

# Laurel United Methodist Church

June 2008

by Dee Nelson

When we enter Laurel United Methodist Church each month for our VHNA meeting, I daresay none of us give much, if any, thought as to the path this progressive group of people have traveled at arriving at such a stunning edifice.

It all started in 1896 as a Mission Sunday School with seventy five people, led by Rev. G. W. Dungan. The location was Laurel School, an outlying school on the N.W. corner of Pasfield and Laurel Streets. The Sunday School was designed by the Quarterly Conference as a Preaching Place. In 1898 it was called Springfield Southern Charge. The following year Laurel School was annexed into the city school system as Horace Mann School.

Perhaps because Laurel School had been annexed into the city school system, the congregation purchased a lot in December, 1899 at 216 W. Pine Street with the Rev. A.S. Chapman as pastor. This congregation was organized under the name of Laurel Methodist Episcopal Church,<sup>1</sup> was completed and dedicated on October 13, 1901 at the cost of \$1,875.<sup>2</sup>

The congregation outgrew the Pine Street church, moved into the chapel of the Second Presbyterian Church on College and Allen and later met in homes when the chapel ceased to be available.<sup>3</sup>

In January, 1906 the congregation bought two lots on the N.W. corner of College and South Grand for \$3,400 and constructed a church for \$20,000. The cornerstone was laid October 14, 1906 as the Laurel Avenue ME Church. "The ceremonies will be exceedingly impressive and participated in by a number of pastors from the city churches of the Methodist and other denominations."<sup>4</sup> It was dedicated on May 5, 1907 by Bishop Wm. F. McDowell.<sup>5</sup> The congregation was to worship there for 18 years.

The construction of the existing Laurel United Methodist Church was completed and dedicated December 20, 1925 with a program extending through New Years Day of 1926.<sup>6</sup> On Sunday, September 8, 1940, a dedication service was held in celebration of the reopening of the church building following an extensive program of improvements, the first major improvement project undertaken since the building's construction in 1925.<sup>7</sup> Following refinancing in 1936, the mortgage was burned on April 30, 1944.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> IL State Register, Dec. 5, 1946

<sup>2</sup> IL State Register, May 5, 1907

<sup>3</sup> Citizen's Tribune, July 3, 1947

<sup>4</sup> IL State Register, Oct. 14, 1906

<sup>5</sup> IL State Register, Dec. 5, 1946

<sup>6</sup> IL State Register, Dec. 5, 1946

<sup>7</sup> IL State Journal, Sept. 1, 1940

<sup>8</sup> IL State Register, May 1, 1944

The church's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration began in September, 1996 with a picnic and concert in Washington Park. A Centennial Celebration was held consisting of a series of events every Sunday from November 11, 1996 through December 15, 1996.<sup>9</sup>

All references, courtesy of Sangamon Valley Collection, Springfield Lincoln Library.

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<sup>9</sup> State J-R, Nov. 11, 1996