

Our Church History

Since between 1840-1850

The Early Years

Our church was founded and built by early settlers, who came to America from the southern part of England in the 1840s and 50s. About twenty families comprised what was known as the "English Settlement." This community of church-going people soon gathered together in the local schoolhouse to worship and formed Sunday School classes for the instruction of their children.

William Battin, Superintendent of the Sunday School, was instrumental in urging the congregation to build a new church. The congregation had been reluctant to take on the expense of a new building. One Sunday morning, Battin had all of the children stay in their seats after Sunday School class, when the parents arrived for worship service, there was no room for them to sit. He had made his point, and the congregation started planning for the construction of a new Church.

The exact date of the construction of the new building is unknown. However records indicate that the first wedding performed in the new church, joined Elizabeth Allen and John Pierce in holy matrimony on December 28, 1862. The first public function held in the new church was a farewell service for the young men leaving to join the Union Army in the Civil War.

The first church was located on the north side of Irving Park Road just west of Route 53. In September of 1902 the building was moved to Meacham (now Medinah) near the intersection of Medinah and Irving Park Roads, it was then known as the Meacham Methodist Episcopal Church.

During the early years of this congregation, circuit riders headquartered in Arlington Heights served as preachers. As the years rolled on, student pastors from Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston would come out on weekends to preach and call on parishioners. These circuit riders and student pastors were housed in members' homes, and did their calling on foot.

The community surrounding the Meacham Methodist Episcopal Church continued to change: an influx of settlers of German descent surrounded the little church. These settlers remained loyal to their Lutheran and Evangelical Churches. The Methodist membership grew smaller and smaller. The Village of Meacham remained small and rural. Roselle was a growing community, and so, the little church took to wheels again in order to be of greater service to the Lord's purpose.

In October 1921 the church was moved to the corner of Park and Pine Streets in Roselle, where it still stands in service to God as the Pentecostal Church. It was rededicated to the Service of our Lord in January 1922, and the name was changed to Roselle Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1939, the word Episcopal was dropped, and in 1968 the word United was added.

By 1948 more changes were necessary for the growing congregation. The basement was enlarged to accommodate the Sunday School classes and an apartment for the minister was built. From that time on, full-time pastors replaced the student pastors who had been serving the church.

A New Church Building

In 1953, a young architect, Don Bessey was approached by a co-worker at the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. Ernest Wiltz asked Bessey if he would like to design a church for his growing church congregation. With "Yes" as his answer, the architect for the new church building had been selected.

Bessey met with the Building Committee on November 22, 1953. His meetings with the committee members – Ernest Wiltz, Charles Turner, Ralph Breyer and George Sim, Jr – started a lasting relationship with the Roselle Methodist Church. The architectural agreement was signed in December 1953. Plans were drawn, approved, and work began in September 1954.

Sweat Equity

During the construction, the entire congregation, under the encouraging leadership of Rev. Herbert Langdon, donated their time and labor ... they dug the basement foundation, they helped install the plumbing and electrical work, they supervised the construction, laid tile, painted walls ... members did what they were able to do. The church women kept the hungry crews well fed, made draperies, and helped with interior finishing.

A Dream Comes True ...

After more than a year of labor, the congregation joyfully celebrated Christmas Eve 1955 in their new church home. One of the first hymns sung in the new church was "O Holy Night" with Hazel Turner. How wonderful and how appropriate! On January 6, 1956 Bishop J. Ralph Magee officiated at the Consecration Service.

The new church building, a fine educational program and friendly people attracted many new members to the fellowship of the Roselle Methodist Church. So many in fact, that by 1960 it was necessary to add the first educational wing to the building. Sunday School classes had been held in the public school, and now could be held in the church classrooms. The north wing was consecrated on January 8, 1961, with Rev. Carl Sattelberg presiding.

The congregation continued to grow, and need for additional space was answered in 1967 when construction of the west wing was started. Rev. Fred Conger directed the efforts for this new addition. Many of the "old timers" thought it unbelievable that another addition was needed so soon. This new addition provided more classroom space, an enlarged kitchen, and a youth room. The west wing was dedicated in 1969.

The Roselle United Methodist Church continues to serve the community of Roselle and the surrounding area in many ways including Sunday Worship Services, Sunday School for all ages,

weekly Bible study classes in person and online, Confirmation Class and the United Methodist Women circles, and countless mission and outreach programs which include PADS, Roselle UMC Community Food Pantry, Homeless support ministry with Plarn Mats and the Night Ministry, service projects in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity, volunteers to help hurricane relief, Midwest Distribution Center for Emergency Relief, Mission Links, and so many others.

To quote Mrs. Charles Turner: "Of course the work of providing a well-equipped church home continues. In all these efforts God's grace has proved sufficient for our needs. In this confidence we look forward to whatever the future may bring."

A New Church

After all the praying, all the planning, all the meetings, all the fund-raising, all the volunteer hours of labor, finally, the Roselle Methodist Church stood as a proud symbol of the faith of the people, and what can be accomplished with God's help.

In honor of the dedicated and effective leadership of its pastor, the congregation named the new fellowship hall, "Langdon Hall."

The Day of Consecration to the Lord

January 6, 1955, a special day in the life of the church and its people. Members gathered at the old church on Park and Pine Streets, and marched, holding hands to their new church home.

