

A VERY
SPECIAL
DAY...

25th

ANNIVERSARY

Of The

**ALLEN PARK
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

We Are Here to Serve You.

HISTORY OF THE ALLEN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

With the Allen Park Church of Christ usually exceeding 500 persons in Sunday morning worship service in 1975, it seems strange that at one time there was no Church here at all. Allen Park is now a busy suburb, but just 25 years ago when the Allen Park Church held its first meeting, Allen Park was little more than a farming village.

Some people must have thought it peculiar when in the mid-1940s the mention of a congregation of the Lord's Church in Allen Park first cropped up at the old South Dearborn congregation, then located on Toledo near Dix and Wyoming in a portion of Dearborn located near Detroit. Those who originated the idea must have been farsighted and known that those small communities surrounding Detroit would one day each be a metropolis in its own right.

Originally it was planned to move the South Dearborn congregation to some lots that had been purchased on Southfield Road in Allen Park. But that idea stalled. The seed had been planted in the minds of many, however, and the concept began to take root. Later, members of the Vinewood congregation saw the need for a new congregation. Those who were instrumental in helping to plan for the new congregation were James D. Groves, minister at Vinewood, David Hancock of Vinewood, Bro. Millard Loftis, minister at River Rouge, Bro. Floyd Agee, Sr. of River Rouge and Floyd Wiley, minister at South Dearborn. Several others also aided in the planning.

After much planning, the first meeting of the Allen Park Church was held in the library of what was then the Allen Park High

soon got underway in 1953 and a contractor was hired to construct the shell of the building. The remainder of the work was done by members of the Church.

The Allen Park Church of Christ officially stopped renting in 1955 as services were held in the basement of the new building. Work continued on the upstairs, which was completed in 1957. The members had done just about all of the work--sometimes to the chagrin of the City's building inspectors--including plumbing, heating and digging a hole for the installation of a fuel oil tank.

There were some discouraging times during the building--the ceiling in the auditorium collapsed the night after it had been installed. From this, members learned better building techniques and increased tolerance. The new auditorium seated 160 persons. Folding chairs were used at first but were later replaced with church pews. The Bible School classes met upstairs.

From July, 1951, until the end of February, 1952, on a part-time basis, Robert J. Lifsey preached on Sunday mornings. From March, 1952 until the Spring of 1955, William (Bill) Ellis also preached on a part-time basis. During the initial development of the congregation, Chester Sims was an inspiration to both members and preachers.

Growth--spiritually and physically--continued to take place and during the Summer of 1955, Leamon Flatt served as the first full-time minister of the Allen Park congregation. An apartment in Detroit and later a house in Melvindale were rented for him and his wife, Lou. The Flatts continued working here until the end of the Summer in 1957.

Walter Bankes, along with his wife, Ruth, and their son, Paul, moved into a rented house on Meyer in Allen Park when he preached from July, 1957 until the first of September, 1958.

Late in 1958, Morris Womack began working with the congregation. He, his wife, Ada, and sons, Jimmy and Ricky, moved into a house on Niver in Allen Park, which had been bought for use as a minister's residence. Morris also taught part-time at Michigan Christian College in Rochester during his stay at Allen Park.

During this period, elders were selected by the congregation membership, and, on August, 1961, four men were installed to oversee the work of the Church in Allen Park: Allan Medley, who still serves as an elder; Charles Steele, who resigned in 1975 because of his health; Carver Darnell, who currently resides in California; Edmund Turner, now deceased.

Extension classes from Michigan Christian College were begun in the evenings, beginning September 12, 1961. College credits were given for these courses.

For the first time, deacons were appointed in the Fall of 1961; Finas Collie; Austin Ensey; Oliver Green; Arlin Medley; James Nation; Loman Nelson; Ed Parrish; Murray Ross. Brothers Ensey, Green and Ross continue as deacons at the present time, while James Nation and Loman Nelson are serving as elders.

The congregation continued to grow, necessitating two worship services and William Ellis returned as a minister until late in 1962. Early in 1962, Harry Houser, with his wife and children, arrived to work

attendance. This tremendous advance convinced the members that they needed a permanent meeting place for work and worship. Through a bond issue that was sold in Canada and in the U.S., a lovely and adequate auditorium and classroom and office structure was erected and the Church began meeting in this building in May, 1967.

This Church has continued to be interested in mission activities itself and has given support to numerous benevolent and missionary projects. The Allen Park Church has maintained a high level of support to this congregation throughout the years and only in 1975 decided it would be to the best interest of both congregations to reduce somewhat the monthly support. The building indebtedness has been reduced consistently and at this time a balance of \$29,000 is owed.

Although Newmarket is a city of young executives "on the way up" and therefore many people come there for a short time and then move on to more responsible positions, the membership has steadily grown in spite of these losses until there are about 75 members at this time. In addition to the financial and moral support given by Allen Park, the Church has sent its ministers there for mission meetings and other members have gone to assist in V.B.S. programs and general spiritual encouragement. The Knutsons are held in high esteem by the members of the Church here and one can often hear the remark made: "Some of the best money we've ever spent has been that support given Magnar and Joan Knutson in Newmarket."

A five-bedroom, brick veneer home costing \$30,000 was built on the church property for the minister and completed in January, 1968. At that time, Larry Acuff, his wife, Janet,

and children, Jimmy and April, came to work with this congregation until the Summer of 1973. The membership continued to increase, as well as the support of the missionary effort in Newmarket, Ontario.

During this time, plans were made for the establishment of a facility to provide foster care for children. \$75,000 in bonds were sold to cover the cost of construction and furnishing a five-bedroom, brick veneer home which would house five or six children. Acquiring a license from the State of Michigan Department of Social Services was a frustrating and frequently discouraging experience. Operation of the Allen Park Church of Christ Child Care Center began in 1971 with Mrs. Elizabeth Carey as Social Worker and Doug and Roydell Gregory as the first houseparents. Other houseparents were Roger and Kathy Grantham and Roger and Kathryn Barrick. Many couples in the congregation served as substitute houseparents. Due to the restrictions, regulations and demands of the State, the elders decided to disband the Child Care Center.

In the Fall of 1968, the elders investigated the possibilities of a busing ministry program being started. Under the oversight of Loman Nelson, elder, and with Jackie Hinkle, a deacon, in charge, and with one bus, the first routes were begun in April, 1969. The average number of children riding it was 15. By Fall of 1972, attendance in Bible classes had increased and busing routes were extended until one bus was incapable of handling the number of riders. When Jackie Hinkle moved from the Michigan area, Tom Gehringer became the deacon in charge and remains so at the present time.

As attendance continued to increase, additional buses were purchased and now,