



Reflections of Yesteryear

Martin L. Ashley, Church Historian

While doing research recently on the Rev. Robert D. Braby, a “son of First Church,” I realized that several of our minister’s were following in their father’s footsteps in the Presbyterian ministry. Rev. Braby was the son of the Rev. N. Dan Braby, who served our church for sixteen years as pastor. Earlier yet, the Rev. William Horatio Phelps, our minister from 1918-1924, was a second-generation minister. His father, the Rev. Stephen Phelps served a number of churches in the Midwest and was the first President of Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

In more recent years, Dr. Allan J. Weenink’s son, the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey D. Weenink and the Rev. Dr. David W. Robertson both followed in their fathers’ ministerial footsteps.

A newsclipping headlined, “Father to See Son Installed,” from the Crawfordsville, Indiana – Journal and Review, dated September 28, 1949 helps to illustrate this fact. The article states:

Ministers of all the city’s churches and members of their congregations have been extended special invitations to attend the ceremony of installation for Rev. Robert D. Braby, new pastor at Wabash Avenue Presbyterian church, Thursday night at 8 o’clock at the church. Ministers of all of the churches in the Crawfordsville Presbytery also have been given special invitation to witness the ceremony As previously announced, Rev. Charles M. Rauch, of Flora, a Wabash college graduate, will act as moderator. Rev. Allen Kohler, of Frankfort, will deliver the charge to the congregation and Dr. J. Harry Cotton, of Wabash college, will give the charge to the new pastor.

Scripture reading and prayer will be given by Rev. Albert Smith, of Shannondale. Rev. Braby’s father, Rev. N. Dan Braby, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, of Battle Creek, Mich., will deliver the sermon. He will speak on the topic “An Unfinished Message.” During the service, the choir, under the direction of Mrs. Robert H. Tinsley, will sing, “Behold, Now Praise the Lord” by Woodman. Mrs. Robert W. Bruce will be at the organ.

Besides serving the Wabash Avenue Church in Crawfordsville, Indiana for seven years, Rev. Braby also was pastor of Presbyterian churches in Montpelier (1942-1945) and Ashland (1956-1966), Ohio. He was assistant pastor at the Park United Presbyterian Church in Highland Park, Michigan from 1945 to 1949.

Rev. Braby continued his education throughout his ministerial career, attending the College of Wooster, Yale Divinity School, the Christian Theological Seminary, Case-Western Reserve University and Cleveland State

University. While residing in Ashland, Ohio, he served as professor of philosophy at Ashland College.

It was with a tinge of sadness that I read of Rev. Braby's death in the Battle Creek Enquirer last February. He was 88 years old and passed away in Montpelier, Ohio, where he had served his first church. I have been fortunate to be corresponding with one of Rev. Braby's daughters, so we are learning more about both her father, Robert Dan and her grandfather, "Father Dan" Braby, who served First Church for many years.



Rev. Robert Dan Braby -- 1950
(Photo is a gift from Wabash Avenue
Presbyterian Church, Crawfordsville, Indiana.)

New Year Thoughts

The New Year is here and I am ready for it. Our spirits are heightened and on the verge of explosion as I think about the fun times ahead. I am also still extremely excited about being a renewed "Papa." You know, John Patrick can't wait to be a part of the J Club, Mid & Senior High (told me himself). But I explain to him that his mom and I would like to enjoy him a bit more at this stage. So, bring on the wet diapers, late nights warming up bottles! Yes, the New Year is just what we expected.

Aside from it all, I truly hope and pray that each of you is celebrating the New Year with warm feelings of love and confidence that God is with you and yours. Each new year reminds us that time moves on with the last year proving that we can accomplish things that, perhaps, we thought we could not. As you smell that good Michigan air, remember God loves and blesses you each day so that you may be able to enjoy the New Year as a true reflection to the many gifts God provides.

Peace Always,
Rick McKire

In Memoriam

Dr. Alexander J. Turco, former Minister of Music (1958-1964) passed away October 30, 2006 in Dearborn, Michigan. Mr. Turco led a flourishing choir program here at First Church, including three children's choirs. He is survived by his wife, Wilma, and daughters Ellen, Beth and Gwen.