

## ALDERSGATE'S ANNIVERSARY

A site for a new Methodist church has been a vision since 1948, when Reverend Roscoe Strivings, District Missionary of the Methodist church of Arizona and Dr. Frank Williams, District Superintendent, undertook a search for a favorable location. Many parcels were sought, but none were available. Finally, five acres (where the church now stands) were up for sale and an appeal was made to the Board of Missions of Southern California-Arizona conference to purchase the site for \$7,500.00 – a rare bargain!! A sign was erected which read "Site of New Northeast Methodist Church," but there was no activity for two years.

Near the end of 1950 the Reverend Roscoe Strivings and the Reverend Coleman Hartzler, Minister of Visitation, began a door-to-door canvas in a wide area surrounding the new site. After assembling interested persons in homes in the neighborhoods, the first congregation meeting of fifty persons was held on February 4, 1951 in the auditorium of Creighton School. The first hymn sung was "He Leadeth Me," and the first offering was \$28.71. On Easter Sunday, March 25, 1951 fifty-seven members were received, the first group to join the church.

The period from February to June 1951 was a time of vigorous organization and planning under the leadership of the Rev. Strivings, Founding Minister. At a congregational meeting held April 13, 1951 at Camelback Women's Club Building at 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Indian School Road, "Aldersgate" was chosen as the name of the new church, in commemoration of the chapel on Aldersgate Street in London where John Wesley had a spiritual experience which resulted in the foundation of the Methodist Church. The first group to be organized in the parish, even before the church itself, was the Women's Society of Christian Service. The first Quarterly Conference was held June 10, 1951, and the Charter Membership Scroll was signed by eighty-five people on that day.

The church was informed, after using the school auditorium at Creighton School for six months, that the hall would no longer be available. Immediate action was required, and on Monday, July 30, 1951, a borrowed barracks building was hauled, in some perilous moments across the irrigation ditch, to be used as a temporary measure. The first Sunday Service of Worship on this site was held on August 5, 1951. A majority of charter members, a few visitors, and million flies were in attendance. There were no coolers and no screens; it was August in Arizona.

On September 16, 1951, Dr. Frank Toothaker, then District Superintendent, gathered a group of people on the site and offered a prayer of consecration for the "new" building. On September 17 the mortgage was recorded, and the first Sanctuary, which was then Fellowship Hall (Strivings Hall today) was staked out on September 18, 1951. The "great day" came on December 18, 1951, when the first Service of Worship was held in the partially completed structure. January 6, 1952 is remembered as the day of Consecration of the new building.

During the summer of 1952, the north wing was built by the church members; and so it was for twenty years. Much of the building and upkeep of the property and grounds, was done by individuals and groups within the fellowship. The growing congregation soon needed more room, and money was raised to build the south wing. In March, 1954, the old barracks building was remodeled inside for church school use and new siding and trim were added to the exterior. The building was given to Crutchfield Methodist Church in 1961. The parsonage at 3101 East Weldon was built in 1954 and the Reverend Roscoe S. Strivings was the first minister to occupy the new home.

On December 7, 1956, ground was broken for construction of the Education Building. The structure was completed on April 3, 1957. On February 16, 1958, the new facility was consecrated before the largest single attendance of persons to date, nearly six hundred people. The original church property of five acres was diminished to four and a

fraction acres, by street dedications and subdivisions. In the spring of 1958, two and one-half acres of land abutting the property on the south and west were purchased.

Aldersgate began to plan for a new sanctuary. On May 7, 1961, a ground breaking ceremony was held. The education units were paid for and the members were ready to build a permanent sanctuary. Talk about a man's dream! Rev. Strivings had nurtured it from the roots of a rickety old barracks building. It had flowered into a small sanctuary, leafing out into wings and education buildings and now everyone was ready for the crowning glory – a big sanctuary with a bell tower, stained glass windows and a pipe organ – the culmination of it all. A dream fulfilled. Now Roscoe could go on to follow another dream.

