

THE LAKE OSWEGO UNTRED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(1888 - 1988)
100 YEARS OF MINISTRY

The history of the Lake Oswego United Church of Christ is testament to the power of vision, dedication, and self giving in a church's life. It is not the size of a congregation which is significant but its determination to stay true to its calling and its communal spirit. We who celebrate our church's one hundredth anniversary would do well to approach our present challenges with the quiet confidence in God and in each other exhibited by those who have lived this history.

The story begins with the deeding of two lots in "Old Town" in Oswego to the Rev. George H. Atkinson, Superintendent of Congregational Missions in Oregon, by John C. Trullinger, owner of the township, in 1873. Trullinger, a businessman, promoter, and future state legislator, had also given two lots to the Methodist Episcopal Church in Oregon, prompted, perhaps, by his upbringing as a minister's son. The building of the first iron smelter on the Pacific Coast in 1867 in Oswego had spurred hopes that the town would become the "Pittsburg of the West" and, undoubtedly, he acted to help meet the attendant religious needs that would grow with the population.

With the addition of a second smelter in 1888, the town's ranks swelled to the point where the Rev. Atkinson took the liberty of asking several members of his own congregation in Oregon City to consider removing themselves and forming a separate church in the Oswego area. Encouraged by the Rev. G.W. Rook of the Oswego Methodist church to take up Rev. Atkinson's suggestion, Oscar Eaton, a farmer from the Hazelia area, with his wife, Hattie, son, Darwin, daughter, Ella Thompson, and son-in-law Albert J. Thompson, met for the first time as the First Congregational Church of Oswego on May 15, 1888, in the Hazelia schoolhouse, about three miles from Oswego. The Eaton and Thompson families were to prove mainstays of the young church for the remainder of their lives.

The tiny congregation continued to meet for worship in the Hazelia School two Sundays a month, alternating with worshipping with their Methodist fellow Christians in Old Town. Their pastoral and preaching needs were met twice month by the Rev. Horace Lyman, a graduate of Pacific University, then by the Rev. Cephas Clapp, the new Superintendent of Congregational Missions. During the church's first two years, ten members were added to the original five.

Meanwhile, the town grew to nearly 1000 people and the congregation was deeded a second gift of land, two lots in "New Town." It was decided to sell the lots in Old Town and use the proceeds to start a building fund for a church structure in New Town, as that area was being developed with houses and wooden sidewalks. Construction on the church building, at the future location of Fourth and D Streets, was begun in 1890, the same year it was dedicated, and completed in 1891 at a cost of \$3,000. The builders were Albert (father) and Thomas (son) Clinefelter and others from the area. Oversight was provided by the Rev. William Tubb, who painted a mural above the chancel, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

Unfortunately, when the building was completed the church still faced an indebtedness of \$1,000 and some members discovered they were not able to fulfill their original pledges of monetary support. The Eaton and Thompson families mortgaged their farms to help fill the gap and assistance came from many other sources as well, such as the Ladies Aid Society of First Congregational Church in Portland (with a donation of \$300), the Congregational Churches in

Oregon City and Forest Grove, the Congregational Church Building Society, and individuals in New York and Connecticut. Particularly important were the efforts of the Dorcas Society, forerunner of Women's Fellowship, to pay off the interest on the debt through various kinds of fundraisers.

During the tenure of the Rev. R. M. Jones, from 1891 to 1897, a series of revival services attracted ten additional members. His daughter, Gladys, a talented singer and choir director, gave a concert to raise money for a new reed organ for the church sanctuary.

In 1894 the main iron smelter closed (with the second smelter-and-pipe-foundry operating only sporadically until its closure in 1928), causing the town's population to drop by several hundred residents. When the Rev. Jones and his family moved to Portland in 1897, no minister was found to serve the church for several years. In the meantime, the Sunday school and other organizations and activities were well supported by the members.

