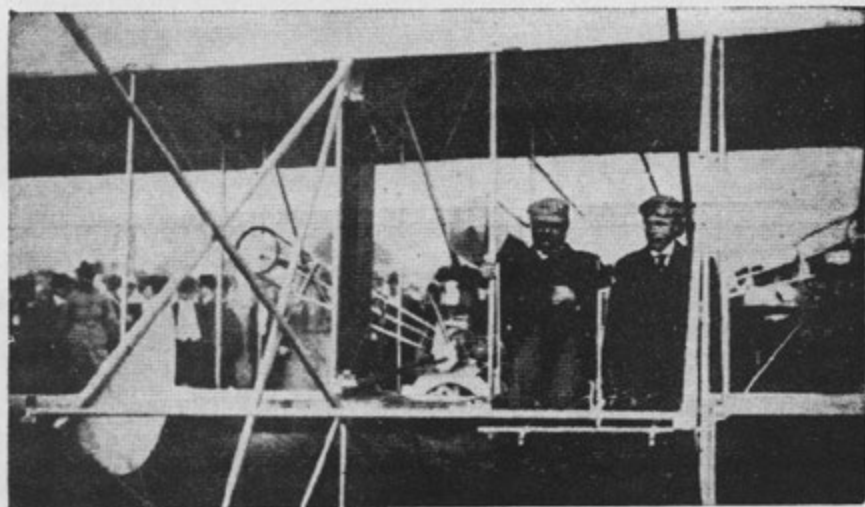
Part III: The Westward Migration

New technology didn't creep into the twentieth century. It galloped, with drums rolling and bugles blaring. Publications of that time gave profuse attention to the marvels that were being uncrated. The public gobbled up each new invention with an insatiable appetite. People were driving now, and flying, and doing funny things with electricity.

And, each new product had a new factory to make it, giant merchandis-

this need and the metropolitan area began its orderly exodus to the suburbs.

Of course the "suburbs" were different then. Clayton was a rural community, blissfully slumbering until a later time. Then it was the likes of Washington Avenue, Portland Place and Lindell, with their stately mansions or crisp town houses that attracted the interest of people who could afford them.



Teddy Roosevelt flew this plane in St. Louis at Kinloch Field. The plane is a Wright pusher. Roosevelt was the first president to fly.

ers to sell it, and rails to transport it. The laws of economics would separate the wheat from the chaff later, but for now the key word was "new" and an eager public waited with scarcely bated breath for each invention to become a production reality.

St. Louis, with its diverse economic base, proximity to raw materials, and strategic location relative to rails, shared fully in this boom. As new factories sprang up, the population expanded. The traditional residential boundaries were insufficient to meet

Somewhere along the line, Central Church grasped the implications of this population shift. Records state that "the Church flourished at Lucas and Garrison Avenues until, the neighborhood changing, the great majority of its members moving much farther West, it was thought best to sell the Church and move West. This was done in 1906. It was sold to a Jewish congregation and a new Church was built on the southeast corner of Clara and Delmar Avenues." The selling price was \$30,000 for a

Church that had cost \$145,000 in 1876.

Perhaps remembering the sobering financial setback the congregation had suffered in building the Lucas and Garrison building, Church leaders were more cautious with their plans this time. Records note that "this was a more modest brick building, although up to date in its equipment." It was occupied in 1908.

From there, however, the trend began to move upward. A 1918 Bulletin lists an average Sunday School attendance of 334. By 1926, active membership had risen to about 750, receipts totaled \$48,788, and virtually all debt had been cleaned up.

About this time Central began to



The Central Church Building at Clara and Delmar. It housed the congregation from 1908 until the early 1930's.

Despite the move, membership apparently hit a plateau during this period. A 1910 Central year book lists 368 active members, five Baptisms, and two marriages. A session report adds that "we fear that family religion among our people is not what it ought to be. We have no reason to believe that more than one fifth of our families have daily family worship. The training of the children and youth of our congregation in the Scriptures and the standards of the Church in the home, we fear, is far from being as we should like, but in the Sabbath Schools, close attention is given to these matters."

take on some of the trappings of its present organization. The 1926 year book notes the hiring of Miss Emily Smith as young peoples worker and Church visitor. A detailed account of her year's activities listed: "Calls made — 400; communications — 257; committee meetings and conferences — 65; young peoples meetings — 26; socials — 17; services attended — 135; Sunday school and Bible classes taught — 23; talks and programs arranged — 35; Sunday School teacher's meetings — 6; Woman's Auxiliary and other meetings — 34; Kept office Monday mornings — 30; hours of study — 200." Apparently our fore-

fathers knew how to get a dollar's worth of work from a dollar's pay in those days. Also added was a Financial Secretary, whose job description covered 27 separate wide ranging items.

