

The departure of the popular Reverend Green left a void in the lives of members of the church congregation and the community as a whole. However, after Green's departure, Professor Roy A. Hamilton of Alma College served as interim pastor and moderator of Session and the program of the church continued without interruption, a tribute to the lay leadership.

Early in January, the congregation voted unanimously to call the Reverend C. B. Hawkins as pastor, although he was not an active candidate for the position. Mr. Hawkins was admirably qualified to lead the growing Mt. Pleasant church. His background included "wide and successful experience in both rural and large city churches," according to the Mt. Pleasant Times. His early education had been in the California public schools. Later he studied at Oberlin and Adrian colleges before earning his theology degree at the Chicago Theological Seminary, followed by a year at the Moody Institute in Chicago. After four years of service in Chicago, the Reverend Hawkins was called to the pastorate of the church at Holloway, serving there until his appointment as assistant superintendent of Home Missions of the Synod of Michigan where he was responsible for general organizational work among the weaker churches. Even with a very busy schedule he had found time to be active in civic and social work in Lansing and to assume charge of the municipal playgrounds for one year.



Reverend C. B. Hawkins

Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins and their two small daughters moved into the parsonage at the corner of Normal and Wisconsin streets during the first week in March, 1923, and he began what would be a long and fruitful ministry. Mr. Hawkins' Moody Institute evangelistic training showed clearly from the outset of his work in Mt. Pleasant. His early weekly newspaper notices were catchy sermonettes, exhorting the people to answer the call of Christ and accept the challenge of His service. Thursday, April 26, 1923, this notice appeared on the church page of the Mt. Pleasant Times:

#### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

C. B. Hawkins Minister

A run-down battery is useless both to the automobilist and radio fan. It must be re-charged to be of use. Is your spiritual battery run down? The churches of Mt. Pleasant are here to do for your spiritual life that which the charging station does for your auto. This cannot be done by absent treatment.

The service Sunday morning at the Presbyterian church is always planned to help one to live more efficiently the following week.

Morning Worship at 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School immediately following with a place for each one of the family.

Miss Elsie Fee will lead the Christian Endeavor meeting at 6:30 p.m. Subject: "What My Denomination Means to Me."

The program of the church developed steadily. Repeatedly, the clerk of the Session commented in the Session minutes that there was a deep spirituality within the congregation; the constant increase in membership supports his contention.

Not only did the Reverend Hawkins serve the church well, but he also became deeply involved in community activities, including Rotary (he was a charter member and second president of the local club), Chairman of the Isabella County Red Cross Association for many years, Chairman of the Home Service for Disabled Veterans, and Chairman of the Library Board. He traveled widely in connection with both church and civic work. In addition, he was a popular speaker, frequently addressing local groups. For instance, soon after he came to Mt. Pleasant, he was the featured speaker at the Memorial Day services, speaking to an audience of "thousands." The Mt. Pleasant Times printed the speech, a moving tribute to the community's honored dead, in several columns.

Financially, the work of the church continued to involve a variety of activities. The local newspaper reported April 19, 1923, that the Ladies' Aid Society of the First Presbyterian Church made a profit of \$193.20 by showing the film, "When Knighthood Was in Flower," the week before at the Broadway Theater. Perhaps the ladies were recouping their finances from the expense of installing new "Wilton carpet" in the sanctuary the previous year. That financial matters continued to be of concern is evident from the Session Minutes of January 10, 1929 which note that a motion was approved "that no special offering be taken at this time for foreign missions as such effort hinders our regular program. . ." That same year the Session increased the fee for rental of the church organ to twenty-five cents per hour!

Even so, the Session and the congregation continued to encourage all phases of spiritual development including recommending Lavon Winterburg, a ministerial candidate, to Saginaw Presbytery for aid in March, 1930. Support for Winterburg continued at least until September, 1935.

The depression took its toll despite the artificial stimulus to the area's economy of the oil boom following 1929. In March, 1931, the session became concerned that benevolence pledges were \$223.15 in arrears, but noted that \$104.00 of the amount was in one pledge with the remainder in numerous pledges. The elders voted to send a letter to the congregation "relative to collecting the pledges and meeting our quota."

Through the years the Session stood firm on social issues. On December 9, 1928 and again April 19, 1931, it permitted the Anti-Saloon League to occupy the pulpit. Several years later, in 1944, the session approved a letter to Mayor Frank Robinson of Mt. Pleasant that read in part: "It has come to our attention that there have been serious violations of liquor selling regulations in our community." The Session urged the City Commission to refuse licenses to offenders. In 1947, the Session approved the circulation of a W. C. T. U. petition to forbid Sunday liquor sales in Isabella County. Further, the church supported programs in 1943 of the Michigan Temperance Foundation which sponsored a speaker in local churches and schools. They also granted financial support to a man "for addresses and discussions at churches and schools on race problems." At another time (1948) the Session expressed concern at the number of community events scheduled for Sunday, morning thus interfering with Sunday School and church attendance.

