

Thoughts on OPCRC Centennial

As we come to the 100th anniversary of the founding of the congregation that became Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, it is appropriate to look back on the 100 year history in light of our current mission statement, which calls us to **worship, learn, serve, and reach out** with the gospel.

The First 50 Years:

On June 19, 1919 The Fourth Christian Reformed Church of Roseland was organized with 19 families, 5 individuals, and 114 total members. The reason for the new church was that the parent church, Second Roseland, used only the Dutch language, and the founding members wanted to worship in English, teach their children in the language they used, and be able to invite their neighbors to join them.

Worship:

Worship services were held in the basement of the Christian School on 104th Street in the beginning. Three lots were purchased (for \$1,050) on 104th Street just east of Wentworth Avenue as the site for the church. In 1920 a “basement church” was built (~\$15,000) and dedicated on November 5. Also in 1920 the first pastor was installed, G. J. Holwerda. This was his first congregation. At this time services were held in the morning and afternoon. In 1921 additional land was purchased for a parsonage.

In 1929, the second service was moved from afternoon to 7:00 PM in the evening. Planning for adding the superstructure also began. In 1930 it was decided to proceed, at a cost which became almost \$40,000, (the annual church budget was about \$9,700). The Depression had not yet affected the church finances. The work was complete by December. Eventually the church debt reached \$69,000. Since both the basement and superstructure were only accessible via stairways, there was no handicap accessibility as we expect today. Of course there was no air-conditioning either.

By 1948 the debt had been paid off, and an adjacent vacant lot was purchased to serve as a parking lot. Things had changed over the 30 years. When the church was built, almost everyone was in walking distance (which meant in some cases over 1 ½ miles), but now most families had cars.

In the 1950s, services were recorded on a new invention, a reel-to-reel tape recorder. The recorder was brought to the house of someone who was unable to attend church because of illness or disability, and then picked up the next day for the use of another person, if necessary.

There was no place in the building for people to talk after the service, so the open space outside, in front of the church, would be filled with small clusters of people, even in winter.

Learning:

On Sunday there was Sunday School, which began with kindergarten or first grade and went through sophomore year of high school. In parallel, there was catechism, which was oriented toward doctrine rather than Bible stories, and began with first grade through high school. This was held during the week, immediately after school for the younger students, in the evening for older students, and on Sunday

morning for juniors and seniors. This was possible because most families lived within walking distance of the church.

There were also mid-week meetings for a Senior Men's Society (older adult men), Junior Men's Society (younger adult men), Mission Guild (younger adult women), and the Ladies Aid (Priscilla Society, older adult women). Until about 1962, there was a Young Men's Society and a Young Women's Society for high school age. These merged to become the Young People's Society around 1962.

Cadets began in 1957. Calvinettes, now GEMS, began in the 1960s.

Service:

There was little in the way of formal service programs, but women got together to do projects such as sewing clothes to send to Europe after World War II.

Reaching Out:

There was a local outreach called the Lithuanian Mission originally, which was in the Pullman area, near the Pullman railroad car factory. This became the Pullman Gospel Center and eventually the Pullman Christian Reformed Church.

Three missionaries were supported:

- Ralph Bos 1948-1959 Owen Sound Ontario, ministering to the post World WAR II immigrants from the Netherlands
- Donald Wisse 1961-1965 Ogden Utah
- Paul Redhouse 1961 into the 1970s Navajo Indians

A group called the Lightbearers made visits to the county hospital in Oak Forest, with 4th Roseland participating once a month.

There was a released time Bible study program for students who could leave the local public school early for religious instruction (1967). Daily Vacation Bible School was offered in the 60s.

The denomination ran a program called Summer Workshop In Missions (SWIM) for high school/college volunteers beginning in 1962 and 4th Roseland young people participated.

Church growth:

The church started with 19 families with a total of 114 people, including 5 individual members. By 1930 there were about 100 families.

In the 1954, the size of the congregation peaked at 132 families and over 550 people, but began to decline as members moved to the suburbs. The decline was partially offset by people moving to Roseland from Englewood, but by the late 1960s the decision was made to move. In May of 1969 a vote was taken to acquire land in Orland Park and plan for a new church building there. In the interim, services continued to be held in the old building but also at Chicago Christian High School in Palos Heights. The old building was

sold and the last service there was held on September 27, 1970. At a congregational meeting on October 7 the Fourth Christian Reformed Church of Roseland ceased to exist and became the Orland Park Christian Reformed Church.

Pastors who served in Roseland:

- G. J. Holwerda 1920-1924
- Albert Bratt 1925-1928
- Herman Kuiper 1928-1944
- Raymond Haan 1945-1949
- John De Kruyter 1950-1954
- Wilbert Van Dyk 1955-1959
- Henry Van Wyk 1961-1964
- Gerrit De Young 1964-1968
- Henry DeMots 1969-1976

The Second 50 Years:

Worship:

From 1969-1971, services were held in the Chicago Christian High School auditorium. The new building in Orland Park was dedicated in November 11 and 12, 1971. In the beginning, we did not even fill the center sections of the sanctuary.