The Rev. D. B. Grey became pastor in 1899 and the next year a bell from the closed Irving Street Church in Portland was loaned, then given, to the church by Rev. Clapp. The bell, the "John Benson" cast by the Meneely Bell Company of Troy, N.Y. in 1850, was a source of pride and enjoyment for the still-struggling congregation. The bell hung in the belfry of the tall steeple of the church until 1927 when the steeple was deemed unsafe, taken down, and the bell was hung in the lower belfry.

When Rev. Grey's pastorate ended in 1905, the pattern continued of the church going for periods without a pastor, and during these times of no formal leadership the members maintained their consistent support of the Sunday school, Christian Endeavor, and Choir, and attendance at weekly worship.

In 1917, the Rev. W. H. Meyer, then pastor of the Oswego congregation, supervised the refurbishing of the church building by members, with the Dorcas Society supplying the necessary funds. The membership that year was 21 persons with a Sunday school enrollment of 51 children. In spite of the financial uncertainties of the town and the occasional absence of a paid ministry, the membership remained relatively stable in the next several decades, ranging from 42 in 1926 to 39 in 1938, and the congregation saw ways to assist in meeting the needs of the community. The women of the church, including Eleanor Mintie, Ann Russell, and Mrs. William Evans, helped establish the first lending library in Oswego. Some provided hot soup to impoverished school children. This period also saw the founding of the first Boy Scout troop in town with leadership supplied by Milo and Harold Weidman. Again the Sunday school and the Christian Endeavor remained active, even during the 30's when the church was even more of ten lacking a pastor than previously.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Elbert Flint, the church celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1938 with week-long festivities. For the occasion Rev. Flint had encouraged the congregation to improve the church building by the addition of lighting, heating, and enlargement of the usable space in the basement.

The church welcomed its first female pastor in 1940, the Rev. Adena Joy, who was remembered for her efforts to promote peace, her love of nature, and her desire to help people understand the Christian life more fully, as well her gracious willingness to live in a room in the back of the church building. However, in 1945 the congregation acquired a parsonage when a cottage was moved onto the church property to house the Rev. Virgil Hicks, his wife Grace, and son, the family being newly-arrived from Pacific University.

The town and the church continued to grow in tandem through the next decade until the needs of the congregation outstripped their facilities. The decision was reached to relocate, and a

new structure was built on Country Club at Knaus Roads. The Rev. Vincent Stageburg presided over the dedication ceremony on June 14, 1959. The church soon celebrated its 75th anniversary on Oct. 13, 1963.

In 1957, the national denomination of Congregational Christian churches joined with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form a new denomination, the United Church of Christ. The Lake Oswego congregation elected to become part of the new denomination and subsequently changed its name to the "Lake Oswego United Church of Christ, Congregational."

During the pastorate of the Rev. Raymond Maier, beginning in 1964, the church addressed the needs of ministry to the youth with an active confirmation program and an annual trip to Mexico to work in an orphanage. Music and the other arts were also of special interest as indicated by many varied Choir engagements, the organization of a hand bell choir, and the church's sponsorship of a Christian Arts Festival on May 27, 1967. The needs of the wider community and the world were also recognized in the involvement of the church in opening the New Heights residential home for senior citizens in Lincoln City in May of 1979, and the sponsorship of the resettlement of a Vietnamese refugee family.

The church's energies during this time were unavoidably diverted in 1973 by a fire in the church building which destroyed the east chapel and required extensive work in the sanctuary and the narthex. However, the faithfulness of the members and the help of friends enabled the congregation to recover from this loss and the renovated building was rededicated on Sept. 29, 1974. On Oct. 1, 1978 the church celebrated its 90th anniversary.

In the last decade the church has had the good fortune to be served by two able women pastors, the Rev. Kay Harding who came to Lake Oswego in 1981 as associate pastor and the Rev. Mary Sue Evers who served the church in 1985 as the student intern youth minister. Since April of 1986, the Rev. Gary Davis has been the pastor, and in the duration of the church has experienced having an intergenerational Church School, the development of a pastoral counseling center for the community, the sponsorship of a Polish refugee family, a joint mission project with the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, and, most recently, voted to offer space to house homeless families through the ecumenically-based Peter Ministry of Lake Oswego.

