

Centennial Milestones

Covenant's Historical Timeline

Published in June 2023 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of our building (dedicated as Spencer-Ripley Methodist Episcopal Church on June 24, 1923)



The church in 1923 (left) and 2023 (right)



Covenant United
Methodist Church

Creating a spiritual home for as many people as we can

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF COVENANT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1884 – Sunday School formed at Central Park and Niagara St. in Rochester

1886 – On September 12, Central Park Mission started at Central Park and Fourth Street, where a chapel was built; the first pastor was appointed.

1887 – On November 16, the church was organized as the Central Park Methodist Episcopal Church.

1889 – The chapel was physically moved to North Goodman Street. On December 11, the church was renamed the Spencer-Ripley Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, in honor of Mrs. Lucina Spencer-Ripley who contributed \$4,000 for a new building.

1890 – On Dec. 2, the new Spencer-Ripley Church was dedicated at 654 North Goodman St., corner of Emma St. (later renamed Ripley St.). The chapel was retained and used for Sunday School. [Photo from 1920]

1895 – The chapel was enlarged and connected to the main building.

1912 – On October 8, North Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church (founded in 1850 and located on North Ave., later renamed North St.) merged with Spencer-Ripley Church.

1915 – Because of overcrowded conditions, the trustees started the search for another location to build a larger structure.

1916 – Spencer-Ripley bought land on Culver Road at Parsells Avenue (which, at that time, was just over the city line, in Brighton).

1917 – World War I halted building plans; the trustees decided to renovate the existing structure in the interim.

1921 – Feb. 25: Church on North Goodman St. was gutted by fire; services thereafter held at School #11 on Webster Avenue. [Newspaper article from the *Rochester Times-Union*, Friday February 25, 1921.]



ROCHESTER TIMES-UNION: FRIDAY, FEB.

Fire Damages Spencer-Ripley Church; Flames Start From Overheated Furnace

BLIND MAN GIVES FIRST ALARM OF FIRE

Father of Sexton Smells Smoke and Calls "Fire!"— Auditorium and S. S. Building Damaged— Organ and Pianos Ruined.

Spencer-Ripley Methodist Church, North Goodman and Ripley street, was badly damaged by fire which started in the basement this morning. Early this morning, Andrew Essex, of 42 Ripley street, sexton of the church, started fires in the furnaces to get the auditorium of the church and Sunday-school warm for the Sunday services and for a motion picture entertainment which was to have been given in the church parlors this evening.

There are two furnaces in the basement, and it is believed that the one on the west side of the cellar became overheated and ignited timbers in the floor under the main auditorium. The flames spread rapidly, and passing through the basement of the brick edifice, reached the frame structure on the east and facing Ripley street, used as a Sunday-school room.

According to report, the father of Mr. Essex, Warren Essex, aged 59, and blind, was on Ripley street near the church shortly after 8 o'clock, and smelled smoke. He called "Fire" loudly, attracting the attention of Ernest Dobok, a lad living at 21 Fair place, who, at 8:30, turned in an alarm from Box 434, at Webster avenue and Ripley street. Battalion Chief Lynch and companies responded, and at 8:44 Chief Lynch sent in three two, calling Chief Little, Commissioner of Public Safety Hamilton and a number of additional companies.

Lines of hose were quickly laid and three engines were utilized to pump water into the structure from five lines of hose. Dense smoke hampered the work of firemen, it entering from the building in huge black clouds, preventing streams from entering.

The residence of E. R. Jones at 30 Ripley street in location close to the church and firemen kept careful watch that it did not catch on fire.

The floor of the brick edifice was badly damaged and damage from flames and smoke was done in the Sunday-school building. A piano standing at the Goodman street side of the main building fell to the basement when the floor burned away. Three other pianos were damaged by flames and water. The pipe organ also was badly damaged, the pipes hanging suspended to the walls and supporting arch after the floor and lower part had been burned away.

Chief Little estimates the damage at \$6,000, but officials of the church society were unable to make an estimate.

Founded by John Stoddy, Spencer-Ripley Church was founded by the Rev. John H. Stoddy. It was first known as Central Park Methodist Episcopal Church and was located on Fourth street. Mr. Stoddy built up the congregation and in 1889 it was decided to move to the then rapidly growing section on North Goodman street. In the fall of 1892 the Rev.

