

AURORA UNITED CHURCH 200TH ANNIVERSARY ANECDOTES – edited

AUC History Book: In a deed dated February 21, 1818 and witnessed by Peter Tyler and C.W. Willcocks, William Tyler conveyed, for the nominal sum of five shillings, one acre of his Lot 80 in King (at the corner of Tyler and Yonge Streets) to four trustees, “for the erection of a house of public worship, for the use of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Province of Upper Canada”. A small log building was erected and church records indicate that in February 1818, the Rev. David Culp preached at the opening service of this first Methodist Church in Whitchurch, as Aurora was then called.

Aurora Banner, May 17, 1850: May 24, 1850 – The title of the Methodist Church in Canada changed from Methodist Episcopal Church to Wesleyan Methodist Church of Canada. A portion of the Yonge Street congregation who did not agree with this change erected their own building at the corner of Mosley and Wells Streets as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Aurora. (In 1884 all branches of the Methodist Church amalgamated. At that time the former Methodist Episcopal congregation sold their building to the Masons).

Aurora Banner, April 20, 1877: The Trustees of the Canada Methodist Church, Yonge Street, - which was partially destroyed by fire, - have decided to take no steps towards building a new church until it is ascertained what is likely to be the prospect of the crops this summer. If the prospect is favorable we understand it is there (sic) intention to build a new Church. It is to be hoped that the Trustees will see their way clear to build, as the present building is too small to accommodate the congregation comfortably, and it would be almost like throwing money away to repair it. The site is a very prominent one and a large and beautiful church would not only add vastly to the appearance of the village, but be more in keeping with the wealth and respectability of the congregation.

Aurora Banner, July 13, 1877: The Annual Pic-nic of the Methodist Church Sabbath School was held last Saturday. Owing to the rain which fell in the morning, Mr. Hartman’s Grove had to be abandoned for the Drill Shed and Park. A large number of children were present and, judging from the heartiness with which they engaged in various amusements, must have enjoyed themselves amazingly. Quite a number of the parents and friends of the children were present.

Aurora Banner, July 13, 1877: The Res. Messrs. Gee and Madden, the new Ministers of the Canada Methodist church, preached their introductory sermons last Sunday. Both gentlemen are well received by the members of the congregation of this church.

Aurora Banner, August 17, 1877: Last Monday afternoon an accident occurred to the men engaged in taking down the old Methodist Church here, by the breaking of one of the beams. One of the men, Mr. Mahers, was injured so that he has been unable to work. He is, however fast recovering.

Aurora Banner, September 14, 1877: At a meeting of the Trustees of the Canada Methodist Church last Monday evening, it was decided to proceed with the erection of the new Church as soon as possible. The tenders were opened last week, but the names of the successful contractors have not yet been made public.

Aurora Banner, Sept 14, 1877: BAZAAR AND FRUIT FESTIVAL The Ladies’ Aid Society of the Congregation of the Methodist Church intend giving a grand Entertainment in the Drill Shed on the afternoon and evening of Tuesday and Wednesday next, Sept. 18th and 19th commencing at 2 o’clock each day, consisting of a Bazaar and Fruit Festival. Peaches, ice cream, and other delicacies of the season will be furnished. The Band of the 19th York Rangers has kindly consented to be present. During the afternoon of each day there will be an opportunity to engage in various amusements on the grounds adjoining the Drill Shed. Admittance to the grounds free; to the

Drill Shed for the day and evening, 10 cents; 20 cents. Proceeds to be applied to the new church. It is to be hoped that the public will largely patronize the entertainment, as there is no doubt but that the Ladies will do all in their power to satisfy their guests.

AUC History Book: In October, 1878, the opening services of the new church were held with Rev. D.F.Gee and Rev. Dr. Sutherland in charge. In order to help pay for the new church, the board decided to rent the pews at \$1 per sitting but raised the price later in the year to \$2. In 1881 the pews were let by tender to the highest bidder, provided there were enough in the family to fill the pew. In 1912 pew rent was abolished.

AUC Archives: December 18, 1878 - Eli Braund and Jennie E. Canbrook were married by Rev. Daniel Gee, Minister. This was the first wedding in the new church.

Aurora Banner, January 20, 1888: We are pleased to note that active steps are at last being taken by the Methodist people of this place to have the old burying ground adjoining their church levelled off and put in a respectable condition....No doubt now that the matter is thus brought to a crisis the unsightly plot which has so long marred the appearance of the best portion of our town, will be so improved and beautified as to be a credit rather than a standing reproach to the Church.

Aurora Banner, March 1891: The Methodist people here have entered into a contract with Mr. Phillips to light their church with electric lights. The number of electric lights being required being 14, three are arc lights and 11 incandescent.