In 1957, Rev. Harvey Kephart was appointed associate minister and following him in 1959, Rev. Eugene Bell was appointed. Some of these ministers, as well as Roscoe, are no longer with us physically, but we pay great tribute to them in the part they played in laying the foundation for this dream to become a reality. Tribute must also be made to the many members that wielded hammers, paint brushes, maintained the buildings, taught Sunday school, played the organ, worked in the kindergarten and nursery, directed choirs, counselled youth groups and worked long hours to initiate programs for the growth of the church and to serve the community.

In July, 1961, Dr. Raymond Firth stepped into take over the helm. Rev. Rex Sprink was appointed his associate pastor. Our building program continued to progress nicely and the first service to be held in the new sanctuary was December 24, 1961. Three hundred candles were ordered for that Christmas Eve candle light service and 600 people were in attendance. Not in Roscoe's dream or Dr. Firth's anticipation could there have been a vision of 2,288 people attending the four services on Christmas day.

On February 25, 1962, a meaningful service was held for the dedication of the beautiful Strivings window. This window graced the church the Strivings family attended in New York when Roscoe was young. This church was soon to be demolished, so a meeting was held here and it was decided we would have that window removed and shipped to Arizona and it would be installed in our new sanctuary. At the same time this window was being dedicated, the Chancel Cross was dedicated to Rev. Harvey Kephart. Later, the small fellowship hall on the south wing was named for him. During this time, Rev. Larry Baker was appointed Director of Christian Education. At this time, Rev. Baker is retired living in Arizona. In 1963, Rev. John E. Feller came aboard as Minister of Evangelism and Rev. John Johnson as Minister of Visitation. Some of you are probably surprised at the number of staff people, but when you consider the membership roll at this time nearing 800 people and 400 children enrolled in Sunday School classes, it took many hands and a lot of heart to cover all these bases. Dr. Feller loved people and enjoyed getting people together for fun and fellowship, so he organized the "Young at Heart" group. These seniors (and some young ones) met once a month for a potluck lunch. They had fine programs and gave their collection money to the "most urgent need at that time." Also in February, 1962, the new Wicks pipe organ was installed and at the same time, a cornerstone ceremony was held at the base of the bell tower. Sealed in a copper box behind the cornerstone, were scrolls from the different church organizations, the church history to that day and a roll of the charter members. The cornerstone was to be opened on their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church, 2001 A.D.

Reverend Peale was a very Ecumenical-minded minister. He wanted to involve all churches in worshipping together. We purchased new hymnals during his time with us. Some members expected Rev. Peale to have a halo or some distinguishing characteristic – knowing he was the nephew of a great theologian and writer. We soon discovered, however, that he was a basic, down-to-earth Methodist human being like us and he related to the congregation very well. He had a good rapport with the youth. The Vietnam War was quite a reality at that time and he spent much time

counseling on the draft situation, as well as on drug problems. He encouraged the youth to create a place where they could “rap.” He wanted the church to be a place where they could spend their leisure time. During time each minister was here, newsworthy events occurred. At this time, the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Church merged to become the United Methodist Churches. This was a momentous step in our church history and in 1986 the Women’s Society of Christian Service became the United Methodist Women.

Rev. Peale was the first minister to take communion to the homebound – thanks to the insistence of a pluck little missionary member, Hazel Shields. She loved riding along with him and seeing that the “ritual” was done properly. In 1970, Rev. Peale, Bob, moved on the fill a new appointment.

Appointed to Aldersgate in 1970 was Pastor Young C. Lee. He was a well-educated man of Korean descent and sent to be our new leader in Christian faith. His biblical knowledge and dedication to the study of the bible were truly an inspiration to many.

Several important events in the life of the church were celebrated while he was here. On September 24, 1971, the Joseph Window was dedicated to Joseph Zito; a charter member who contributed much to the building of the early church. At the same time, two Walborn stained glass windows were also dedicated, one to the youth and one to Eunice Walborn.