For years communion services had been held separately from the regular worship services, usually in the late afternoon on Sunday. In 1934, the Session experimented with serving communion at the regular morning worship service with gratifying results. The clerk of Session observed: "There was a very fine attendance at the Communion Service. Most everyone present partook of the elements. About two and a half times as many were served than at the afternoon Communion Services." The next several years no pattern for communion services is apparent in the records, but in 1939 the Lord's Supper became a regular periodic part of the morning worship program.

The physical as well as the spiritual growth of the church continued. The annual report for 1934 showed 239 communicant members. The total expenditures for the year just ended was \$5,472.00. In January, 1935, the clerk of Session again commented about the "spiritual awakening" that was taking place in the congregation.

As frequently happens in church growth, the "spiritual awakening" was accompanied by the need and desire to enlarge and improve the worship facilities. Over a period of several years starting in 1937, improvements, modifications, and redecoration of the church building proceeded. The first, and largest, step in up-dating the building was the installation of new pews. In April, 1937, the Reverend Hawkins reported the estimated cost of new seats to the Board of Trustees. The drive increased in momentum in September when an anonymous pledge was made to match the congregation's gifts toward new pews. On November 22, 1937, the trustees approved a \$1,014.70 contract for new seats. On February 7, 1938, the trustees could report joyfully that the pews were installed and fully paid for.

Meanwhile, in November, 1937, a committee from the Women's Association presented plans and drawings to the trustees for "proposed installation of auditorium lighting," and in July, 1939, the trustees approved a bid of \$205.00 for painting the sanctuary. A growing congregation now had a more beautiful place to worship. Also, the Women's Association had redecorated the manse.

The congregation grew steadily. In 1938 the membership totaled 315; in 1939, the figure reached 322; in 1940, 324; and in 1941, 349.

In July, 1941, the Reverend Hawkins resigned as pastor effective October 1, in order to accept the position of Executive Secretary of the Synod of Michigan, with responsibility for all of Michigan except the Presbytery of Detroit. A pastoral search committee, Gerritt Mryskens, Kendall P. Brooks, Miss Helen Warner, Mrs. David Trout, and Worth Dafoe, proceeded to the task of finding a replacement.

In the interim, the church passed another milestone. On September 25, 1941, the congregation celebrated the Seventieth Anniversary of the founding of the church with a "pot-luck" dinner, topped off by "birthday cake" and ice cream. After dinner Mrs. R. O. Doughty and Professor Claude Larzelere presented "reminiscences," followed by congregational singing of songs of seventy years earlier. The evening concluded with a gift to the Reverend Hawkins presented by the Board of Trustees. The clerk of Session recorded that "this anniversary was a very joyous occasion."

The pulpit committee screened candidates through the fall and winter and on Sunday, February 22, 1942, presented the Reverend Wanzer Hull Brunelle to the congregation. Mr. Brunelle preached the morning sermon. On the following night the congregation unanimously elected the Reverend Brunelle pastor, with a salary of \$2,500.00 annually plus manse, pension, and one month's vacation. Mr. Brunelle was a graduate of the University of Chicago and the Presbyterian Theological Seminary. From 1932 to 1935 he was university pastor at Columbus, Ohio, and from 1935 until his appointment to the Mt. Pleasant pastorate had been pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at Buchanan. The Reverend and Mrs. Brunelle and their two children, a son, five years old, and a daughter, two, moved into the parsonage early in May. The Mt. Pleasant Times-News declared: "An effective speaker and of engaging personality, Reverend Mr. Brunelle has demonstrated a high interest in religious education, being a member of the Presbytery's committee on Religious Education. He is also a writer of Sunday School material for Presbyterian young people."



Rev. W. H. Brunelle

The formal installation service for the Reverend Brunelle was held on April 14, to climax the spring meeting of Presbytery. The Reverend John A. Gardner, acting moderator of Presbytery, presided at the installation service, assisted by the Reverend Clyde B. Hawkins, former pastor, and others. A reception for the Reverend and Mrs. Brunelle followed.

Despite the war which scattered the younger men of the congregation around the globe, the church continued a pillar of spiritual strength to the congregation and the community. The church contributed to the war effort in various ways. "War Relief Sundays" were held, funds were contributed for War-time service, and boxes were sent for Russian Relief. In April, 1945, the Session sent a telegram to the Honorable Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., at the United Nations Security Conference in San Francisco supporting the "amendments to the Dumbarton Oaks Agreement proposed by the Cleveland Conference of the Federal Council of Churches looking toward a more Christian world order."