Growing Pains

During the pastorate of Rev. Carl Sattelberg, the north wing of the educational building was built in 1960. This additional space provided a pastor's study, a business office, the church parlor, a choir room, eleven classrooms and the narthex.

In the spring of 1969 the original building plans for the church were completed with the construction of the west wing educational building. The sanctuary was extended to provide for a large church parlor. Besides new entrances and a lobby this addition added four large children's classrooms and a youth room.

A Bit of History From Hildred Shellenbarger ...

Roselle was a town of 770 when we came here in 1941, Al Jordan was mayor and also head usher at Roselle Methodist Church. Al stood perfectly straight as his army experience taught him, yet he had a warm smile for everyone. Charlotte Jordan was important to our church, to the school PTA, and to her many friends.

Earl Crandall was station agent and "guardian of the railroad tracks." He once rushed out to pull a young girl back as she stood too close to the tracks.

The Turner family gave the land for this church and gave much of themselves always to the church activities, trustees, Sunday School, Women's Society, building, upkeep and talent. Ethel was Director of Education, district and local officer in the UMW, and with Chuck, was a mainstay

of our church years. Ruth Tuner Thomas was chairperson of dinners and bazaars, and Hazel was director of music and soloist.

I remember the move at Christmas time from the little corner church to this one. Hazel directed the choir and when she sang, "O Holy Night" at practice we went down to stand in the pews to hear her. We rejoiced in the fine acoustics of our new church. Howard Turner was building director, maintainer and general "handyman for everything."

In the corner church we all took turns at church maintenance. I remember when our family each had a job – Lyell financial was secretary and helped with janitorial chores on occasion. I was the Sunday School Superintendent and choir member, Carol was president of MYF and David was acolyte.

As we think back to the little church when we had a visiting student from Garrett Seminary each Sunday, we remember that we became concerned that our church was at a lull. At a meeting about twenty of us decided that what we needed was a full-time pastor, which meant that we needed a stable budget. This meant our pledging support for the year was necessary. As we agreed that evening we went ahead with pledging plans and hiring a minister. Bob McIntyre was hired. We rented a small house on west Irving Park Road for Bob and his wife, who was expecting a child. We painted and repaired and turned the little apartment into our first parsonage. Our church started to grow.

In 1955, I remember these big arches, which had been wrapped and lying on the ground were finally raised. What a thrill to see the new church reach toward the sky!

I remember pastors Twyman, McIntyre, Rollins, Plummer, Langdon, Sattelberg, Conger, Crandall and Graham. I have fond memories of times with Helen Turner, Ann Clucas, Crandalls, Halls, Albers, Knohls, Wiltzes, Grossos, Thomases, the Charles Turners, the Howard Turners, Olsens, Breyers, Burreesses, Schmidts, Myers, Seddons, Roses, Holmes, Prichards, Burianeks, Beardens, Ladds, Matthews, Bullamores, Culls, Daniels, Keens, Thorsens, Herbeners, Besseys, Petries, and so many others.

The church was the focal point of our social and religious lives and of our children's lives, as well. Mr. Pritchard taught our young people the Dale Carnegie course, "How to Win Friends and Influence People." Sunday evening fellowship gave us friends, worship and knowledge. Often baby-sitting was by either husband or wife, the other attending Fellowship; the next week they would switch off. When there was a party, we were all there. At one Christmas party, Howard Turner brought his sleigh, the bearskin robe, velvet cape and hat. What fun we had, and we all had our pictures taken.

Our church represents years of families, pastors, dedication, volunteerism, prayers and joys. It has been and surely will continue to be a stable influence in this community.

The Turner Family

The Turner Family has a long history with the Roselle United Methodist Church. In 1921 when the old church building was moved from Meacham to Roselle, Walter T. Turner donated the land at Park and Pine Streets.

The Great Depression of the 30s found the church in financial trouble. Members were staying away from church, because with so little money, most members were not able to give donations to the church. Attendance dropped as more and more members stayed away. Walter Turner called a church meeting, he asked everyone to come back to church! He told the members that he would pay all of the church's expenses for the next year, if only they would attend worship services. The much relieved congregation returned to faithful attendance, and Turner kept his word and paid all the bills.

In 1953 when plans for a new church were underway, it was decided that the property at Park and Pine Streets wasn't big enough for the new building. Howard Turner owned five other sites in Roselle, but for one reason or another, none of them were suitable for the new church building. Turner bought the property on Rush Street between Woodworth and Pine and donated it to the church.

Not only did Turner donate the property, but he also was responsible for the excavation for the Sanctuary, and later on for the two education wings. Charles Turner was responsible for the electrical work in the church. During negotiations for property, a site was obtained in Town Acres. This piece of property also was donated to the church and became the site for the parsonage.

Mrs. Turner wasn't very pleased with the light fixtures that were specified in the plans, and had special lighting fixtures designed and manufactured. These too, were donated by the Turner family, and are still hanging in our Sanctuary today.

Ethel Turner and Hazel Turner both were very involved in Christian education, making sure that the youth were given a good, sound basis in scripture. Hazel also served as Choir Director for many years.

We are thankful that the Turner family played such an important role in the growth and development of the Roselle United Methodist Church.