In 1973, Rev. Leonard Millars was appointed our Associate and served a little more than a year, he was about to retire.

On January 4, 1974, the Eternal Light above the altar, was dedicated to the memory of Harry Hawks, a charter member, by his wife, Leona and son, Terry.

In 1978, Dr. Holmes Ambrose was appointed Program Director and he also served as choir director and visitation minister.

On February 12, 1978 the mortgage was burned, retiring all indebtedness on Aldersgate United Methodist Church.

Under Reverend Bassett’s leadership, we pledged \$41,237 to the Pacific Rev. Bassett, Don, was a caring, enthusiastic minister. One Sunday morning, after a guest hand bell group had played, he was so impressed that he commented that he wished Aldersgate had a bell choir and pledged he would give the first \$100 dollars for the bells. In little more time that it takes to say “gesundheit” we have bells for a choir. He was in inspiration to all.

During this time, the beautiful stained glass windows were put in the Narthex. One was given by Orville and Phyllis Soberg and the other in memory of Toni Burris, who had passed away.

Our Fellowship Hall was renamed Strivings Hall in honor of our founding pastor. Another warm event was the return of Reverend Maurice Persons and his wife, Lois, from their mission in Africa. Maurice became our Associate.

When Rev. Bassett was asked what his most memorable events were while at Aldersgate, he recalled a visit from Bishop Golden on November 28, 1982 to dedicate the sanctuary. His fondest memory was the way the congregation responded to his going away party when he was reassigned. He said he left, definitely feeling loved and appreciated.

July 1984 rolled around and with it, the arrival of Rev. Marshall Lindsay there at Aldersgate. We soon found out he was an energetic man, who did not waste time and definitely had visions of a “new look” for our church and grounds. The building fund was a sizeable amount at that time. Soon plans were drawn up, an able building committee was appointed, and in no time, foundations were being poured and walls were going up.

The office wing on the north side of the sanctuary was project one and by May 1, 1985, it was ready for occupancy. The sanctuary was painted, the parsonage was refurbished and Marshall worked right alongside those who painted, planted flowers and repaired many other areas.

Marshall liked a challenge and his time at Aldersgate offered him plenty of them. We had fires, burglaries and vandalism. After Strivings Hall was burned the second time, it became necessary to completely rebuild it. A new kitchen and many other extras were added. The library on the southeastern corner, including the stained glass window, was dedicated to Ira and Mabel Lazear on May 28, 1989. Attendance had been dwindling for a number of years and Marshall challenged the congregation to strengthen their faith through studies like Kerygma and the Walk to Emmaus. A John Wesley performance provided another memorable Sunday. Marshall inspired an interest in a Foundation, which was established in December 1984. This Foundation is still strong today and provides money for capital improvements on the church, monies for education and missions, and may scholarships. During this time, two and a half acres were sold on the southwest part of the property. We became the proud owner of an IBM computer in 1986. Marshall encourage the congregation to never underestimate their talents. In 1987, Rev. Lindsay moved on to build a new church.

July 1987 arrives and with it Rev. Ed Smith. He soon became known as "Rev. Ed" to all of us. We had been warned that he was a hugger, and we soon found this to be true.

His knowledge and wisdom go hand in hand to make Rev. Ed a good leader and teacher. His big interest is also in the growth of the church. Since he came, we have been involved in some excellent workshops and studies. We were into our Congregational Vitalization Program with eight other churches in the valley. Our constant prayer is that with the conclusion of this program, we have some answers about our future. Rev Ed held us spellbound with his Sermon on the Mount dissertation each year, and we definitely looked forward to that time. Some of the events

that have occurred are the building of the kiosk and the installation of the stained glass window in the reception area in March of 1989 in memory of Gene York. The kiosk was a memorial to Robert Keith. On November 27, 1988, the beautiful stained glass window in Kephart Hall was dedicated to the memory of Merry Jean Hannifin.

Plans were also under way at this time to refurbish Kephart Hall.

