

Mentor United Methodist Church Bi-Centennial Moment April 22, 2018

While the sanctuary built in 1906 served this congregation well for over fifty years, by the end of the 1950s it had become clear that a larger sanctuary was needed. Many services had full houses on Sunday. Plans were drawn up for a new facility with a Western Reserve style of architecture. Rev. David Skeen was the church's pastor at this time. The new church was designed to seat 520 with 360 on the main floor and 160 in the balcony. Church membership at this time was approximately 1400. The new building would be to the west of the old structure and be connected to it with a covered breezeway. The new sanctuary cost approximately \$250,000. However, fundraising would not begin until the remaining debt on the education wing, about \$17,000, was paid off.

Ground was broken in 1962 and construction took about a year to complete. The new structure has a center aisle which was something the old building did not have. Questions had been raised about expanding the old sanctuary or razing it and building a new one at the same site, but both were deemed too costly to be viable options. The new sanctuary did not, at first, mean a new organ. It was decided to pay off the new building before mounting a drive to fund a new organ. The organ from the old sanctuary was moved in for use in the first few years. By the time construction started, and fundraising had begun, Mentor Methodist had a new pastor. Rev. John Freiling had replaced Rev. Skeen in 1961.

It is interesting to note that plans were made to raze the old sanctuary and build a new fellowship hall, a new kitchen, new administrative offices and additional education space. The hope was to start this project no more than six years after the completion of the new sanctuary. These plans did come to fruition but not until twenty-five years later.

The new sanctuary was completed in 1963. The Mentor Methodist Church had a facility to meet the needs of its congregation as the church and the City of Mentor grew. A new organ would be purchased and installed, but that is a message for a later date.