

# *The History of the Edgewood Church*

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Written by Mary Purdy of the Edgewood Historical Society  
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The history of the Edgewood Church and the history of the community of Edgewood are very similar. After the incorporation of the borough on December 1, 1888, the residents felt the need of a place of worship nearer home than Wilkinsburg, Swissvale, Pittsburgh, or Allegheny. Prayer meetings had been held in various homes, and a small Sabbath School was held at the home of Mrs. Alexander Gordon, Sr. As a result of this need for a church a meeting was called on March 26, 1891, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. N. Taylor on Maple Avenue. Many more meetings were held in the next seven months, and finally a charter was obtained from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, property purchased, and a committee appointed to prepare and present a petition to the Pittsburgh Presbytery for the organization of the church. It was accidentally discovered, though, that the Edgewood borough east of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and therefore the property purchased for the church, was within the limits of the Presbytery of Blairsville. It was generally felt that the church should be located within the Presbytery of Pittsburgh, so it was necessary to petition both the Pittsburgh and Blairsville Presbyteries, and the boundary line was changed to include the entire borough of Edgewood in Pittsburgh Presbytery. On December 1, 1891, exactly three years after the incorporation of the borough, the Presbytery of Pittsburgh received and granted the Edgewood petition signed by sixty-five persons, and an organization committee was appointed.

The first ruling elders of the Edgewood Church, as it now came to be called, were Johnston Baldwin, Matthew Bigger, Robert C. Moore, and William N. Burt. The first board of trustees consisted of A. W. Cadman, C. M. Thorpe, William G. Gordon, Edward J. Lloyd, W. N. Taylor, and J. H. Harlow.

On December 17, 1891 the organization committee met in the frame building on Edgewood Avenue between Elm Street and Maple Avenue, since torn down, where the Texaco Service Station now stands. This building was the office of the Homestead Loan and Trust Company, but the trustees had accepted the company's offer to use it free of rent. Here the first church service was held, with Rev. Samuel J. Fisher of the Swissvale Presbyterian Church conducting the services and Mr. E. J. Lloyd, who had given the organ, as organist. The first sermon was preached by Rev. John Gordon of Omaha, Nebraska, son of Alexander Gordon, Sr. of Edgewood, on December 20, 1891. On January 3, 1892 the Sabbath School was organized with John F. Miller as superintendent. The first Sabbath School had ten teachers and fifty pupils. The following Sunday, January 10, the first communion was observed, the services being conducted by Dr. W. J. Holland, Chancellor of the Western University of Pittsburgh. On March 9, 1892, at a congregational meeting, Mr. Earnest L. McCartney was elected pastor of the Church. He was installed on May 18, 1892 at exercises held in the newly erected Edgewood Public School building and conducted by Rev. S. H. Moore of the First Presbyterian Church of Wilkinsburg.

The first annual meeting of the congregation was held on January 13, 1892 and on April 13, 1892 the plans for the building of the church were approved and the trustees authorized to proceed with its erection. The cornerstone for the first church, which was on Swissvale Avenue where the present church now stands, was laid September 20, 1892, and the church was dedicated on May 28, 1893. The organ was donated by Mr. C. C. Mellor and the new furnishings by the Dorcas Society.

Many women's organizations were formed in 1892 which greatly helped in the furnishing of the new church. In 1913 these organizations were disbanded and the Women's Association was formed to do all the work of the church. In this same year the Cot Club was organized for hospital work, its main purpose being to maintain a bed at the Presbyterian Hospital, but since then its object has come to include other charitable works and social activities.

In 1910, due to the great increase in the membership of the church, the trustees renovated and extended the Sunday School to the basement of the church. Five years later the congregation desired a new structure and plans were considered for a new and larger church. Although the members of the Edgewood Church held services in three buildings, they have owned only two. Ground was broken for the present church on April 9, 1917, and the cornerstone laid July 22, 1917. The dedication services were held November 17, 1918, and then three days later the organ, presented by Mr. George S. Davison, was dedicated. The chimes, which were given by Mr. and Mrs. George C. Blackmore, were dedicated on December 15 and 16, 1929. At first there was considerable debt on this new building, but the last of this debt was paid in March 1930. The total cost of the church and its furnishings was about one hundred fifty

thousand dollars. The Edgewood Church is one of the few in the whole denomination which has no present indebtedness.

The first manse was at the corner of Locust Street and Hawthorne Street. This building was sold in 1925 to purchase another more suitable in size. Three years later the present manse was purchased (on Lloyd Avenue).

The church has had six pastors: E. L. McCartney, from May 18, 1892 to October 1, 1896; William R. Farmer, from December 4, 1896 to December 14, 1907; Duncan S. Cameron, from February 1, 1908 to February 1, 1925; Ralph W. Lloyd, from September 1926 to November 23, 1930; Victor A. Rule, from February 5, 1932 to May 31, 1932; and Walter L. Moser, who was installed February 24, 1933. Rev. C. C. Berryhill served as assistant pastor during Dr. Moser's service as a chaplain in the National Guard.

As it completes its fifty-sixth year, we find the Edgewood Church, the only church in a community of five thousand people, serving the people. May it continue to do so.