About this time, there were many in our congregation who needed to be called on either in hospitals, nursing homes or their own homes. So, Marianne Steele served as our Ministerial Assistant. She also kept a record of attendance each Sunday and phoned members who did not attend to see if there was something we could help them with.

Rev. Maurice Persons must be included in this history. He returned to Aldersgate in 1981. He was retiring as a missionary, having spent many years in Africa. His mother was a member of this church, so we instantly embraced him and his wife, Lois. They quickly became loving members of this church, serving in any capacity as needed. Maurice soon became a "part time" Associate Minister of Visitation. But, with Maurice, nothing is part-time. It became a full-time job of ministering to the ill, the homebound, and keeping track of our winter visitors. He and Lois took communion to those unable to attend church.

Maurice was dedicated to Mission work, to evangelism, to the Caring Ministry or wherever God's loving care was needed. He was a quiet man who went about with willing hands and a loving heart. He served Aldersgate in this capacity until he retired a second time in 1987. Retired??? Well, maybe, but he still lent a helping hand wherever needed.

For the next few weeks, we are going to digress from our history of the church and pastors and give you information about our beautiful sanctuary. We will start with the stained glass windows all depicting

some phases of the life of Christ starting on the south side going from East to West; then the north side going from West to East, next Sunday.

#### Southside of Sanctuary:

1. This is the "Nativity" window dedicated on November 14, 1993, and given by the Patrick Burke Family in memory of Patrick Edward Burke, George and Zepha Cunningham (Sarah Burke's parents) and Helen Elizabeth Burke (Pat Burke's mother.) This window has a large star centered at the top of the crèche scene of Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus along with three kings, a Shepard with a sheep and two small lambs.
2. This is the "Jesus in the Temple" window dedicated January 1, 1995, given by the Joseph I. Mills Family. This window shows Jesus as a young boy teaching the people in the temple with the priests witnessing him as Jesus' parents walk beside the outside wall of the temple.
3. This is the "Baptism" window that was dedicated on January 2, 1994, given in memory of J. Warren Kane, by his wife, Helen Kane. This window shows the disciples watching Jesus from the side of a stream with a descending dove accompanied by ascending rays above.
4. This window is the "Sermon on the Mount" window that was dedicated on September 11, 1994, given in honor of Charles and Janice Payne and their family. This window shows Jesus preaching to many observers in the mountains.
5. This is the "Jesus and Fishermen" window that was dedicated in memory of the Branscome and Malone families, given by Zoe Branscome. This window shows Jesus walking on the water with the disciples nearby in a boat.

Additional information about our beautiful sanctuary this week. We will add more information regarding the stained glass windows all depicting some phases of the life of Christ on the north side going from West to East.

#### Northside of Sanctuary:

6. This is the "Healing" window that was dedicated on May 21, 1995, given in memory of Lula M. Green by James Green. This window shows a cluster of observers watching Jesus with his hand upon the forehead of a baby.
7. This is the "Last Supper" window dedicated in honor of and given by Rex and Edith Umbenhauer. This window shows Jesus along with the Disciples and displays a wine goblet and grapes on the upper room table.
8. This is the "Crucifixion" window that was dedicated on May 19, 1995, given in honor of Hildred M. Chevront and in memory of J. Howard Chevront by the Chevront and Erickson families. This window exhibits three crosses at the top with a scene of Jesus carrying the cross through the rocks just below it.
9. This is the "Resurrection" window, dedicated on October 9, 1994, given in memory of Harry G. Hawks, Anna and Harry L. Hawks, Nettie and Ridley E. Johnson, and in honor of Terry and Sandy Hawks, given by Leona P. Hawks. This window shows people praising Jesus – a beautiful butterfly flying above.