During 1926, Central hosted a revival that drew an attendance of over 9,000 with G. Campbell Morgan the featured speaker. This evangelistic thrust on the part of Central was further emphasized with notice that three more evangelists were scheduled the following year.

That year, Pastor James L. Fowle concluded that "it is my earnest conviction that the best people in the world are God's people — not only the best, but the happiest and the most worthwhile . . . The Church has enjoyed the blessings of God during the past year. Its membership is unified and stabilized, and, under the blessing of God, we believe by prayer, and personal work, and faith, this year upon which now we have entered will be one of marked advancement in every activity of our work."



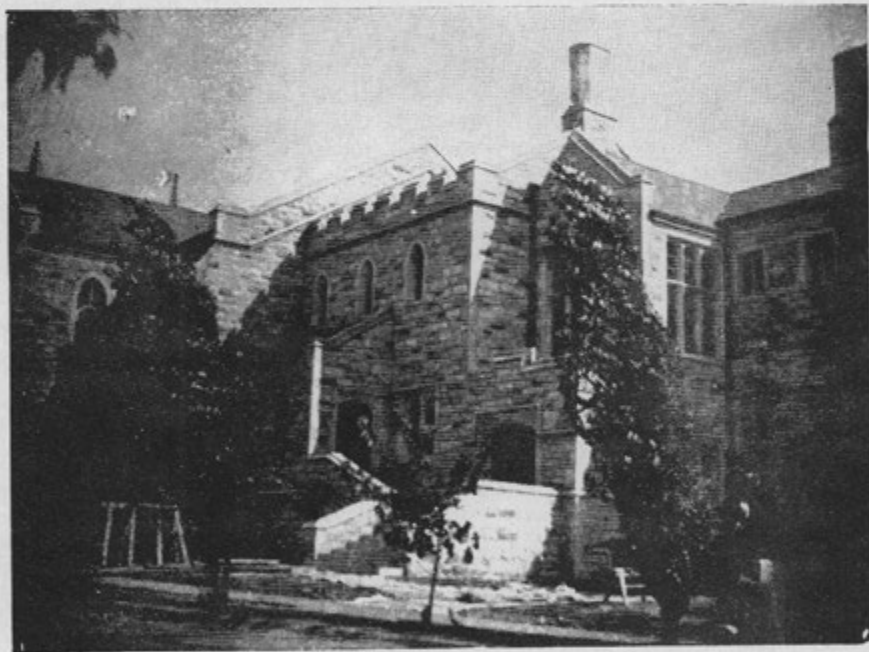
Part IV: Standing in Place

In 1931, Central Church made what was to prove to be its final move. It was a fortunate move that would strategically place Central in the vortex of what was to become the most booming area of St. Louis County. Although Church membership and Church mission were to grow, never again did Central Church seriously consider another move. Instead, the emphasis became expansion, first with a Sunday School wing, then the Central School building, and even now, with Central Church's current ambitious expansion program.

consideration was given to moving. Instead, Central used its resources to help develop other congregations in the new areas. Central, at last, was here to stay.

The French have an expression: "The more things change, the more they remain the same." When you look at the musty records that remain to tell us of Central's history, this expression seems to have a lot of merit. For instance:

—In 1934, the Easter service featured a stirring rendition of "As it Began to Dawn" sung by soloist Gir-



This picture of Central Church from the Davis Drive entrance, was taken some years back. Note the construction horses and newly planted trees.

It was almost as if some internal decision had been made: "Here we will stand." As each new problem presented itself, it was dealt with in this context. Even as areas began to open up beyond Central's location, no real

ard Bauer, whose stirring renditions still grace our services.

—The history for 1936 ominously notes that "the closing of the gates at the east end of Davis Place caused

much Church unhappiness. The matter was taken up with the Davis Place Association." The parking dispute continues to this day.

Though just two examples, they demonstrate the continuing life of Central Church, and you get a curious feeling of permanence, of only barely perceptible change.

There is a durable substance even to the listings of prior Deacons and Elders. Their children and their children's children are members now, and one senses a quiet unchanging flow to the events of our times.

Yet this was just on the surface. While Central was making its move to its present location, the speculative bubble that characterized the '20's burst. The great depression was upon

forts of its members made it possible.

And then came the Second World War. It was the time of Rosie the Riveter, and kids saving tinfoil and newspapers, and Glenn Miller entertaining the troops. It was truly war on a global scale and every segment of American society and every resource it possessed was directed to the war effort.

And in this cataclysmic event that shaped our present, Central Church also played a role.

—A 1941-42 Central document tersely notes that "our representative on the Foreign Mission Field, Miss Jessie Hall, of Tsing Kiang Pu chose to remain in China when most of her colleagues returned home and no direct



Crowds danced in the streets of St. Louis on VJ Day.

us. For a while, it was touch and go as to whether or not Central would be able to fulfill its commitments for the new building. Only the heroic ef-

word has come from her since the outbreak of hostilities between Japan and the United States." A later report notes that "she was held a prisoner

for several weeks by the Japanese and was returned home on the Gripsholm as an exchange prisoner." Miss Hall was an aunt of former pastor Dr. Benjamin Hall.