Above, Spencer-Ripley Church at corner of North Goodman and Ripley streets—below, frame structure east of brick structure, facing Ripley Street, where most of damage occurred.

1922 – On May 21, the cornerstone was laid for the new building. Worship continued to be held at School #11 until August, when services were conducted in a tent on Parsells Avenue [shown below in a photo from August 1922] on land now occupied by an apartment building adjacent to the Golden Fox parking lot. Then worship was held in the fellowship hall (basement) of the present building starting in mid-September as the sanctuary wasn't ready yet. In August, the Goodman St. building was sold to the Full Gospel Church of God (later renamed Bethel Full Gospel, which relocated in 1953 to East Ave.)



1923 – On June 24, the new church building was dedicated. [Newspaper article below is from the *Rochester Times-Union*, Friday June 22 1923; photo of chancel featuring then-pastor Rev. Dr. Milton Butler Pratt and choir is from 1923 or 1924]

ROCHESTER TIMES-UNION FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 1923

Dedication Services To Be Conducted Sunday For Spencer-Ripley Church In Culver Road

Above, left, front view of new Spencer-Ripley Church in Culver road; right, above, interior of church; lower, beautiful entrance hall as one enters from Culver road.

Appropriate exercises will mark the conclusion of the dedication program of the Spencer-Ripley M. E. Church on Sunday. Bishop William Burt will deliver the sermon at the morning service and the formal dedication will be by the Rev. Frederick H. Conner, John J. Skuse, president of the board of trustees, will present the church on behalf of that body.

During the evening services, the organ-vaganza, together with songs presented by the

Frederick G. Reynolds and the Rev. minister, in recognition of unflinching William H. Stauffer will speak, 300-courtesy from the church. The star next altar will give a course solo-table, of solid oak, carrying the his- "The Lost Chord." Prayer and bene- toric inscription "In Remembrance of dition will be offered by the Rev. Min- in the gift of the members of H. Curtis Wheeler.

First a chapel of modest character in Central park, then a commodious and attractive church in North Goodman street, where the society grew in numbers and influence, and now a large and modern edifice in Culver road, surrounded by beautiful homes and loved by an enlarging group of families whose ideals are fine and devout-this is the history of Spencer-Ripley Church.

Several memorials enrich the au- steriority. The pulpit furniture was de- signed by W. A. Campbell, as a cour- tesy to the church. The pulpit, of solid oak carrying the simplicity of elegant Gothic lines and equipped with a lectern, together with the baptismal font bearing the names of Mar- garet and Mrs. George W. Worth, presented by their children; will be consecrated.



1925 – On December 13, the pipe organ was dedi- cated. [Photo from the cover of the organ dedica- tion bulletin]



1928 – Parsonage purchased. It had been built in 1920, but the church didn't own it originally.

1937 – Celebration of the fiftieth (Jubilee) year of Spencer-Ripley's founding took place October 27 through December 5. [Newspaper article from the *Rochester Evening Journal*, May 29, 1937]

IN GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR

Church on East Side Marks 50th Anniversary This Fall

Once forced to hold its services in a tent after fire damaged the church structure, Spencer Ripley Methodist Episcopal congregation, now at Parsells Avenue and Culver Road, this year celebrates its golden jubilee.

It was early in 1886 that the additional Episcopal Alliance at Rochester through its president, Lemuel T. Foote, authorized purchase of property at Central Park and Fourth Street to build a chapel to serve the people in that section of the city. The Sunday school had its first service, December 23 of that year, with George F. Nichols as re- sponsible.

Some years that first meeting a conference of the congregation voted to ask John B. Stoney to be its minister. Almost a year later the congregation met to organize and incorporate. Its trustees were Mr. Book, Mr. Mortimer, Mr. Loring, Mr. Jones, Mr. Smith, who is still living, Charles Street and W. J. Colburn. The first quarterly conference was held December 11, 1887.

The Rev. J. Harrison Olmstead was named minister in 1894 and continued to lead the congregation until his death in 1920 he was succeeded by the Rev. Milton B. Pratt, who took up his work only to see an almost disastrous blow strike February 28, 1921, when fire damaged the North Goodman Street structure.