#### West side of Sanctuary

This is the "Christ and the children window" that was dedicated in memory of Silas R. and Mae T. Strivings and in honor of Dr. Roscoe S. Strivings, who was the founding pastor of Aldersgate Methodist Church. This leaded cathedral glass was made about 1907 and placed in the Methodist-Episcopal Church being built in Castle, New York where the Strivings family lived. The congregation moved out of the church and in 1956 Dr. Strivings contacted the owner of the property and asked if he could obtain the art glass window if he would have it replaced with clear glass in the building, which the owner consented to. The Official Board of Aldersgate approved paying the shipping charges of \$350. The crates were shipped to Arizona and put into storage at Aldersgate until the construction of the new sanctuary in 1961.

Dr. Strivings said:

*"It has been a great satisfaction to me that this lovely window, which might have been lost, was saved for further witness to our faith in Christ, who loved little children and blessed them."*

#### East Side of Sanctuary

The Chancel Cross window is dedicated to the memory of Reverend Harvey C. Kephart, who was a beloved former associate pastor of the church and who was well-known for building many churches. The large glass chips are carefully set in the wall of stone indicating Christ's crucifixion showing 'IHS' circled in the center of the cross.

In Kephart Hall's Chancel area, there is a stained glass window group consisting of four separate windows configured in a cross-shape, which was dedicated on November 27, 1988 to the memory of their daughter, Merry J. Hannafin, by Robert and Fern Courtney and the Hannafin family. A baby lamb is depicted below bright sunrays with descending doves on each side holding tree sprigs. Interestingly enough, this window was crafted by a current member of Aldersgate, Martha Stowe Benton, who is the eldest daughter of charter members, William and Wilhelmina Stowe. Also, their granddaughter, Nina Althea Schnorr, took all of this booklet's window photographs.

There is a lovely stained glass window in the church library dedicated by Mabel Lazear, to herself and her husband, Ira Lazear. It depicts a dove flying in the sky over mountains and ocean waves.

This ends the coverage of our beautiful stained glass windows. Next Sunday, we will return to information on our remaining pastors.

Returning back to the Stained Glass Windows information:

South side of Sanctuary: The two windows on the lower south side of the sanctuary were dedicated on September 24, 1971. The "Dove"

window in memory of Eunice Walborn was given by her husband, Edgar Walborn, contains a descending dove, which symbolizes the gift of peace, inside of an almond shape, a symbol of pure love.

The "Lamb" window dedicated in honor of our youth and given by Mr. Walborn's Youth Sunday School Class, contains a lamb, which is the symbol of Jesus, within a triangle shape.

Narthex: Stained glass windows flank the exterior doors in the narthex on the west side of the sanctuary. They are similar windows of various geometric shapes. The Orville and Phyllis Soberg window is to the right as you exit, given in honor of the family members: Wayne A. Warren R. Marsha J. and Wendy L.

The Martyn and Toni Burris window is to the left as you exit, given in honor of family members: Kathleen M., Patricia L. and Alma J.

At the north end of the Narthex area in the lobby of the church office is the "Jesus and Joseph in the 'Carpenter's Shop'" window, dedicated on December 12, 1993 and given in memory of Gene York by Dona York, family and friends.

At the south end of the Narthex in the back of the sanctuary is the "Gethsemane" window dedicated on May 21, 1977 and given in memory of William H. Stowe and in honor of the Stowe family and friends. This window shows Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and also depicts the terrain of the desert, similar in nature to the deserts here in Arizona, with a stream of water flowing through it, which is so precious for survival here.

We have completed the history of our many, beautiful stained-glass windows and are returning to our Pastoral coverage.

We begin with Pastor Mel Munchinsky in 1972 who followed Rev. Ed Smith. Rev. Mel was a "doer". and accomplished much while he served

us. We walked the stations of the cross by going from business to business near our church. A reading was given at each of these stations. We had Seder meals and a washing of the feet program. Rev. Mel acted out several Bible characters during sermons.

During this time, the name of the "Charge Conference" was changed to "Church Conference." A Korean church was started. A Sage school for the gifted started in 1994, but did not keep up with their obligations, so they were evicted. A Montessori School replaced them using all Sunday School rooms, Kephart and Strivings Hall and the playground. The playground was renovated and the water line was extended to a sand volleyball court. It was suggested we install a playground on the south side of the church where there is plenty of shade. So, a sandbox, swing set and other playground equipment was installed. Our next project was to redo the parking lot.

