

RELIGION

Ainsworth United Church Of Christ "A Beacon Of Hope"

part one of a series

BY BILL FORSHAY

Travelers to New England frequently notice the white frame churches at the end of the village green often in the center of small towns. Informed that these are Congregational churches, they usually nod wisely as though they know the story of Congregationalism in America. They seldom learn that the greens once belonged to the churches and were leased out for grazing to local farmers. Nor are they told how these churches supported their members in times of hardship and created a spirit of oneness in their communities by having the church play an active role in all community affairs.

Today's Congregational churches united with Reform and Evangelical churches under the umbrella name of the United Church of Christ have returned the concept of the church as an active force in the community with concern for the well being of all people in society rather than a chosen few. In order to accomplish this goal, they have adopted the prayer of Jesus "that they may all be one" and made it their logo.

One major example of this interactive and community intensive faith is found at Ainsworth United Church of Christ located on the corner of 30th Avenue and Ainsworth Street.

Well aware of the early history of the Congregational churches which started in colonial times and were established all over New England and Pennsylvania, this church is proud of its heritage of involvement. "Some of the early churches sent missionaries to the Indian tribes and the church was an active force in seeking the abolition of slavery during the early 1800's," one member stated and another added that the United Church of Christ has grown to nearly two million members in this century.

Even the brochure handed out to visitors and potential members stresses

the community involvement with a section titled: Why are We Here?

The answers start with the fact that the church is part of the community with deep roots in the neighborhood history. It points out that this community needs a church that reflects the character of the area and is open to all people.

The church facilities are suggested as a place for people to discuss problems and make plans for a better future. The fact that the location is accessible



Rev. Paul Spurlock

to the community is stressed as is the thought that the church is committed to serving the neighborhood in order to enrich the moral fiber of the community. Finally the brochure points out that the mission of Christ is to people of all ages and races.

Oldtimers, proud of the church's local history point out that the history of this church began when immigrant Swiss dairy farmers living on Columbia Boulevard in 1904 gathered in a kitchen to talk about building a Reformed Church in their neighborhood so their children could attend weekly services. With the help of a \$100.00 grant from the Home Mission Board and volunteer labor, a one room church was erected on 37th and Columbia. A large circus

tent was needed to hold the crowd that celebrated the Silver anniversary of that founding in 1929.

Reverend Zinn, the fifth pastor to lead the church guided the congregation into relocation of the church to 30th and Ainsworth. He also led the church into a merger with the Evangelical Church of America. Both the Reform and Evangelical churches had historical roots back to the 16th Century tied in with the Protestant Reformation with Martin Luther in Germany and Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland.

This congregation then changed its name to the Second Evangelical and Reformed Church.

During the 1950's, this church merged with the Congregational Christian denominations as a forerunner to the unity of Christendom and adopted the name of United Church of Christ.

Following this, the congregation at 30th and Ainsworth again changed its name. Thanks to the presence of the First Congregational church on Park which had been renamed as First United Church of Christ in Portland, the choice was easy.

Under the leadership of Reverend Goodling, the present sanctuary of brick was constructed with stained glass windows designed by the artist Gerber.

These windows starting with the first on the right nearest the altar represent the life of Christ both symbolically and artistically. For example, the first window has the Virgin and Child with symbols from his nativity such as three crowns and a shepherd's crook.

The second shows Christ as a boy preaching in the temple and "about his Father's business". The third shows Christ prior to starting his preaching and the fourth shows him as rabbi, leader of disciples.

In the fifth Window Christ is on trial, crowned with thorns, in the sixth, crucified and in the seventh, risen and

ascending to heaven. Each of these pictures has appropriate symbols such as the anchor and the Torah and the dove.

Over the altar is a larger separate dramatic portrait of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane praying with the disciples sleeping in the distance.

Although very formal, these windows add to the charm of the church with their color, expressiveness and deep religious feeling.

During the 1960's, the mortgage was burned and the church became independent of the Home Mission Board.

By the 1970's, with ethnic variety established in the congregation, another church, St. Andrews United Church of Christ was organized and located in NE. Portland. After mutual sharing of programs and facilities over several years, it was decided to join the two parishes and start a church together using the structure at 30th and Ainsworth and renaming it the Ainsworth United Church of Christ.

Thus for a time the present building housed two parishes who found a community of spirit and an agreement of theological principles united under one roof but with separate pastorships. This occurred in 1981 and was seen at the time as a positive statement in the face of societal upheaval and racial dissension.

Now, eleven years after that historic effort to soothe the troubled waters of ethnic strife, this church once again stands in the forefront of those people who are unifying community forces in such a way that the ideals of Christian brotherhood are followed and practiced as a functioning rule of human conduct.

This has led to an ethnic diversity reflected in every endeavor the church is involved with from the United Negro College Fund to the support of a refugee African family to active opposition to such socio-political issues such as the fight over proposition 9.

The multi cultural diversity is also

reflected in the eclectic music used in the services and coming from all sources and traditions.

Under the skilled leadership of Lessie Williams, a wide ranged and skilled soprano who is frequently seen in other venues as soloist/director/teacher, the church boasts a choir of about sixteen voices who attempt everything from Bach to Rutter with repeated forays into gospel, jazz, folk, sacred and ethnic music (often done phonetically in the original language).

Another example of this musical universality is the fact that for the past several months, Janice Scroggins, a Portland musical legend and jazz virtuoso, has been the accompanist for the church and choir. Her intricate and spiritual piano solos often used for the purpose of "centering" the congregation and choir are religious works of art in sound.

