



Reflections of Yesteryear

Martin L. Ashley, Church Historian

After a long hiatus from writing about our church history, I am glad to be back at the computer keyboard ready to share more of our illustrious past with you. The Presbyterian church is somewhat unique in that when a minister resigns, an interim minister is often selected to bridge the gap until the Pastoral nominating committee chooses a candidate for their new minister. In the Catholic and Methodist denominations, ministers are assigned to churches, with no interim gap involved. We have been served by a number of Interim ministers throughout the years including three interims during my 24 years of working as your Sunday Custodian. Shortly after I

was hired by Dr. Al Weenink, he retired from active ministry and we hired Rev. Dr. John M. VanderMeulen to bridge the gap until Rev. David W. Robertson was selected as our next minister. The following article appeared in the August 7, 1982 edition of the *Battle Creek Enquirer & News*,

The Rev. John M. VanderMeulen, a retired minister and former pastor of First Presbyterian churches at Dearborn, Lansing, and Santa Anna, Calif., has been appointed interim senior minister at First Presbyterian Church. He has accepted the call for six months with renewal options until the congregation calls a replacement for the Rev. Allan J. Weenink, who recently left the post he had held for 24 years to accept a position with the Lake Michigan Presbytery. VanderMeulen, ordained in April 1939, has degrees from Hope College and McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, and a master's degree in philosophy from Missouri Valley College, Marshall, Mo. In addition to the above churches, he also has pastored Presbyterian

churches at Orchard Lake, Sedalia, Mo., and Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

VanderMeulen is a former trustee of Alma College, moderator of the Sedalia and Lansing presbyteries, chairman of the evangelism commission of the Synod of Michigan, and active with the Los Angeles Presbytery from 1957 to 1963.

Prior to accepting interim pastorates in the spring of 1976, VanderMeulen had been senior pastor of John Knox Presbyterian Church, Florissant, Mo., for seven years.

He has served as interim or associate pastors at Presbyterian churches at Port Huron, Danville and Champaign, Ill., and most recently at Eastminster Presbyterian Church, Grand Rapids.

VanderMeulen will begin his interim ministry at the local church Sept. 12, and he and his wife will reside in the church manse at 287 Central St.

I have many fond memories of John and some of you may also. John had a great sense of humor and enjoyed spending time with young people. He was instrumental in getting a young singles

group going during his time at First Church. He and his wife, Corinne were very involved in preparing our congregation for the changes that would take place under a new ministry.

In the June 1983 edition of the Carillon, the following appeared:

Farewell Reception – Sunday, June 12, 1983, in the Parlor, following the second service to show our appreciation and gratitude to John and Corinne VanderMeulen for their service during the past several months.

After leaving Battle Creek, John and Corinne moved to Tyler, Texas where John continued his ministry. I had the privilege of visiting them in Tyler several years later and had a great time while there. I was saddened recently upon finding out that John had passed away on January 31, 2006 at the age of 91 in Tyler. He touched innumerable lives through his long and fruitful ministry.



Corinne and John VanderMeulen at a staff farewell party.
Marcia Lennish is presenting the gift.
(June 1983)