Rev. Mel assisted Tracy Perry, Pastor of Albright Church any time he was needed; started a Young at Heart program, went with us Christmas caroling, served his own refreshments after our late Christmas Eve service and served soup and sandwiches with our Lenten studies.

In March, 1997, Stacey Bittner was hired as our Youth Director. She taught Sunday School classes, had MYF sessions each Wednesday and Sunday evenings and organized ball games between our MYF youths and those from other Methodist churches.

It was an active, happy, loving congregation during Mel's time with us. He moved on in 1998.

Rev. Phil Norton was appointed to our church in 1998. It was quite a change from Rev. Mel. Rev. Norton was not an out-going person, so did not "meet and greet." There were many changes during this time. All committee members were immediately relieved of their duties as well as the Treasurer and Financial Secretary. Rev. Norton filled these positions with new members, many who didn't understand what they were saying

"yes" to and only remained in their positions a few months. Committees were forever changing, but we did manage to "get by." Rev. Norton was an excellent preacher and tended his congregation well in time of need. He was compassionate with those needing spiritual help and was quick to assist when needed for the homebound or hospitalized. Looking for some old hymnals one day, we soon learned they had been given away by the preacher. Many in our congregation found new church homes during this time.

Soon after Rev. Norton arrived, a team from Villa Montessori School approached him about using our classrooms and campus. He referred them to the Board of Trustees and from this meeting, a mutually pleasant 18-year relationship began with Villa Montessori School. Rev. Norton was interested in revitalizing our Youth Group, so a student from Grand Canyon University, David Weber, was hired as our Youth Director. While at Aldersgate, Rev. Norton completed his MBA at Arizona State University.

February 4, 2001 was the celebration of our church's Fiftieth Anniversary. Rev. Norton moved on in June, 2001 to make room for Rev. Lydia Moreno. Not too many years after Rev. Norton moved on, he passed away.

On July 1, 2006, Pastor Matt Ashley was appointed to our church. Matt was a single young man with a lot of energy and ideas.

A Native American Church was started with Pastor Matt as their preacher. Some members from Aldersgate attended their services and we soon built a good relationship with them. We began to hold dinners, events and services with them. We loved the Native American people. One activity was a week-end Pow Wow with Native Americans coming from all of the state to worship, fellowship and hold a huge fry bread sale.

Pastor. Matt and members canvassed the area around the church three times, once was with the Native Americans. A Kids for Christ program

was stated. Fliers were hung at homes, stores and apartment buildings telling of the events we had once each month. We also started an afternoon program in conjunction with Larry C. Kennedy School. There were game nights, a movie night and special chili, spaghetti or fish dinners. Our Pumpkin Patch was held at Halloween time with hayrides taken around the church property. We had summer splash parties with the local Fire Department providing water for all children in the neighborhood. Vacation Bible School was started with four neighboring churches and there were Easter Egg hunts. We offered camp scholarships for youth to attend Mingus Mountain camp and Pastor Matt and Felida Takahashi were their counselors. Our food bank was started and each Tuesday morning a bag was given for those who needed a little extra food. We became a Water Station for the City of Phoenix. Pastor Matt also started a Taize service each Sunday morning before our regular service. It was a casual service with a Praise Team much different from our regular service.

Unfortunately, our church secretary at the time Marjorie, was embezzling from us and we ended up owing the IRS some \$40,000.00 (penalties and interest). We did our "plea bargaining" to get this payment reduced.

Pastor Matt moved on to his next appointment in Sedona, Arizona on July 1, 2008.

On July 1, 2008, Rev. Mary Lou Adame became our Pastor. We canvassed our neighborhood again; continued with Kids for Christ program; continued Advent and Lenten dinners; had Bible Study; had a rummage sale; continued our Taize service and our Food Bank. We had another Native American Pow Wow with the Tongan Choir singing during our worship service. Included was a Craft Fair and a Fry Bread sale. A Karaoke night was started, as well as a community garden; and an Easter Egg Hunt.

