

**First Church Location
1806 Bradford Road
(at the intersection of Bradford/Rutherford Roads)
Bayside, VA**



As many of you know already, our church has not always met at the present location of Ewell and Independence. Our first church location was just down the street at Robbins Corner in back of CVS Pharmacy. The address was 1806 Bradford Road, but it was really at the intersection of Bradford and Rutherford Roads. We were founded both as Robbins Corner Chapel and later as Bayside Presbyterian Church there, and it was our home for 16 years – from 1948 to 1964.

Our Pastors at that first church location were Rev. J. Gordon Riggan, Mr. Charter Wells, Rev. R. Allen Brown, Rev. S. K. Emurian, and Rev. John E. Johnson. Pastors Riggan, Brown, and Charter Wells supplied our church part-time, splitting their duties with our sponsor-church East Ocean View Presbyterian. Pastor Emurian was our first full-time Pastor, and the Pastor who worked tirelessly to organize, and grow us from a Chapel to a full-fledged Church. Rev. Johnson was the pastor who took us to our present location at 1400 Ewell Road.

Our first church location was considered Vision I (in our Vision I, II, and III lingo). We built that building – at an estimated cost of \$3,000. This was made up of a \$1,500 grant from the Norfolk Presbytery (now Presbytery of Eastern Virginia). Then we then received a suitable lot plus a \$1,000 donation from Mr. George W. Robbins, Jr.. We were required to raise the remaining \$500 through church donations.

Our first church location was considered an “outpost mission.” Our postal address

was Bayside, Virginia – which was considered a suburb of Norfolk. Bayside, Virginia was in Princess Anne County – not yet Virginia Beach. At that time, Virginia Beach was only a 2-mile resort strip at the oceanfront. It wasn't until 1963 that Princess Anne County merged with the two-mile resort area to form the City of Virginia Beach most of us are familiar with today.

For most of its history, Princess Anne County was rural and agricultural. However, Norfolk was growing at such a rapid pace it created a giant demand for housing. As Virginia Beach grew into a popular resort town and transportation from Norfolk to Virginia Beach improved, Norfolk residents were attracted to the land around the Lynnhaven River. In addition, Navy presence at Little Creek and Oceana, and Army presence at Fort Story drew people to Princess Anne County.

Our first church building (on Bradford Road) was constructed of cinder-block, steel and concrete. It was 32 feet wide by 70 feet long. In addition to his donation mentioned above, Mr. Robbins also later donated the chapel windows. Labor was hired to construct the building, but some labor was voluntary as well. The first church service was held November 28, 1948 “amid piles of lumber and building activity.” We started with old folding chairs, a loan of a piano, and stoves used for heating the building. Sunday School literature was supplied by our mother church - East Ocean View Presbyterian.

The finishing of the inside of the building was done over time by volunteers. Materials were purchased using offerings, the selling of pictures, and hosting benefit movies. We also received donations from other area churches and local businesses. Used pews were purchased and hauled with volunteer labor. The Women's Circle donated the Communion set; members donated hymnals. One member built the pulpit. The youth fellowship donated a Pulpit Bible.

In 1950 two additional Sunday School classrooms and two restrooms were added. Members donated the building materials and the Men of the Chapel donated the labor. In 1951, window screens were added to the windows. The grounds were landscaped by a professional nursery at a cost of \$100. More used pews were purchased, and three choir robe cabinets. All this furniture was transported to the church and installed through member volunteers. Additional hymn books were ordered.

In 1952 Rev. Emurian appealed to the Norfolk Presbytery to request help in building an education building and purchasing better equipment, based on a 30% increase in membership. The request was granted by enlarging the two back classrooms and installing folding doors to divide the space. Again, the Men of the Church provided the voluntary labor. Also that year, the Men of the Church built a Vestibule in front of the Sanctuary. Choir robes were given by the choir members and the Women of the Church.

In 1953 on Easter Sunday the congregation assembled as ground was broken for the new education building to be built at the rear of the Sanctuary. When completed it would be named “The Emurian Building.” It was funded with cash gifts and pledges. Donations were also received to purchase new equipment for the educational building – i.e., tables, chairs, blackboards, and bulletin boards. Concrete sidewalks were laid around the buildings by the Men of the Church.

It was at this point on October 25, 1953, with 74 charter members that our name changed from Robbins Corner Chapel, to Bayside Presbyterian Church. We would remain in this first church location for 11 more years.

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