

First Presbyterian Church of Manasquan

History of Our Church

Back in the year 1842, there was only one church in the vicinity of Manasquan--the Quaker Meeting House, almost a mile west of the village. However, in that year, the local Presbyterians, Methodist Episcopalians, Methodist Protestants, and Baptists banded together and erected the Union Church on the site, which now forms part of the Atlantic View Cemetery.

The Presbyterians, probably the largest segment of the Union Church, continued to hold their services in the Union Church until 1848 when they built their own church. The church was organized as the Presbyterian Church of Squan Village in April, 1848 by nine residents under the leadership of the Reverends Morse Rowell, Rufus Taylor, and Charles Webster. A building site was chosen on Main Street, and the cornerstone of our first church was laid in June, 1848 and dedicated on March 1, 1849. By 1858 membership in the Presbyterian Church of Squan Village had grown to 40 persons. The 1848 church (with alterations) stands today as the home of the congregation of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Some of the early members of the Presbyterian Church are buried in the church graveyard at that site.

The first of our present buildings, the Manse at 24 Virginia Avenue, was built in 1881 at a total cost of \$3,300 including the purchase of the land. Reverend Frederick Brown was the first pastor to live there; his final resting-place is in the Atlantic View Cemetery.

During the years 1881 through 1893, membership increased to 175; and in May 1903, the congregation voted to purchase property at the corner of South Street and Virginia Avenue and erected a new church at a cost of \$20,000. The cornerstone was laid the following April, and the new brick building was dedicated on September 24, 1904. The total finished cost was \$24,000. November, 1904 was another milestone, and the church was formally renamed the First Presbyterian Church of Manasquan.

In 1924, a Moller pipe organ was installed to replace the Vocalian which was donated to the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. On Saturday, February 9, 1929, fire struck the church. Starting in the boiler room, flames crept through a partition behind the organ and rose to the roof. The kitchen, boiler room, roof, walls, and furnishings of the sanctuary were severely damaged, and the two large memorial stained glass windows that faced South Street and Virginia Avenue were broken. Damage was estimated at \$40,000. The community responded to the disaster, and officials of five neighboring churches offered their facilities. Services were held in the Baptist Church and the Masonic Temple until repairs were completed. The sanctuary was re-dedicated on August 30, 1929. During that service, a new organ was dedicated, and special vocal and instrumental music enhanced the observance.

From 1929 through 1940, major changes included extensive renovation and the modernization of the manse, purchase of adjacent properties, remodeling of the sanctuary, and installation of organ pipe chimes. By the church's 100th anniversary in 1948, membership had risen to 400.

In 1955, additional property on Virginia Avenue was purchased which added continuous frontage from South Street to the east side of the manse. In December, 1957, a financial campaign was started for the purpose of erecting a Christian Education Building; and finally, on January 1, 1961, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for this building. On September 24, 1961, the Christian Education Building, adjacent to the church on Virginia Avenue, was dedicated, and church school classes were held there.

Renovations of the early 1970's included converting the church basement for use by the Sunday school, choir, and deacons; adding a ladies' lounge on the sanctuary level; remodeling the choir loft, which involved moving the organ; and the suspension of the Celtic oak cross which presently hangs above the communion table. The year 1981 commemorated the 100th anniversary of the renovated manse; and in November, 1985, a new Paragallo pipe organ was dedicated.

In 1998 a sesquicentennial celebration was held throughout the year that included many planned activities: a talent show, Presbyterian Women's fashion show, Sunday school birthday party, church cornerstone opening, and elevator dedication. Renovations continued, and a new library/parlor (including children's library) in the Christian Education Building was dedicated along with candelabras and musical instruments. One major improvement was the air conditioning and installation of new carpeting in the sanctuary. The property was landscaped, and several rooms in the Christian Education Building were air conditioned, and retrofit lighting was installed.

