

## Riceville Methodist/United Church History

Much of the following information is taken from the Fournier Book of 1992 with a history that was written by Margaret Scott, Pat Wilson, Lorraine Rowe, Mary and Harvey Clemens.

In 1849, the first Methodist church was built at Franklin's Corners, in what is now the Franklin Corner's Cemetery. In 1869, a second church was erected just west of the Village of Riceville – a frame building painted white, this became known as "The Little White Church". With the turn of the century approaching, the expanding membership were in need of a larger church building. The minister, Rev. Calvert, who served from 1898 to 1902, gave leadership to help the congregation build a new, bigger church. This is the present site of this church. The "Little White Church" was sold to Leslie Rowe, presently owned by Ernie Guillemin, and became a barn.

The Rev. Calvert, acting as architect, drew up a unique design for the entrance to the church. It is said that Rev. Calvert had some grand ideas for the new church and he was determined to build it in such a way so as to eliminate some of the problems – everyone liked to sit at the back of the church, others claimed that latecomers were too disruptive. With his new design, where everyone enters facing the congregation. Rev. Calvert felt that the latecomers would be forced to change their tardy ways. Through his efforts the greater part of the funds were collected and although the church cost more than originally estimated, the debt was wiped out in a few years and the mortgage was burned at a Christmas concert.

In 1902, when the new church was built, the charge consisted of Riceville, Casselman and Cambridge Methodist churches. Cambridge withdrew in 1904 and in 1911, Casselman was replaced by George's Lake. The Rev. Eagleson served from 1905 to 1907 and it was at this time that the gas lighting was removed and the horse sheds were built. During the time when Rev. J.W.P. MacFarlane was minister, 1908 to 1911, the Fournier Methodist Church was added to the charge. The Rev. Hunter Hills served from 1911 to 1916. His wife organized the first Ladies' Aid in 1913. Charter members Mrs. Pearl Scott (Margaret Scott's mother-in-law and Catherine Clemens' grandmother) and Mrs Alice Gibb Scott were later honoured on the groups Sixtieth Anniversary in July of 1973. Mrs. Eliza Wert was

also honoured for her fifty-four years with the Ladies' Aid (part of which was with Fournier). In 1911, an organ was purchased for the church at a cost of \$100.00.

During the term of Rev. H. Beach from 1924 to 1927, a Delco system was installed to produce electricity for the lights. Rev. Beach was a talented musician and organizer and had many activities for the young people of the area including a musical group.

In 1925, also during the term of Rev. Beach, this was a pivotal year for the church building. The Methodist Church joined the Union of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches to form the United Church of Canada and this church now became the Riceville United Church.

Over the next number of years, the church was served by ministers and by lay supply. Of note was Rev. Gordon Fresque from 1933 to 1938 and Rev. R. McCord from 1938 to 1944. From 1946 to 1951, the Rev. Oliver Davidson came to Riceville from Labrador with his wife and three children. In 1946 the Fournier church closed. Also, in 1946 Pendleton United Church joined the charge which still included George's Lake. The George's Lake Church closed in 1967. Rev. Charles and Leisha Judd arrived in 1951. Mr. Judd came as a student and continued with his studies earning his degree at a later date. They had four daughters, one of which was Marie who married Orville Wilkes. They lived and farmed in the area and had their family of two daughters, Wendy and Aileen and son Ken who continues on the family farm. The Judd's were instrumental in remodelling the basement into a more comfortable place for wedding banquets and meetings. Mr. Alex Fraser and his wife Ella followed in 1954 and stayed until 1967. Mr. Fraser was a retired R.C.M.P. Officer and had a great interest in the church. During his time the interior and exterior were refurbished and a new electronic organ bought and dedicated in memory of Dr. & Mrs. H. MacIntosh. A new visitors' book was dedicated to Mrs. John Clemens and a new pulpit light to Mr. & Mrs. Edmund Reid.

In 1958, the horse sheds were removed from behind the church making more room for parking, the horse and buggy days being long gone. Gowns for the choir were purchased in 1959. When Mr. Fraser left in 1967, Mr. Gerald McFarlane and his wife Marion came to serve the charge, he too, was working on his Degree. During their stay, an oil furnace was installed. In 1968, Pendleton United Church Women joined with the Riceville Women to cater the meals at the Riceville Fair.