Ainsworth Church is under the current leadership of Reverend Paul A. Spurlock. Born in Denver, Colorado and raised and educated there, he spent time in the U.S. Navy and also performed several years of Social Service work before deciding to become a minister. He received a Master of Divinity degree from Iliff School of Theology in Denver and completed his interim and field work in churches in Arriba, Flaler, Evergreen, and in two Denver churches.

Formally installed as minister of Ainsworth UCC on Sunday, May 13, 1990, Rev. Spurlock had actually been working in the church from the previous March.

Coming to the ministry later in life has given Rev. Spurlock a greater awareness of social needs and his participation in a wide range of volunteer posts has kept him current on the real problems our society faces. He was a volunteer counselor for the Opportunities and Industrialization Center, a director of the Colorado Advisory Symposium on Child Abuse and Neglect, personnel chairman for a mental health center and a delegate to a Chicago Conference on Racial Justice.

Sally, Rev. Spurlock's wife is a former Social Service worker and is also an active participant in the programs of the church. A graduate of the University of Colorado where daughter Lisa and son Matt both attended. Mrs. Spurlock brings her energy and awareness to community problems and at the same time supports Rev. Spurlock in his work.

Thanks to their understanding of real need and concerns, both are often found speaking out against societal evils.

In particular, Rev. Spurlock's sermons often deal with the present day problems of the community and the church. This is not a church where the minister or the congregation is afraid to speak out.

Even the children of the church are not simply relegated to Sunday School but are encouraged to act as acolytes, sing in a youth choir under the superb direction of Curtis King, hear special stories on Sundays and are occasionally used as liturgists in addition to their inclusion in the social programs.

With a membership of 137 which includes four other ministers, Ainsworth UCC is still reaching out to the community. As Rev. Spurlock says, "Although we draw people from all over the city, we still want to be a neighborhood church."

When asked about his dreams, hopes and expectations for the coming year, Spurlock commented that the church would like to increase membership but, more importantly, continue to reach out to the community in a positive way that affirms our diversity.

Spurlock mentioned that in a recent meeting with other ministers of the area, they told him that their view of Ainsworth church included the desire that the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic basis of the church would act as a "beacon of hope that this is what the community itself can become."

Services start at 11:00 a.m. each Sunday. The church phone number is (503) 284-8767.

Seasons Greeting



Mallory Avenue Christian Church

Disciples of Christ

"Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

9:45am Sunday School
11:00am Morning Worship
7:30pm Tuesday Bible Study and Prayer

Inter-racial Congregation



126 N.E. Alberta + Portland, OR 97211 + (503) 288-5173

St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church

8101 N. Fiske Avenue • Portland, Oregon 97203
Church Phone: 289-0147 Study Phone: 289-1911

Sunday Service 10:45
Sunday School 9:30
Bible Study 6:00
Evening Service 7:00pm



Pastor, Rev. James C.E. Faulkner

Theme: Whatever you're going to do for the Lord, do it now
I Peter 1:11

Creed Of The Black Press

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from racial and national antagonisms when it accords to every person, regardless of race, color or creed, full human and legal rights. Hating no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

Jesus Loves You!

Allen Temple CME Church

Psalms 34:3

4236 NE Eighth Avenue
(corner of 8th & Skidmore)
Portland, Oregon 97211
(503) 287-0261

Phillip S. Nelson Pastor

Dad's Oil Service

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MALLORY AVENUE CHURCH OF CHRIST

ANNOUNCEMENT

Free? What? Clothes and Food Only
When? Tuesday: Clothes • Friday: Food 1:00 to 3:00pm
Where?

Mallory Avenue Church of Christ
3908 NE Mallory Ave. • Portland, OR 97211
for further information contact: Pat at 503-288-1092

Martin Luther King, Jr.

SPECIAL EDITION
COMING JANUARY 13, 1993



Theme

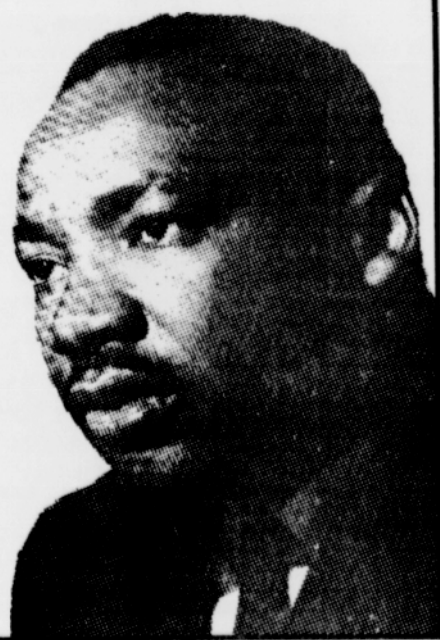
"Thy Kingdom Come"

A Mass In Commemoration Of
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

5:30 p.m.
Saturday
January 9, 1993

Celebrant

Fr. John Cornelius S.J.
Holy Redeemer Parish
25 N. Portland Blvd.
Portland, Oregon



MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH

Has moved Sunday services to
Stone Tower Church
N.E. Sandy Blvd. & 30th

Worship Services 8:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.
Church School 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.
Bible Study, Wednesdays, 116 N.E. Schuyler
10:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Radio Ministry each Sunday, 8:00 a.m. on KBMS

A Teaching Church With A Reaching Ministry
Dr. James E. Martin, Senior Pastor

Church Office 116 N.E. Schuyler St. • (503) 284-1954