In 2001, additional property on South Street became available; and as visionaries looked to the future growth of the church, the property was purchased for \$345,000. Rev. Alec B. Wendell retired on July 21, 2001; and shortly thereafter; the congregation voted to confer him with the title of Pastor Emeritus. The portraits of the 12 apostles were dedicated in his honor and now hang in the overflow room of the sanctuary.

In 2002, it became necessary to replace the slate roof on the church sanctuary and make extensive repairs to the steeple. The four finials that were present on the original steeple (but mysteriously removed some years ago) were also restored.

A \$600,000 capital fund campaign began in 2003 to help pay for the many repairs/improvements being made to the church and the manse (painting, carpeting, kitchen modernization, landscaping and yard fencing).

In 2003 we called the Rev. Dr. Steven J. Davis to become our pastor. Pastor Steve grew up in a military family, and moved across the country and overseas during his formative years. He received his BA in Psychology and Religion from Seattle Pacific University; his M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary; and his Doctorate from San Francisco Theological Seminary. Prior to coming to us, Steve Davis's ministry included directing youth ministries at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, CA; serving as Associate Pastor in Centralia, WA; and serving as Head of Staff at Monte Vista Presbyterian Church in Newbury Park, CA. He and his wife, Cindy, met in high school in Hawaii; they are the parents of four sons: Grant, Blake, Lane, and Scott.

A dinner-dance was held in 2004 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the church building (sanctuary). Also in this year, Rev. Gayle Donnelly, (who has lived in the Manasquan area since 1967, raised her two daughters here, and became a member of this church in 1982) became the Parish Associate Pastor of this church. She is a graduate of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Chuck Gianakos joined our staff as Minister to Youth in 2005, with eighteen years of experience in working with youth, he utilizes a very unique and interesting approach to teaching the good news of the Gospel to our young people.

In 2007, Rev. David Cotton joined the staff as a Parish Associate Pastor in Education while continuing his work as Manager of the Pastoral Care Department at Jersey Shore University Medical Center and also chairing the Bioethics Consult Committee. In addition, Pastor Dave brings to Manasquan his experience as Pastor, Interim, and Parish Associate. He is an extraordinary Bible study teacher both in the church and on the beach in the summer.

Eighteen pastors have served our congregation since its organization in 1848; and since 1947, the addition of youth directors and associate pastors has been of great benefit.

Pastors

Morse Rowell	1850-1856	Paul F. Boller	1915-1919
Henry R. Avery	1857-1858	J. Franklin Weaver	1920-1922
Samuel Alden Freeman	1864-1868	Walter H. Semple	1923-1925
Charles F. Worrell	1870-1880	W. Taylor Dale	1926-1935
Frederick T. Brown	1881-1893	Harry H. Hubbell	1935-1953
Nathan Dushane Hyson	1893-1901	Frederick J. Allsup	1954-1959
A.F. Gordon Mackay	1902-1906	Joseph H. Brady	1959-1988
J. Marshall Rutherford	1906-1911	Alec B. Wendell	1990-2001
Walter W. Edge	1912-1915	Steven J. Davis	2003-

Parish Associate Pastor

Gail Donnelly	2004-
David Cotton	2007-

Minister to Youth

Charles Gianakos	2005-
------------------	-------

Interim Associate Pastor

Lynn Wendell 1999-2001

Associate Pastors

Richard T. Middleton	1969-1972	William D. Robertson	1979-1988
H. Paul Hoover	1972-1973	Larry C. Bauerband	1993-1999
Roger P. Richardson	1973-1978	David T. Widmer	2001-2004

Interim Pastors

William Sadler	1988-1989
Lee D. Donow	1889-1990
Dennis Van Wyk	2001-2002

Membership of our church currently stands at 677.

The history of our church is more than a sequence of pastors, members, renovations and acquisitions. It is our family in Christ, with those who have been, those who are now, and those who are yet to come—those who love God and dedicate themselves and their time, talent, and treasures to His Kingdom. Our history is one rich in faith, in sharing, in worship, and in fellowship.