For a few meetings services were held in the undamaged basement of the church. Then permission to use the hall in school was given by the Rev. W. J. Colburn. Finally the services were held in a hall on the site of the Parsells Avenue car loop.

The Rev. Mr. Pratt, with the assistance of a building committee headed by Alling S. De Purcell, gave the congregation a new structure. On June 17, 1928, the new church at Parsells Avenue on Culver Road was dedicated.

A full week was allotted to doctrinal services. The Rev. Mr. Stoney, together with the present minister, the Rev. Robert Brown, took up the duties in 1931. Today the congregation numbers 800, with 100 children enrolled in the Sunday school. The golden jubilee will be celebrated during November.

Spencer Ripley Methodist Episcopal Church

1943 (Dec. 26) - 1949 (March 13) – Memorial stained-glass windows installed in the sanctuary; total cost \$7,503. [The Resurrection Window is shown below]



1953 – On Nov. 22, the remodeled chancel was dedicated, including a new altar (white with carved Alpha and Omega symbols). [Photo from 1959]



1959 – On April 26, the new chapel and Sunday School facilities were dedicated (including classrooms created in a previously unexcavated portion of the basement). [Photo of the chapel taken in 1959 by Jim Robbins of Graflex]



1962 – New church offices were constructed under east balcony. Also, celebration of the 75th year of the church's founding took place October 21-28.

1968 – Two denominations, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, merged to form The United Methodist Church.

1969 – On May 8, Spencer-Ripley Methodist Church merged with Calvary Evangelical United Brethren Church to form Covenant United Methodist Church. (Calvary E.U.B. was founded in 1896; a chapel on Ontario St. was built in 1898; congregation relocated to a new building on Culver Rd. at Melville St. in 1914.) With two buildings located within a block of each other, the merged congregation rented the Calvary Church building to NEAD (North East Area Development). [Photos of the Calvary Church below are, respectively, from April 1919 and October 1961]



1971 – Covenant facilities used by the Kiddie Town Day Care Center; it closed in 1974.

1973 – Covenant joined with six other area churches to form NECC (North East Church Cluster).

1974 – The Calvary Church building was sold to NEAD. [Later, NEAD also sold it; the First Rochester Spanish Church was located there for many years. In 2010, it became Iglesia De Dios El Alfarero Divino (Church of God the Divine Potter), an Assembly of God congregation.]

1976 – On June 9, Monroe Avenue Methodist Church merged with Covenant U.M.C., and the Monroe Foundation was established. [Alexander St. M.E. Church was founded in 1852, a building was dedicated in 1854; the congregation moved to the corner of Monroe and Averill avenues in 1893 and the name was changed to Monroe Avenue M.E. Church. The church existed there until May 18, 1973, when it was destroyed by fire. Photos below show the Monroe Avenue Church in 1966, followed by how it looked after the 1973 fire.]



1977 – House and lot on Parsells Avenue purchased, house demolished and parking lot extended to include this property.

1978 – Pew cushions placed in all the pews except the ones in the balconies.

1982 – Enclosure at back entrance built (this was replaced by the current entrance in 2019).

1985 – Ceiling fans installed in the sanctuary.

1986 – Wooden cross over the altar in the sanctuary dedicated in memory of Ward & Mary Turner.



1987 – Ceiling fans installed in the chapel as a memorial by the Gordon family.

1988 – Ceiling fans installed in the parlor as a memory to Ruth Fooks.

1989 – New hymnals purchased by donations from members and money from the Memorial Fund. That edition of the *United Methodist Hymnal* was innovative for its time, and it's still in use.

1990 – Wooden cross installed in the chapel in memory of the Huser family.

1993 – The sanctuary floor was refinished and carpet was replaced in the sanctuary, chancel and narthex. The fellowship Hall floor was replaced; it had been damaged in a heavy rainstorm in 1992.

1994 – On November 18, "Catacombs Coffeehouse" opened in the basement and was in operation for several years. Also that year, the flat roof over the classrooms was stripped of asbestos and rebuilt; all other roofs except over the sanctuary were re-done.

1995 – Men’s and Ladies’ bathrooms on main floor were renovated with drop ceilings and an automatic vent system. (These old bathrooms were replaced during the UpLift renovation.) The church offices were renovated; a central air and heating unit was installed. And the sanctuary was painted.