Aurora Banner, May 26, 1893: May 23, 1893 – Aurora's Cyclone - Frame buildings between Temperance and Yonge Streets were levelled and then the full fury struck the Methodist Church carrying away the fine steeple and part of the south tower into the street. Tons of brick and mortar were driven through the roof and into the east gallery. The chimneys on the western end of the church were blown down and the western gable as well as the entire roof badly damaged. Every window on the south and east side of the fine structure were demolished.

Aurora Banner, August 25, 1893: The spire or whatever it may be termed on the Methodist church is completed and is now being painted. Our conception may not be very good; but whether it is or not, we certainly, with many more of our citizens, are not very highly impressed by the beauty of the new spire. However if it suits the members of that church we can stand it.

Aurora Banner, June 22, 1900: The Methodist Church Conference which has been in session during the past week closed Tuesday night.Reverend Edmund A. Pearson who has been pastor of the Davisville Methodist church for the past three years will be pastor of the church here. Rev. G. W. Dewey who has been pastor of the church here for the past three years will have charge of Agnes Street Methodist church Toronto.

AUC History Book: The following temperance pledge for the Methodist Sunday School at Aurora, instituted Sunday, April 15, 1900 was signed by 97 people. It states: "We, the undersigned, trusting in God for help, promise to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage, from the use of tobacco in any form, and from the use of bad language".

Aurora Banner December 10, 1909: December 5th marked an important day in the history of the Methodist Church in Aurora. It was the dedicatory service of the new pipe organ. The organ was built by Mathews Church Organ Co. of Toronto. It has a most beautiful appearance with two banks of keys, eleven stops and 64(9?) speaking pipes pneumatic attachment and run by motor power. The total cost of installing it is about \$2,000. On December 3rd a concert was performed at the church by 50 members of the Broadway Tabernacle Methodist

church choir. Mr. Richardson, Aurora choir master and Mr. Grant, organist also took part along with the Aurora Methodist choir. The Ladies Aid provided supper for both choirs.

Aurora Banner, March 30 1925: On Monday evening the AHS (Aurora High School) five played the Two-In-One club of the Methodist Church.....and gave them a sound drubbing to the tune of 41-7. The Methodist boys tried hard all the way and the score does not completely indicate the play.

Aurora Banner, April 10, 1925: On Tuesday evening the Two-In-One Athletic Club of the Methodist Sunday School closed their season's activities with a banquet in the church parlors. About sixty young men thoroughly enjoyed the evening. During the winter this class has met each week in the High School gym and given physical training. A basketball team was also organized.

May 8, 1925: A meeting of the membership of the Methodist Church and the Unionists of the Presbyterian Church will be held in the basement of the Methodist Church on Tuesday May 12th at 8 o'clock.

AUC Archives: August 18, 1930 – Memo of Agreement between Cassavant Brothers Ltd. Of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec (Seller) and the United Church of Aurora (Purchaser). The seller agrees to construct for and sell to the Purchaser a Pipe Organ ...to deliver said pipe organ, to install it under the supervision of skilled employees of the Seller ...and to complete such installation on or about Christmas 1930 for the sum of \$6,210.00

Aurora Banner, Friday July 16, 1943: The old adage that lightning never strikes twice in the same place does not hold good as far as the United Church is concerned as the steeple on the church was struck for the third time during the storm late Monday afternoon. It is thought the lightning struck the metal weather vane and set fire to the inside of the steeple as no damage was done to the outside. The fire brigade had a difficult time in extinguishing the blaze. The interior of the south tower was damaged by water.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday September 30th, 1945: Tonight at 7:00 pm the beauty of the chimes will be heard at greater length as the sacred story is brought to us by the ministry of music. You are invited to the evening service to receive its blessing. (The Chimes on the Organ were presented by Lambert K. Farr as a memorial to his wife Rosa M. Farr, her father Joseph Stevenson and his wife Allison Folliott).

Annual Report 1945: The next great event in our church and in the whole world was V.E. Day. Due to the foresight and excellent organization of the ministers of our churches and the town officials everything was in readiness for this great day. Our church was filled to capacity for both morning and evening services. Chimes in the tower added to the solemnity and joy of the occasion. The same readiness was shown by our church later in the year when V.J. Day came.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday October 19th, 1947: At its recent meeting the Official Board was given the good news that a sound amplification system was being given to the church by Mr. Fred Cousins. This gift will mean that we will be able to amplify the Chimes music from the tower Sunday by Sunday and also to transmit beautiful Carillonic Bells from the Recorder through the towers,.....This gift is given in remembrance to those of our church who served in the Armed Services.