A first for the church was a meeting of Seaway Valley Presbytery in 1969. This was repeated by the Riceville-Pendleton Pastoral Charge in 2008. Lawrence Pushee arrived in 1970 and was very active with the youth organizing a Young People's group. The Rev. Robert Trotter and his wife Trudy, were here from 1974 to 1976 arriving from Saskatchewan and during their stay became the proud parents of a baby girl. In 1976 Rev. Arnold MacDonald, who also operated a family farm near Summerstown, served in the summer months and was followed by the Rev. John Guy who was a weekend replacement minister. Douglas Troop served from the summer of 1977 until the following summer, he was a student at McGill. Rev. Mel Newman was weekend supply in 1978. In these years most of the ministers were students or weekend supply, (part time), which helped keep expenses down. Rev. Elizabeth Pramsma served from 1979 to 1982. Rev. Frank Bailey from Maxville was the supervising minister and services alternated between Rev. Pramsma and a retired Baptist minister, Rev. Henry De Vries, who lived in our area. From 1984 until 1989 Rev. De Vries was our minister and his wife Gladys shared her musical talents.

In 1985, the Bradley Brothers installed a new roof on the church and a new electric organ was purchased. In 1989 Patricia Henry became our minister with her husband Don and their 3 children. They lived in Iroquois and she was working on her degree as she preached.

In 1991 Rev. Gail Christy, living in Ottawa, became the minister working part time. Rev. Gail traveled with her personal chauffeur, husband Bob, who drove her everywhere and he became actively involved in the church. Rev. Christy represented the Riceville-Pendleton Pastoral Charge as Chair of Seaway Valley Presbytery from September 2008 to June 2009. Rev. Christy officially retired on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

In the later years, regular Sunday services were not held in the winter, services alternated by month, Riceville holding services in May, June, August and October.

There have been many improvements to the church building over the years that could only be possible with the volunteer labour we received from not only our community but also from some members of the Pendleton church.

Here are some of note:

In 1998 the trees were removed from the East side of the church, as it was discovered that water was seeping in the wall. A drain along the East wall was put in and over half of the basement floor was replaced. The architect behind this project was Lowell Blaney. His assistants were Harvey Clemens, Malcolm Jones and myself/John Clemens with visits from Bob Cleary. New stairs were installed and a bathroom. To mark the event a time capsule was placed, this too is shown in a picture. Also, that year a walkathon helped raise money for a new sound system. Frank Baker made a donation to cover the rest of the cost. In 2000 Lowell Blaney was instrumental in helping repair the front steps where the concrete was disintegrating. In 2011, Arden Clemens replaced the side entrance to the church basement and built the flower beds on the East side.

Many other upgrades have been made, oil furnace replaced with propane, eaves troughs were installed, front doors replaced, church interior repainted, and a sign for the front of the church, are only a few.

Fundraising has been the lifeline to raise needed funds for the church but also brings a church and the community together. A fall turkey supper was first started in 1990 and combined the efforts of both the Riceville and Pendleton churches. The numbers served grew to a high of 433. With the aging members and lack of help, the suppers were stopped in 2016.

Riceville Church held a Strawberry Supper, this had continued for many years. They were first held in the church basement with entertainment outside. Sharon Blaney and Catherine Clemens provided their musical talents on a flatbed provided by Guy Shane and later on a wagon. The location moved to the South Plantagenet Hall now the Fournier Community Centre where there were better facilities and washrooms. This fundraiser came to an end in 2016.

In 2010, as it happened, there were 4 other charges in the same situation without a minister. A committee, known as the "Dream Team", was struck consisting of Cassburn, Vankleek Hill, Hawkesbury, Kirk Hill and Riceville-Pendleton and was facilitated by the late Rev. Garth Mundle. Their task was to outline a framework for the 5 congregations to work together. From this, a committee of 2 reps from each congregation started working on details of how this would work and the Genesis Cooperative was born. On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, Rev. Phyllis Dietrich officially

became the minister for the 5 congregations, with an office in VKH and a secretary. The Cooperative was now full steam ahead.

In the spring of 2017, the Riceville Board and congregation members made the hard decision to suspend services after the Christmas Eve Service on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The building was put up for sale and here we are today at the closing service. On October 31<sup>st</sup>, Mr. Sylvain Tetreault of Casselman takes ownership of the building and property. Our understanding is that he is converting the building into a residence and plans to live here. Work will start immediately to install a well and septic system before winter.

In closing, this is only a historical account of the building and the many faces who have lead services at the church. The members, the volunteers, the community, are what makes a church survive. As a memorial to the church building, a memorial stone will be placed at the Franklin Corner's Cemetery. A Veteran's Memorial Tree has already been placed at the Cemetery which holds the Honour Roll that hung on the church wall and a memorial stone will be placed at the foot of the tree. Our plan is to dedicate the Memorial Tree and the stone at the Cemetery service next spring.

117 years of history will come to a close this week as a church building. Through revitalization it will live on as a home and will make new memories.

Presented by John Clemens  
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