



Reflections of Yesteryear

Martin L. Ashley, Church Historian

Our annual Youth Caravan work trips have been a part of First Church's summer activities for many years, dating all the way back to early 1960's. The Rev. James D. Hill led many of these caravans during his tenure of nearly twenty years with First Church.

The year was 1964, and our Minister of Christian Education, the Rev. Donald A. Wright had just resigned to accept a call from First Presbyterian Church in Niles, Michigan.

The search for a new person ended in the selection of Rev. Hill, who was then serving as the minister of the First

Presbyterian Church in Concord, Michigan, as Assistant Minister.

The following is taken from the April 18, 1964 edition of the *Battle Creek Enquirer & News*:

The Rev. James D. Hill, new minister of education at First Presbyterian Church, has arrived with his family from Concord. Getting settled at their home at 121 Algonquin St., are the young minister, his wife and two preschoolers, Tommy and Danny. The newcomers will be introduced at both the 9:30 and 11 a.m. services on Sunday, April 26, and will be welcomed at a reception from 3 to 5 that afternoon at the church.

The Rev. Mr. Hill, who has been serving as minister of First Presbyterian Church in Concord, was born in Bad Axe. He is a graduate of Alma College, received his B.D. degree from McCormick Theological Seminary, and has had special training work at Cook County Hospital and Foote Hospital, and chaplain clinical training at the University of Michigan. While in Seminary he served as minister of youth at the First Presbyterian Church in

Rockford, Ill.

Mr. Hill is a Chaplain (Lt.) in the USNRTC (Jackson Naval Reserve), was president of the Concord Lions Club and a village councilman. He also has been director of the Southern Michigan Presbytery Junior Day Camp and a counselor at Presbytery Junior High Camps.

His wife, the former Elizabeth Hemenger, is a graduate of Albion College.

Two years later in April of 1966, Rev. Hill was formally installed as Associate Minister/Minister of Christian Education. It was noted in an article from 1974, honoring Rev. Hill upon his tenth anniversary with the church that:

Hill has directed an active youth program at the church. Among the major youth programs have been work caravans during the past ten summers where church youths have volunteered efforts in aiding those less fortunate than themselves.

Trips have included those to Buckhorn, Ky., in the center of Appalachia, two to Indian reservations in South Dakota, one to an area in West Virginia,

several to inner-city areas of St. Louis, Mo., and Washington D.C., last summer's to a reservation area in New Mexico and one to a remote area of Northern Michigan.

Hill also has directed a group of youths who "adopted" a ward at the former Ft. Custer State Home and are planning monthly programs and parties at area half-way houses for the mentally retarded. He also directs a summer junior day camp which reaches between 40 and 75 underprivileged youth.