In the month of August, 1942, the congregations of the First Presbyterian Church and the First Methodist Church worshiped together and planned to "put on a 'School of Religion' for ten weeks in the Fall, and again for ten weeks during the winter." They also planned a series of combined meetings for the high school youth of the two churches on the same Sundays. The spirit of cooperation that has long marked the relations of the two congregations was much in evidence during these troubled years.

During the Reverend Brunelle's ministry, the congregation continued to grow both spiritually and in size. In 1943 the adjusted membership numbered 304. Three years later, membership had climbed to 400 in spite of the dislocations caused by the war. Financially also, the church grew stronger during these years after a somewhat frustrating period in the late thirties when the trustees frequently had to borrow to meet current operating expenses. In 1943, the proposed budget (including Benevolences and \$1,000.00 in a "Sinking Fund") was approximately \$8,200.00. In 1946, the Annual Report showed General Fund disbursements of \$11,222.92, Benevolence Fund disbursements of \$2,107.12, with a Building Fund of \$2,500.00 and a Pulpit Fund of \$50.00.

In 1944, a long-forgotten note securing a loan from the Board of National Missions in 1875 to help construct the first church building was presented to the Session for payment. After some negotiation, the Board agreed that earlier payments had reduced the \$600.00 original loan to \$416.00. The loan was paid from a surplus in the Benevolence Fund.

As the church continued to grow, space and facilities became an increasing problem. In the summer and fall of 1944, the front of the sanctuary was rearranged, the organ electrified, and the organ console moved to the auditorium of the church. By November, the rearrangement was complete and the clerk of the Session noted that the Session was attempting to "work out the method of serving communion under the new arrangement of the front of the church."

The music program of the church underwent modification at this time also. For a number of years Professor J. Harold Powers of the college music staff had directed a choir of eight voices—his music students who sang in the choir in payment for their private voice lessons. In November, 1944, Professor Powers resigned because of other pressing duties. The clerk of Session recorded: "Mr. Brunelle stated that a new mixed adult choir of 16 to 20 members is being organized and that he will direct them." This arrangement continued until the fall of 1946, when David Ambrose Holford of the college music department accepted the position of Director of Music

and Mrs. Harriett Collin became organist. Mr. Holford served only one year; Mr. Levi Dees, also of the college music department, became Director of Music in the fall of 1947.

The concern of the Session and the congregation extended into the community. In February of 1945, the Session agreed to cooperate with the Methodist Church in establishing a Sunday School program for children on the west side. Before the summer ended, the support terminated when the "proposed union Sunday School [became] a Methodist Church."

The Reverend Brunelle's interest in Sunday Schools transcended the local scene. He took time from his busy pastorate to travel to Philadelphia to assist in the developing and writing of church school literature for the denomination. He also served on various Presbytery and Synod committees, chairing the Synod Committee on Camps and Conferences. Several summers he directed church camps.

The year 1946 marked the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the First Presbyterian Church. The Session, at its January meeting appointed a committee to plan an appropriate celebration of the event. Included in the commemorative events were a banquet October 17, 1946, with the Reverend C. B. Hawkins, former pastor, as speaker, and special services on Sunday, October 20, with President J. Harry Cotton of McCormick Theological Seminary preaching.

On the day of the banquet the local newspaper carried an article stating that the church had accepted its quota of \$6,775.00 of a national Presbyterian Fund that was part of a World Council of Churches Restoration Fund to replace religious facilities, especially churches, hospitals, and schools in the war-devastated lands of Europe and Asia. Two thousand dollars already had been pledged locally and the goal of the church was to surpass its quota on Sunday, November 3.

The outreach of the church continued. On November 4, 1946, the Session instructed the Christian Education Committee to consider establishing and financing a scholarship in the name of the church at McCormick Theological Seminary. The transaction was completed when, March 2, 1947, the Session voted \$600.00 from its Benevolence Fund to finance a "Son in the Ministry" at McCormick Seminary for three years. This is only another example in the continuing interest of the church in assisting ministerial candidates.

The Reverend Brunelle announced to the Session November 11, 1946, his desire to accept a call from the Presbyterian Church at Allen Park, Michigan. It was a decision, Mr. Brunelle wrote, taken only after prayerful consideration, but he felt it to be God's will. The Mt. Pleasant Times-News reporting the decision noted: "Mr. Brunelle. . . has endeared himself to the citizens of this community by his outstanding work on behalf of the young people of the community. He has also taken a very active part in all civic projects of the city and has worked untiringly in behalf of a better community life for the city and its surrounding communities." The newspaper further commented that during Mr. Brunelle's pastorate the interior of the church had been "remodeled and modernized" and a new heating unit installed. With the Reverend Brunelle's resignation an era in the life of First Presbyterian Church ended.