Annual Report 1946: March 17, 1946: Probably the most outstanding accomplishment of the year 1946 was the renovating of our Church Auditorium and of the Sunday School room. Great praise is due the Building Committee under the leadership of Dr. Urquhart for the splendid manner in which they carried out their task....On March 17th the "new" auditorium was re-opened and in the evening a former minister Rev. A.E. Black

was the guest preacher. It was during his time of service that a new organ was installed, the choir loft changed, and new seats placed in the auditorium.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday March 17, 1946: RE-DEDICATION OF CHURCH (after major renovations to the sanctuary) YESTERDAY-Remember the dark green chipped walls in our church entrance and gallery? The high bleak gallery towers that stole the heat? The blackish plaster on the ceiling of the nave? The great cracks and chunks out of the walls and under the galleries? The gas pipes along the walls? The poor lighting in entrance etc.? TODAY-A new, modern, insulated, and safe ceiling, and ceiling under the galleries – A correct and warm painting scheme throughout – raised gallery pews with new floor, new ceiling and new lights – safe secure and plumbed galleries. TOMORROW-New cathedral glass windows – railings for the stairway – new gallery floor and changes in gallery seats. THE COST-Remodelling, reconstruction etc. \$6,700. We have on hand for this purpose \$4,800. We need \$1,900. Building Fund Envelopes are in the Church pews.

AUC Bulletin Sunday November 2nd 1947: Tomorrow night, November 3rd the ladies of the congregation are serving an Anniversary Supper. We hope to make it a big church family gathering, a congregational affair to give us all a chance to have a good dinner, to have good fellowship, to renew acquaintances and to make new friends. We especially welcome those who have come into our church these past few years... Come to be friendly, to have a good time and come with 60 cents.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday September 15, 1957: A dedication service for the Narthex and Church School Rooms (under the Narthex) was held. Minister; Rev. J.F.G. Morris, Organist; Illyd Harris

AUC Bulletin, October, 1961: Rev. T. Edwin Hancock, B.A. was inducted into the pastoral charge of Aurora United Church in October 1961. (Rev. Hancock served from 1961-1969.)

UCW Guidelines Book: The UCW officially came into being on **January 1, 1962**. Women integrated their national-level work into the boards of the United Church, and blended their two organizations, the Woman's Missionary Society and the Woman's Association, into one: the United Church Women. The Women's Federation also joined the UCW at this time. Across the country, 300,000 women joined as charter members. The structure of the new organization was the same as that of the national church: Conference, Presbyterial, and local units, with UCW representatives participating at all levels of United Church structure.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday February 25th, 1968: The Rt. Rev. Dr. W.C. Lockhart Moderator, The United Church of Canada spoke at the 150th Anniversary Service.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday November 3, 1968: The Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson and Mrs. Pearson were welcomed to the 150th Anniversary service. Mr. Pearson spent several years of his childhood in Aurora while his father, The Rev. Edwin Pearson was minister 1900-1903.

Annual Report, 1970: On June 24, 1970 the Official Board directed the Trustees to sell the Manse at 39 Catherine Ave. also the house and lot at 12 Tyler St.....The Manse including rugs, floor covering, curtains and drapes etc. was sold to Mr. & Mrs. Roy Webster on July 1, 1971. Sale price \$28,000. The Tyler Street property was sold to Mr. & Mrs. James King and they received title to same on July 6, 1971. Sale price \$12,000. The balance of the furnishings from the Manse were sold and the Trustees received \$747.05 for same.

Annual Report, 1975: The fiftieth anniversary of the United Church ran through our activities like a golden thread.....May 25, (1975) a Building and Renovations Committee was formed.....Their task: To build a Christian

Education Centre, to renovate the Ladies' Parlour, to renovate the 3 year-old nursery. December 7, was Opening and Dedication of the new building.

Annual Report, 1977: There were two major changes in terms of staffing during 1977. Rev. John E. Hunter retired and Rev. John W. Houston became our new minister on September 1, 1977. Herman Van de Beek retired also and Mr. Ken Smith is our new custodian and is doing an excellent job.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday September 7, 1977: The Official opening and dedication for the Founders Room was held. Minister; Rev. John Hunter.

Bulletin - Sunday August 30, 1981: Final Joint Service of Aurora United Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church – held at St. Andrew's - At this final Joint Service for the summer of 1981, the members of both congregations welcome our visitors, including those who are in Aurora for the Church Street School Reunion. This morning's Service was arranged by the Aurora Public School Reunion Committee in cooperation with the Aurora and District Ministerial Association: Chairman, the Rev. John Houston.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday October 12, 1986: Next Sunday, the 19th, the tickets for the ANNUAL FAMILY TURKEY DINNER to be held Nov. 29th and 30th will go on sale. Avoid disappointment, purchase yours early. Adults \$6.00, Children \$2.00

Annual Report, 1990: We organized the celebration of the burning of the mortgage on the weekend of April 20/21 (1990), a remarkable feat that was only possible because of the commitment of the whole congregation....We agreed to worship at 10:30 each Sunday....Anne Gowans Blinn is our new minister.

