

Remembrances of the Schreiner Chapel by Don Priour

The "Good"

My mother, Bertha, and my dad, JW, had been married in 1943 in St. Peters Episcopal Church; the church that my mother grew up in. When I completed kindergarten, they changed to the First Presbyterian Church. There was a special thing about those windows in that they partially opened. But still it was hot. I believe fans were also used.

The ministers were good as well. When my parents joined the church in 1954, William Logan was the pastor, and Dr. Andrew Edington taught Sunday School Bible class that was broadcast on KERV radio.

After Bill Logan took a call to the University Presbyterian Church in Austin, Richard Ryan became pastor. Rev. Ryan was extremely personable. It was during his tenure that I learned so much about the Presbyterian Church and church doctrine.

Richard Ryan initiated the Candlelight service on Christmas Eve. It was beautiful. At the end of the service the whole congregation came out on the steps, singing Silent Night.

When I returned from my medical training, Rev. Weatherhog had taken the helm. Under his tenure and under Dr. Currie's tenure, the congregation approached a membership of 950.

The "Bad"

There were in effect three stories to the church building. A partial basement, the lower floor of the sanctuary and the balcony with only stairs. There was a ramp and elevator, but very few seemed to utilize them. There was one gentleman that made the effort to go up the front steps. He took one step with one foot and then pulled the other foot up very slowly. After what seemed an eternity, he finally made it. I remember one Sunday in the spring when the Daylight Savings time took effect. The doors of the church opened as he took the last step up and was surprised to hear the Postlude coming out the door.

The "Ugly"

In spite of improvements, the building was aging, and the congregation was growing. A sign of the aging was that one Sunday, one of the supports for the banister to the balcony crumbled due to a termite infestation.

Also, with the increase in the size of the congregation, people crowded into the pews so tight that it sometimes was hard to breathe. The air conditioning and air circulation was not too good. The EMS started calling First Presbyterian Church the "fainting church" because many services required a trip to the ER after someone packed into the tight pews. When the Chapel was renovated, attention was given to spreading the pews farther apart and improving the air flow. I think that the last time we had someone pass out in the church was during Dr. Currie's tenure.