On May 15, 1988 the Lake Oswego United Church of Christ will celebrate one hundred years of history as a loving, ministering congregation. That history has been marked as often by years of difficulty as by years of growth and stability. The constant throughout the many changed circumstances which this congregation has encountered has been the ability to respond appropriately and faithfully to each such change. The key to meeting the changes which the future will continue to hold for our church is to remember the strengths we have had, about which the past teaches vision and dedication and self-giving.

Ministers of the Congregation Church

Period	Minister Name
1888	Rev. Horace Lyman
1889	Rev. R.M. Jones
1890	Rev. William Tubb
1891-1897	Rev. R.M. Jones
1897-1898	Vacant
1899-1904	Rev. D.B. Gray
1905	Supply
1907-1910	Rev. Burton Jones
1911	C. F. Aue
1913-1915	Rev. William C. Upshaw
1916-1917	Rev. M. B. Meyer
1917-1918	Rev. Franklin C. Butler
1919	Rev. A. B. Snider
1920-1921	Rev. S. E. Long
1922-1925	Rev. Horace S. Miley
1926-1929	Supply: Rev. L. M. Thurston; George A. Pollard; Rev. A. B. Snider
1930-1932	Rev. William Essig
1933	Rev. Elbert E. Flint (part-time)
1934-1938	Rev. Elbert E. Flint
1939-1940	Supply
1940-1943	Rev. Adena Joy
1944-1945	Harry Coffin
1945-1948	Rev. Vergil C. Hicks
1948	Clyde Woolard (June-September)
1948-1952	Rev. Melvin R. Fenner
1952	Dr. Tuttle, Interim (January – August)
1952-1955	Dr. Duane Maln, Jr.
1955	Dr. John Anderson, Interim
1955-1963	Rev. Vincent Stageberg
1964-1984	Rev. Raymond Maier
1985	Rev. Robert Gruwell, Interim
1986-2005	Rev. Gary C. Davis

From a compilation by Mrs. Edna Bickner from data received from Miss Ethel Thompson and from Conference records.

Sunday School Superintendents
Lake Oswego United Church of Christ
Formerly, Lake Oswego Congregational Church
Formerly, First Congregational

Period	Superintendent Name
1896-1897	Mrs. S. C. Baker
1898	Oscar Eaton
1899	None Reported
1900	F. L. Mintie
1901	E. J. Russell
1902	Hugh T. Evans
1903	F. L. Mintie
1904	H. T. Evans
1905	E. J. Russell
1906	H. T. Evans
1907	Rev. Burton H. Jones
1908	Oscar Eaton and Mrs. W. (Edna) Bickner
1909-1910	Rev. Burton H. Jones
1911	Mrs. E. J. Russell
1912	None reported
1913-1915	Mrs. Stella Shipley
1916	Frank Tomlin
1917	L. L. Woodward
1918	L. L. Woodward and Mrs. Bickner
1919	Mrs. Edna Bickner
1920-1921	Rayburn Edwards
1922-1925	Mrs. Edna Bickner
1926-1928	George McClellan
1929-1931	Carl Vose
1932-1934	Mrs. Edna Bickner
1935-1938	M. R. Weidman
1939	Rev. E. E. Flint
1940	Rev. Maurice de Vries
1941-1942	Mrs. E. R. Wood
1943	Mrs. McGee
1944-1950	Miss Marian Weidman
1951-1953	Mrs. Robert Tousley
1954-1955	Robert Kroodsma
1955-1956	Mrs. Lester Thompson
1956-1958	Mrs. Elsie McLean

1959	Robert Kroodsma
1981-1984	Jim Sink
1984-1987	Nancy Lewis