Annual Report, 1993:– The Anniversary Banner (175th) was hung on the front of our building. February 21 was the day of our 175TH Anniversary service. Our Guest Speaker was the Rt. Rev. Stan McKay, Moderator of the United Church of Canada. The service was well attended by past clergy and dignitaries.

AUC Bulletin, Sunday November 23, 1997: Next Sunday we will have the renewed pleasure of welcoming Magali Cunha from South America to our church. She and her husband Claudio Ribeiro are ministers in a very poor section of Rio de Janeiro...The children of this congregation have supported the work of their "Little School of Love" by sending their Lenten offerings. Magali brings us a wonderful and uplifting story of their work there.

The Tablet, October 2002: Jane Caspi has been 'taking care' of our church for 12 years and we would like to take one more opportunity to express our sincere thanks for all the love that has accompanied the hard work over that time.

The Tablet, June 2003: Sunday May 4th (2003) was Aubrey Foy's last day as our Music Director, and we celebrated his contribution to the life of our church with presentations during, and after, the service.

Tidings, December 2003: In December we will be saying 'farewell' to the Reverends Harry Klassen and Bob Wright marking the end of the Intentional Interim Ministry period. On behalf of the congregation, thank you for being our ministers these past two years. The road has been bumpy at times and we thank you for journeying with us...With your help, we are now in a good place and ready to call our new ministry team.

Also in December we'll be saying farewell to Mary Smith as Sunday School Coordinator. Thank you Mary for your smiles and hard work.

Tidings, March 2004: On February 22nd at the Intergenerational Service, the United Church of Canada Award of Distinction was presented to Bill Newman. This award recognizes his work with the 3rd Aurora Scouts for the past thirteen years.

Tidings, March 2004: York Presbytery approved our request to call Rev. John Smith as Minister of Worship and Rev. Ruth Noble as Minister of Youth and Christian Education at Aurora United Church. John and Ruth will begin to lead us in 'singing a new song' as of May 1, 2004.

Tidings, June 2004: Mark Ruhnke, newly appointed Faith and the Arts Coordinator is organizing a "Faith Alive Arts Project" a week long summer school/camp event from July 19th to 23rd.

Tidings, October 2004: Join the Hand Bell Ensemble: This is a new and exciting venture sponsored by the Faith and the Arts at our church.

Tidings, November 2004: 1,211 pipes have been removed from the organ at our church over this past year. And 1,515 new or rebuilt pipes have been carried, one by one, up a ladder to their place in behind the west wall of our sanctuary....Most of the existing pipes were part of the Cassavant organ installed in 1930-31 but some dated back to 1911.....Many of the original pipes were sold at Fall Event this year at ten dollars each.

Annual Report, 2007: M&P hired Carmen Harany as Church Treasurer in mid October.

Tidings, Nov-Dec. 2008: September 28 - The whole church looked beautiful for the celebration of our special anniversary – 190 years as a Methodist/United congregation at the corner of Yonge and Tyler. Flowers and balloons, archival displays and other decorations all added to the festive occasion. It was a great day at AUC.

Tidings, February-March 2009: Janine Maxwell and David Kariuki will be speaking at both services on February 15th. You won't want to miss hearing Janine talk about her work in Africa and what our church has been able to accomplish in Swaziland.

Tidings, February-March 2010: What a great way for our church to start a new year! After several months of anticipation Rev. Lorraine Newton-Comar and Rev. Andrew Comar have begun their ministry at Aurora United. Their first Sunday was January 10th.

Tidings, November 2011: On Saturday the 22nd of October 2011, 5 youths from our Venturer Company (David Armstrong, Austin Bushell, Keegan Comar, Michael Nash and Sam Sweeney) received the highest award for youth in Scouting, The Queens Venturer Award.

Jim Coyle, Toronto Star, April 2014: The brick façade of burnt-out Aurora United Church which has stood solidly for almost 140 years, stood instead like an eerie taunt Saturday morning. Out back firefighters still poured water on the ruins, now roofless. That's the bad news. Here's the good. Astonishingly, just a block or two away, less than 24 hours after the fire broke out, the "Rise and Shine" breakfast program that's been running for four years every Saturday morning at Aurora United was underway at Trinity Anglican Church.

Zoe McKnight, Staff Reporter, Toronto Star, April 21, 2014: The resurrection theme that carries all Easter services was especially poignant Sunday for the Aurora United Church congregation. Just 10 days ago they watched as their beloved church burned. But even with borrowed bells ringing in a makeshift sanctuary, the message of hope at a time of trial and loss filled the auditorium of Aurora High School.