

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF BAYSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Bayside Presbyterian Church will be 50 years old in 2003 so as a congregation, we are young. We have had, from the beginning, good leadership that has stimulated growth and continues to attract new vital members. Bayside's growth in recent years ranks it in the top two per cent among Presbyterian Churches nationwide.

Bayside began under the leadership and vision of the pastor of the East Ocean View Presbyterian Church, Reverend Gordon Riggan, as the Robbins Corner Chapel and was founded as an Outpost Mission of that Church in 1948. It was financed by gifts of a lot at the corner of Bradford Road and Rutherford Road and \$1,000 from Mr. George W. Robbins, Jr., \$500 from the parent Church, and \$1,500 from the Home Mission Committee of Norfolk Presbytery. The deed was recorded in the Clerk's office of the Circuit Court of Princess Anne County on July 31, 1948. Immediately thereafter, a Building Committee was appointed and work began on the construction of a concrete block building.

Most of the inside work of the Church building was completed by future members and volunteers. Work was accomplished as funds became available. So year by year and piece by piece the building was completed.

A quotation from our records reads: "On Sunday, November 28, 1948, amid piles of lumber and nails, and with an assortment of folding chairs, the loan of a piano and some portable stoves, and Sunday School literature supplied by the mother Church, East Ocean View, the first Sunday School session was held at 2:00 in the afternoon. The written records show that the total attendance was 33. The offering that day was \$13.60 and the birthday offering was 26 cents. The Church service was held at 3:00 with the Reverend Riggan delivering the sermon. Church officers were elected the following Sunday, December 5th."

Mr. Riggan left in January 1949, and the leadership passed to an elder from East Ocean View Church and then to the new pastor. Each served about one year.

In May 1951, Reverend S. K. Emurian, at the youthful age of 77 years, accepted a call as the full time pastor of the Robbins Corner Chapel. A quote from our Library records lists some of Mr. Emurian's goals: "50 Church members, 75 Sunday School members, 2 choirs, 20 men involved in men's Christian Fellowship, 20 women active in Women's Circle, and a Vestibule to be built in front of the Sanctuary." The Vestibule was added in 1952. Apparently the other goals were also met because membership increased, classrooms and other improvements were added. Growth

signalled that the time to become an organized Church had arrived.

On Sunday, October 25, 1953, at 4:00 p.m., with 74 of the 77 charter members present, Robbins Corner Chapel was organized as the Bayside Presbyterian Church by the Commission appointed by Norfolk Presbytery.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. Emurian, wishing to resume his evangelism work, requested that a successor be found. On January 1, 1955, Captain John E. Johnson, U.S. Navy Chaplain Ret.), accepted the call and served as pastor and as interim pastor until the summer of 1967.

Under "Dr. Johnny," membership increased until the need for larger quarters became evident. So, with a gift from Norfolk Presbytery of five acres of land on the corner of what is now Independence Boulevard and Ewell Road (the site we now occupy), a membership of 227 and a large dose of faith, ground breaking ceremonies for the new Church building was held on August 18, 1963. The new building was occupied on June 24, 1964, with an indebtedness of about \$255,000.

By July 1967, when "Dr. Johnny" retired, membership had grown to 508, a new Church building had been built and a new manse had been received in a bequest from a deceased member.

The Reverend Fletcher C. Hutcheson was called as pastor in 1967. He continued to build on the foundation laid by his predecessors and in 1970-71, the second phase of the building program, adding more classrooms, was completed. Mr. Hutcheson served as the pastor until his unexpected death on February 9, 1981. During his pastorate the Church increased in size, in membership, in service to the community, and in workload. The staff increased and was strengthened by the call of an assistant pastor (now associate), a secretary and a sexton. It was during Mr. Hutcheson's 14 years that our service to the community expanded. An earlier writer said it this way, "It has become the stated policy of the Church to cooperate with any service organization which ministers to the people in keeping with Christ's ministry, this being done by offering the over-all utilization of our facilities." Since then the building has been utilized daily from about 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Scheduling of activities is sometimes chaotic.

Following Fletcher's death, Reverend Susan Haugh served as interim pastor until our present pastor, Richard J. Kever, accepted a call in September 1982. Since then, we have continued to grow in Christian outreach, in faith, in service, in membership and in added building space.

Under Dr. Keever's guidance, Bayside has raised funds for one Basic Health Care Clinic in Kinshasa, Zaire, and has assisted in funding others, has called a Director of Educational Ministries, a Director of Music Ministries, and a second Secretary. Other part-time staff has increased our educational and property staff. In the mid 80's a "Mother's Morning Out" program started with volunteers and has become Bayside's Preschool with a staff of 23 and a student group of 163 in ages 18 months to Pre-K.

In 1989, a capital building fund campaign was conducted followed by the negotiation of a contract and the construction of Additions and Renovations to Bayside Presbyterian Church. The building program added an Administrative Wing, a Music Wing, a Youth Activities Wing and a new Fellowship Hall, an up-dated Kitchen, an expanded Sanctuary, several new and renovated classrooms and numerous other improvements.

All around you can see the fruits of Reverend Riggan's vision in 1948:

.... membership has increased from 33 to more than 1,190;

.... weekly offering has increased from \$13.60 to about \$12,000;

.... and the annual budget has increased from \$800 in 1951 to nearly \$800,000.

We give thanks to God and to all of His faithful servants for bringing us through the past years and for His love and guidance as we move ahead in the future God has for us as His people.

June 1, 1994