



Reflections of Yesterday

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With Easter just around
the corner, we often

think of the glorious music that surrounds this solemn religious time. We have had a large number of talented Choir Directors/Organists through the years. As I was thinking about this month's article, the idea of highlighting the career of Roger Sweet, who spent thirteen years as Minister of Music at First Church, seemed appropriate.

It was the announcement of Al Turco's resignation in 1964 that prompted our church to look for another Choir Director/Organist. The following is taken from the *Battle Creek Enquirer and News*, dated September 12, 1964, "Roger D. Sweet, former organist and director of music at the First Presbyterian Church of Adrian, will be installed as minister of music at Battle Creek's First Presbyterian Church Sunday. He succeeds Alexander J. Turco who left the church here to become minister of music at the First Presbyterian Church of Dearborn. Mr. Sweet was educated in the Rochester and Charlevoix public schools and was graduated from Albion College in 1954. During his student days he was organist and choir director at the First Presbyterian Church in Marshall. The new minister of music has done graduate work at the University of Michigan in the field of music and also did graduate work at McCormick Theological Seminary in the area of Christian Education. While in Adrian he was also director of the church's Christian Education.

During the past five summers Mr. Sweet has attended the summer seminars of the Choristers Guild, a national organization of children's choir directors of which he is a member. Mr. Sweet is married and has four children. Mrs. Sweet attended Grace Hospital School of Nursing and holds the R.N. degree. The children are David, Joan, Daniel, and Judy. The family resides at 158 North Union Street. He will conduct a choir retreat Sunday at Cotton Lake camp for the junior and senior high choirs of the church."

In his early years at First Church, Roger also filled the role of Minister of Visitation as is told in this excerpt from a letter from the Session of the church dated October 5, 1967,

"... The Session has asked me to write you expressing their gratitude for the splendid and considerate work you did while serving as Minister of Visitation. We are grateful for the many kind and thoughtful visits and deeds which you performed in that capacity. Many fine reports have come to us of your good work and the appreciation of those visited. In addition, we would like to thank you for your excellent leadership and stimulating help with the XYZ Club. You have made many fine friends among the elderly of our congregation and they think most highly of you. . . ."

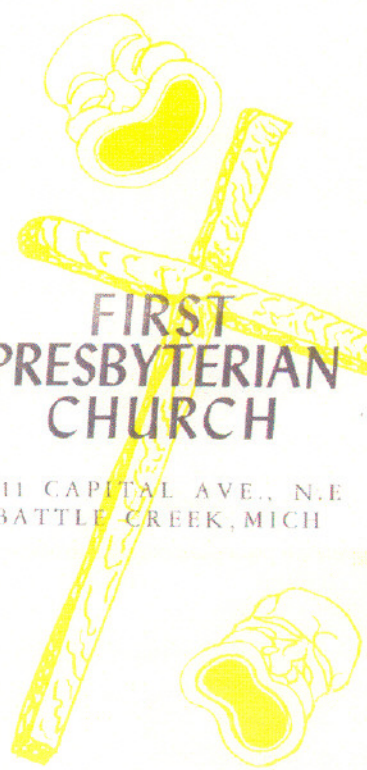
In April of 1974, Roger was honored for his ten years of service at First Church including the initiation of a number of innovative and creative services. The April 27, 1974 issue of the *Battle Creek Enquirer and News* noted the following,

"The Presbyterian Players and the interpretative dance choir are among the groups he has organized. The players, noted for performing contemporary dramas, have presented programs before church and

service groups in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana and at Alma and Albion Colleges and Michigan State University. The interpretative dance group currently is planning programs for dance workshops at Michigan State University. Sweet most recently directed the church youth choirs in the contemporary musicals, "It's Cool in the Furnace" (the story of Daniel) and "100 Per Cent Chance of Rain" (the story of Noah). The highlight of Sweet's career was in 1971 when he directed one of the first performances in the United States of the rock musical hit, "Jesus Christ Superstar."

Sweet received permission from the London team that had written the show to adapt it to the original recordings for the program here. "And it was the first time in the history of First Church that people were turned away from the church doors twice," Dr. Allan J. Weenink said. The two-day run of "Superstar" marked the first time here that a church board debated many hours whether to permit such a type of show to be produced within the sanctuary. It was with sadness that members of First Church said their goodbyes to Roger in the summer of 1977 when he resigned as Minister of Music. He continued to reside in Battle Creek, where he specialized in the teaching of voice at his home and continued as director of the Battle Creek Community Chorus.

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