



Reflections of Yesteryear

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Many of you have fond memories of Dr. Allan J. Weenink. He served First Church for almost twenty-five years as Senior Minister and upon his retirement in 1982, was named Pastor Emeritus. He arrived with his family in Battle Creek thirty-nine years ago (1958) this month, beginning a ministry that touched many. The following appeared in the Sunday edition of the *Battle Creek Enquirer & News*, June 8, 1958 and is taken from an article entitled, *Mainly About Folks*, by George B. Dolliver. It gives a glimpse into Rev. Weenink's life prior to his arrival in Battle Creek.

Despite the heavy schedule he has taken over as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Allan J. Weenink will again this summer direct the boys camp at Higgins Lake, maintained by the Detroit Westminster Presbyterian Church as he has for eight seasons past. The boys, who number around 125, have their camp in July and the girls, about the same in number, take over in August. When in Detroit Mr. Weenink served as camp executive for the two bodies. This will probably be his swan song, as he has inherited a full time job in his Battle Creek position.

There is a new factor in the summer program, too. For some time the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches have united for summer services, but this summer each will have its own separate service, at 9:30 a.m. the Presbyterians will still maintain their Sunday school.

Mr. Weenink is really a native of this area, having been born in Kalamazoo. The date was July 6, 1921. His parents were John W. and Josephine (Sivon) Weenink. John, now deceased, ran a grocery and then a clothing store on Westnedge. He was a native of the Netherlands. Mrs. Weenink who still lives in Kalamazoo, was

of French descent. Allan, given John for a middle name, has a brother Philip, who still lives in Kalamazoo and is a state insurance adjuster.

Allan went to school in Kalamazoo and in 1939 was graduated from Central High School. He played end in football, forward on the basketball team. He did not play high school baseball, though he was on the American Legion team. He had to work in the store too. Then Allan entered Western Michigan University and spent two years. His extra activity was oratory. The next move was to Hope College at Holland, where he was president of the Emersonian Fraternity and president of the student council. He won his bachelor of arts degree in 1943. He was on the college debate team but his athletic program was confined to intramural activities, basketball and soft ball principally. He was on the business staff of the Anchor, the college yearbook. In addition to his school work he put in 30 to 40 hours a week at the P. S. Bates & Co. clothing store. He lived in the fraternity house. Allan spent two summers as a grave digger in Riverside Cemetery, Kalamazoo, and two as field

representative of the Michigan Christian Endeavor Union.

Two days after his graduation Weenink married Miss Virginia Ruth Heidanus, of a prominent Kalamazoo Dutch family, at the First Reform Church in that city. His bride was an alumna of Western and had been teaching at Dowagiac.

The young couple set up housekeeping at Holland, where Mr. Weenink entered the Western Theological Seminary. Two years later he moved to the New Brunswick, N. J., seminary, where he was awarded a bachelor of divinity degree in 1946.

In the summer both Allan and Virginia studied for their master's degrees. Mrs. Weenink received hers from the University of Michigan in 1946 and he his at Columbia University in 1948. While still in school, Mr. Weenink preached at the Christ Reformed Church in Newark and in 1949 he reported to the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Detroit, where he spent the next nine years. He accepted a call to the First Presbyterian Church in Battle Creek and came here in February 1958. He preached his first sermon February 16 and was installed as pastor March 2. He has taken over a membership of 1,500 and he has witnessed the formation of the Westlake Presbyterian group, which meets in the community building at 20th Street and Territorial

Road, with the Rev. John Crosby as pastor. The congregation has a site south of Columbia Avenue on 28th Street, where it intends to build. Mr. Weenink acts only in an advisory capacity. The Weeninks live at 199 Fremont Street, in the Presbyterian Manse. They have four children: John Alan (Allan as his father is named), 12; James Bryan, nine; Judith Carol, five, and Jeffrey David, two and one-half. John goes to W. K. Junior High School, in the seventh grade; Lames and Judith to Fremont School.

The Weeninks like their new work here and are gradually becoming acquainted within and beyond their congregation.



Christmas Greetings from the Weeninks 1962.
(From the estate of Betty Becraft—Church Archives.)