Strivings Hall was painted and a new tile floor installed with a wood dance floor. Pastor Mary Lou started an exercise class. Had a Miracle Mile

night where we invited our neighborhood to attend a restaurant in Miracle Mile with 15% off. It was very successful. We held three Phoenix Country Day concerts with David Rowe conducting.

Pastor Mary Lou was very strong in visitation – whether members or non-members – hospital or home. She sang in the choir. She arranged for a Hispanic AA to hold their meetings at Aldersgate and brought several Conference meetings to our church. We started Web and Facebook pages and opened our church for wedding receptions, and family get-togethers. About this time, the Conference was concerned for three neighboring churches – Albright, Aldersgate and Creighton. Membership had declined; costs going up. Several meetings were held with all three churches in attendance and the Conference and the Bishop doing the negotiating. With Mary Lou being reassigned, we were assured we would have a new minister who would preach 4 services (includes the Native Americans.) Pastor would preach at each church and for the Native Americans. Expenses would be shared by all three churches. Keep coming for more on the merger of three churches.

Soon after Rev. Adame was assigned to a new church we again met with Creighton, Albright and the Conference. Since none of the churches were doing well, the Conference proposed we use one minister and one secretary for all three churches. The new Minister would preach 4 services on Sunday; one at each church followed by one at Aldersgate for the Native American Service. David Rowe agreed to be organist for each service. Susan Baldisseri would re-main as Administrative Assistant for all three churches keeping the office facilities at Aldersgate Church. In June, 2012, the District introduced us (Creighton, Albright and Aldersgate) to our new Pastor - the Rev. Melissa Rynders, a young mother of 2 small boys, who was ready to preach three sermons each Sunday. That left the Native Americans without a preacher and they soon found a new place to worship. We really missed them.

After a month, the district called another meeting of all three churches. They had a new format they would like to institute. Rev.



Melissa would now be preaching one sermon each Sunday and we would move to a different church each three months and have a combined service for the three churches. Shortly before Rev. Melissa served one year for all three churches, the District called another meeting to advise us that Pastor Melissa was being transferred to a new assignment. We would be getting a new Pastor who would serve Aldersgate and Creighton. Albright was being put up for sale and their members could stay with the current congregation. We were also asked to select two members from each church and those six people would decide where we would hold services - Creighton or Aldersgate Church. We were told the office would remain at Aldersgate. James Schlemmer, who was also added to our staff with Rev. Melissa, but not an ordained minister, was also re-assigned. He had preached several Sundays (did a great job) and tried to hold "restaurant ministries" in the neighborhood; but to no avail.

In July, 2013 we were introduced to our new Pastor, Rev. Brian Green. Pastor Green was new to our Conference, coming to the desert for health reasons from the Ohio Conference. One of the first orders of business was to find a new name for all three churches. After meetings and discussions, the name "The Bridge" was selected. So, there was no more Albright, Aldersgate or Creighton Churches. It was also decided, by those chosen, to meet only at Creighton Church. Aldersgate would continue to have offices for "The Bridge." Creighton was chosen for Worship because it was smaller and Aldersgate for the office because of its better space and facilities and a separate heating cooling unit from the church. Susan Baldisseri served as Administrative Secretary at Aldersgate for "The Bridge."

Pastor Green served us well with good sermons, active visitation, and extra activities. However, for the majority of us from Aldersgate, it did not feel like home to us. We were not asked to be actively involved and we began to feel more like visitors than members. We also noticed that more than half of the income was coming from Aldersgate as we had several sources of rental income. There were members of Aldersgate who were

not attending Creighton and in speaking with them, they would be happy to attend if we moved back to Aldersgate.