—In 1946-47 "six kitty kits, consisting of a complete wardrobe for a war orphan were sent to Europe under the auspices of the United Council of Church Women."

The aging files reflect less conspicuous but equally important economic change. In 1935, if you were a member of Central's Auxiliary for School of Missions and attended their dinner meeting, the meal cost you 40 cents. 1,000 copies of the Church Directory cost the Church \$55 that year and total contributions came to only \$30,214. Incidentally, the records show

that a dinner at the Statler Hotel for the National Preaching Mission cost \$1 per person.

Our Church, because it is an old one, has seen the dramatic events which have shaped our world, including a Civil War, two World Wars, not to mention numerous bloody skirmishes. During its time entire dynasties have risen and fallen. The world order has been irretrievably changed.

Yet time has a curious way of dimming these harsh changes. What comes through instead is a warm feeling of continuity from one decade to another, of good friends sharing in God's Work, of a congregation basking in the warmth of His Spirit.



Part V: The Fabulous Fifties —

The Sizzling Sixties

Before World War II Clayton was a sleepy outpost of St. Louis County. A county seat town, true — but a stable one, small in area, residential in character. Then after the war, things began to change, slowly at first, then at an accelerating pace. Business had begun to move in, and in a big way. From the beginning City leaders tried to give a stamp of uniqueness to this change. They wanted quality, and quality they got. The

tinued to the hinterlands — Ladue, Frontenac and beyond.

The 1949 Central Church history notes:

“On Sunday, January 30, 1949, the congregation unanimously ratified the call to Dr. J. Layton Mauzé, Jr., of Central Presbyterian Church, Kansas City. His father had been pastor of this Church from 1902-1917. He preached his first sermon “Central Church Speaks” in our pulpit Sunday



Dr. J. Layton Mauzé, Jr.



Dr. Andrew A. Jumper

initial requirement was for colonial architecture, and many of these fine buildings still grace the Clayton area. But this did not last for long. After all, how do you build a 20-story colonial building? A series of dazzling office buildings were to be erected and Clayton was to become a commercial hub. Meanwhile, the expansion con-

morning March 6th. On Wednesday night, March 9th, a reception was held by the officers of the Church and the Women's organization for the congregation to meet and welcome Dr. Mauzé and his family."

So began a remarkable career. Dr. Mauzé was to remain Central's pastor until his retirement in 1970. To this

day, he is our pastor emeritis, remembered with fondness and held in esteem by the entire membership. For his sure hand was to guide Central Church through a period that can only be characterized as one of the most threatening in American theological history.

It all started quietly enough — in retrospect, how naive and traditional the fifties now seem. But even then faint rumblings were heard. A curious theological offshoot of existentialism led to the "God is dead" movement. In pulpits across the country some ministers began to question traditional Christian values. Joseph Fletcher's bombshell on situation ethics which glibly tossed aside dominant Biblical insights for a fuzzy self-determined set of values, gained wide-spread acceptance. A doctrinaire humanism centered on "works" became the dominant thrust of many mainstream denominations.

And as these and other secular values began to spread outward and downward, the very fabric of American society began to change. Virtually no institutions remained unchallenged.

The question had to be asked: What would become of Central Church? Would it become some anachronistic remnant of an archaic and irrelevant theology, a dying outpost, hopelessly out of touch with what was happening?

The answer was not long in coming. For "what was happening" was grim indeed. Drugs and widespread sexual immorality. An epidemic of crime and assassination. Rebelliousness and protest and confrontation. Families

breaking up, children separated from parents, husbands from wives. America was coming apart at the seams. But, throughout this period Central remained a beacon, a place of refuge and comfort, where old values could be relearned, old commitments remade.

In August 1970, upon the retirement of Dr. Mauzé, Dr. Andrew A. Jumper became the pastor of Central Church. America was on the verge of pulling itself apart, yet he found a Church sure of its purpose, dedicated in its pursuit of God's Eternal Truth.

What happened next could be described as a modern miracle. Just as a world-weary America seemed irredeemably lost, the fires of revival, probably the greatest of this century, breathed new life into a hopelessly misguided and displaced society. Under Dr. Jumper's leadership, Central became a center place for this revival. During a series of lay renewal missions at Central, many came to know Christ for the first time, while others recommitted their lives to Him. Central Church became the vehicle for a dynamic outreach to the community.

The result was exciting. As the Word spread, the membership roles began to grow. Dynamic programs were launched, new ministries undertaken. The possibilities for the future seemed virtually endless.

Today, the future finds Central Church much as it has always found it — sure in its purpose, dedicated in its commitment to Christ, zealous in its desire to share the Good News. In short, a Church with a shining past and a brilliant future.