December 13, 1972 Second Christian Reformed Church of Roseland merged with OPCRC. The mother and daughter churches were reunited.

The congregation soon outgrew the building. Partly in response to that, in 1979 Faith Christian Reformed Church was founded in Tinley Park. Even after some families left, by April of 1980 we had 210 families, 881 members. Continued growth meant we needed more classroom space, so the house next to the parking lot was acquired in 1982 and converted to classrooms. Eventually it became a second parsonage. More room in the sanctuary was needed, so a balcony was added in 1983. By 1984 there were 255 families.

Growth continued, and in 1988 the two-story education wing and family life center (the gym) were added. These new facilities allowed for Wednesday Family Night (now Family of God Night), which began in 1988, and the Pre-school in 1989. That did not solve the lack of place in the sanctuary, so in 1989 we began having two morning services. We outgrew our storage space and added the storage shed in 1996. Also in 1996, another daughter church as established, New Life CRC in New Lenox. In 2002 new classrooms, additional office space, and the youth center were added. In 2017 the Future Generations project involved a major remodeling of the church.

Pastors who served in Orland Park:

- Henry DeMots 1969-1976
- Arthur Schoonveld 1977-1987
- Fred Van Houten 1981-1986
- Cornelius (Corky) De Boer 1986-1999
- Gerald Erffmeyer 1988-2013
- Marshall Holtvluwer 2001-2012
- Derek Buikema 2013-
- Daniel Roeda 2016-

Learning:

Many activities from the prior years continued in the new location: Young People's Society/Youth Group, Cadets, GEMS, Sunday School/Church School under various names. Others were added over the years: Adult Fellowship, Friendship class, Grow Groups/Small Groups, Adult Ed, Coffee Break, Men's Prayer Breakfast, Beth Moore Bible Study.

The church newsletter, the Outlook, began in 1975 to inform the congregation about these organizations, as well as the service and outreach work.

Service:

- Orphan Ministry/Safe Families - 2008
- Honduras
- Operation Blessing
- Coffee and Comfort – 1983
- Family Outreach Team – 1985
- Cancer Support - 1989
- OASIS – 1996
- MOPS – 1994
- Car Ministry - 2000
- Food Pantry
- Roseland Christian Health Center
- Chicago Christian Counseling Center
- Angel Tree/Bells of Hope
- Celebrate Recovery
- Job Connection Service
- Sunday dinner for Trinity students (in homes) 1984
- College and Career Sunday dinners
- Shawl Ministry

Since 2005, our Adult Serve ministry has been building houses, sometimes more than 1 in a year, in response to natural disasters. Many of the cities mentioned below were part of that program:

- Rehoboth NM
- Cary MS
- Watoma WI
- Mt. Vernon KY
- Arcadia FL
- Mandeville LA
- Hattiesburg MS
- Gulfport MS
- Columbia MS
- Long Beach MS
- Pass Christian MS
- Franklinton LA
- Gary IN
- Slidell LA
- Biloxi MS
- Ider AL
- northern Alabama
- Bastrop TX
- Chocowinity NC
- Huntington WV
- Rainelle WV
- Dominican Republic
- Mexico
- Haiti
- Liberia
- Malawi
- Nicaragua

Reaching Out:

A Neighborhood Bible Club existed from 1978-1984.

There were Sunday night radio broadcasts on WIND, then WMAQ from 1985-1987. Our current services are available via livestream.

The Faith Promise method of funding began in 1981. Missions to many cities and countries have been supported by these funds:

- Guatemala
- Back to God Radio Chinese Ministry
- Back to God Radio Russian Ministry
- Nigeria
- Sierra Leone
- India
- Venezuela
- Philippines
- Belize
- Dominican Republic
- China
- Uganda
- Mexico
- Ukraine
- Papua New Guinea
- Mali
- Middle East in general
- Albania
- Japan
- Indian Ocean Area (based in Australia)
- Panama
- Roseland Christian Ministries
- Houston
- Springfield IL
- Homer township (now Homer Glen) IL
- San Diego CA
- Corvallis OR
- Teec Nos Pos Arizona
- Purdue University
- Temecula CA
- Rehoboth NM
- Cook County Jail
- Darien IL
- Denver CO
- Frankfort IL
- Agape Center Chicago
- Grand Rapids MI
- Grinnell IA (InterVarsity)
- Chicago (InterVarsity)
- Kansas City MO (InterVarsity)
- Arab Ministries (Chicago area)
- New York NY

As we celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness to Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, we pause to give God praise for all that he has done. We also rejoice in the future, knowing that "His faithfulness continues to all generations" (Psalm 100:5b).