At another Conference meeting called July, 2013, we were introduced to our new Pastor, the Rev. Brian Green. Pastor Green was new to the Arizona Conference, coming to the desert for health reasons from the Ohio Conference. He must remain in the southwest, so applied to be a part of the Arizona Conference. The two members from each church chosen to elect where we will hold services said they had chosen Creighton Church for two reasons: 1) it is a smaller church and 2) it would be less expensive to operate. The church office will remain at Aldersgate as there is more room, more equipment and a separate heating and cooling unit from the rest of the church property.

Rev. Green served us well with good sermons, active committees, visitations and mission activities. There were several of us who felt we were not a part of Creighton Church. We were not included in decision making or activities and felt like visitors instead of members. So, we started meeting to see what we could do to return to Aldersgate. The District was informed of our wanting to move back as was our Bookkeeper, Cynthia Reed. The District came up with a myriad of things we needed to do before moving back.

1. We needed a mission statement as to why we wanted to move back;
2. A list of things that needed to be done around the Church;
3. Make a list of committees; their leaders and members;
4. Conference needed to know what we had to offer the community and how we intended to implement our actions, and
5. Prove we could pay for all of the above once we were on our own.

It was like starting a new church, but with no help from a Pastor or the Conference.

As the summer progressed, all of our papers were in order and the Conference began contemplating our return to Aldersgate. However,

they seemed to come up with a new challenge each week. We tackled each problem and waited. Then, a new challenge and we passed that. I have not counted how many challenges we were given and met and passed each one. At the end of July, Pastor Green announced that the Conference had approved our return to Aldersgate, but didn't say when!! Rev. Green would be our part-time Pastor; David Rowe, our organist and Susan Baldisseri, part-time secretary. Rev. Green would be part-time at Creighton and David and Susan would serve similar roles at Creighton as at Aldersgate. On September 3, 2016, Pastor Green gave us a report from the Trustees Meeting on September 2, 2016 with the following instructions:

1. Get all Aldersgate church keys; organize them and give them out only to authorized people.
2. Be sure each piece of equipment, every store room, cabinet, closet and storage space was cleaned and organized.
3. Susan is our Secretary and not a member of the church. She has no authority to make decisions for the church. She can only take messages and report them to the proper committee. Therefore, the Trustees must look over every rental contract or purchase contract to be sure they are in proper order.
5. Entire grounds must be cleaned up.
6. List should be made of possible rooms to rent with a current price for each.
7. A new custodian is needed and a possible change in cleaning ladies.
8. Decide on a time for our service - either early (9:00 or 9:30) or late at 10:30 or 11:00 a.m.

Yet, no word of a move-in date. Again, we had work to do before we could move back to Aldersgate.

More meetings were called to accomplish all that had been expected of us. We decided on a late service - 11 a.m. Creighton liked a 9:30 service, so that would give Pastor Brian and David time to get from

Creighton to Aldersgate for 11 a.m. service. All of these arrangements were short-lived as the District called another meeting to inform us that plans had changed - again and Pastor Brian would be a full-time pastor at Creighton and Susan B. would be their full-time administrative assistant. A new part-time Pastor had not been finalized for Aldersgate and we would now have to get our own part-time administrative assistant!!! Martha Benton was interviewed for the administrative assistant's job and was hired. David would remain our organist. We were informed that our move-in date would be Nov. 29, 2016 and a pastor would be obtained by then. Our disappointments with the District changing their mind so often were quickly erased as we looked forward to being back at Aldersgate with loving, caring, hard-working parishioners who loved Aldersgate and wanted to worship there. Our new Pastor appointment could not have been better for us. He had preached at Aldersgate before and came to us as a part-time retired preacher until June of 2016. He admitted to liking his summers off, but arrangements could be made so he could enjoy some time off during the summer. Pastor Thomas Kiracofe has a great insight into people and before a month passed, he knew the names of all of us - and much about us. His calm, pleasant way of "handling" people has endeared him to all of us. At the June, 2016 Church Conference, he was appointed to Aldersgate for another year as part-time Pastor.

And, that's the end of the story!!!!