In September 1995, Covenant launched “The Cave” youth ministry (a weekly program for teens in the basement featuring a pool table and foosball). By 1998, Parsells Avenue Community Church became a partner in this ministry. [Photo below is from 1999; the adults standing in the rear are Andy and Dawn Taylor (of Covenant) and Rev. Bob Morgan (of Parsells).]



1996 – The Men’s and Ladies’ restrooms in the basement were completely renovated, including installation of a shower in the men’s room.

1997 – Covenant purchased property at 1199 Culver Road for a Teen Mothers daycare; the building was then renovated and equipped. [The daycare transitioned to Franklin High School in 2001-2002, under private ownership. In 2010, the property was sold to Second Life Bikes, but was foreclosed and sold at public auction in 2016. The building was later razed and is now a community garden run by St. Mark’s and St. John’s Episcopal Church.]

2012 – On September 30, Covenant, at its Church Conference, adopted an inclusive “Welcome Statement” and approved Covenant’s “Safe Sanctuaries” Policy to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Welcome Statement

Reflecting the universal and inclusive love of Jesus Christ, Covenant United Methodist Church is called to create a spiritual home for as many people as we can.

Covenant ministers with our local and global neighbors, with special sensitivity to people who have been marginalized by society or by the Church.

We welcome all whom God brings into this faith community regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, family system, socioeconomic status, or physical or mental ability.

Covenant values the diverse gifts of all people reflective of God’s universal gift of grace.

2013 – On October 6, Covenant, at its Church Conference, adopted a resolution designating Covenant United Methodist Church as an affiliate member of the Reconciling Ministries Network.

2015 – On July 26, Covenant approved a project to stabilize and restore the brick exterior of the church building.

2016 – A water pipe burst and flooded The Historic Parsells Church on February 17; that congregation began holding worship services at Covenant on February 21. On September 11, “Praise and Play” was launched, featuring worship and Bible stories for families. In October, the “Blessing Box” was installed on the front lawn of the church. And in December, the New York Kachin Baptist Church began renting the chapel for their worship services.

2018 – Covenant began the “UpLift” accessibility project to install an elevator, build a new entryway and create accessible restrooms.

2019 – Covenant held the “UpLift” celebration on April 14, dedicating the improvements which made the building fully accessible. [Below are photos showing the new addition and the April 14th service.] On May 1, Dharma Refuge, a Buddhist sangha, began renting space on the second floor.



1124 CULVER ROAD BUILDING EXTERIOR THROUGH THE YEARS



Photo by the architects, featured in *Monograph of the Work of Gordon and Kaelber*, published in 1923 (the book also featured the Eastman School of Music, completed in 1922)



Photo taken in 1957 for the capital campaign brochure raising funds for classroom renovations (the bus loop for the Parsells city bus route is in the foreground; it's now a parking lot)

2020 – On March 18, the first weekday “time of prayer and meditation” was held online as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic; this was the beginning of what would be called “Reflections on the Roc.” The pandemic prevented public gatherings. On March 22, the first online-only worship service was held; in-person worship did not resume until February 21, 2021.

2021 – On May 10, the “Covenant Table” meal ministry began.

2023 – On June 25, Covenant held a celebration marking the building's centennial.



Photo taken on May 18, 2023

**PASTORS OF ALEXANDER STREET/
MONROE AVENUE METHODIST CHURCH**

**PASTORS OF NORTH STREET METHODIST
CHURCH**

<u>Years of Pastorate</u>	<u>Name</u>
<i>[Before church was established]</i>	
1842-1845	Nathan N. Beers
1845-1852	(Supply Pastors)
<i>[Once church was incorporated]</i>	
1852-1855	Alpha Wright
1855	Thomas Stacey
1856-1857	Elijah Wood
1858-1859	John G. Gulick
1860-1861	Israel Herrick Kellogg
1862-1864	John Raines
1865-1866	Edward J. Hermans
1867	Henry Van Benschoten
1868	Andrew Sutherland
1869-1870	DeWitt C. Huntington
1871	James Dixon Regua
1872-1874	John A. Copeland
1875-1876	Thomas J. Leake
1877	Albert N. Damon
1878-1880	John Edward Williams
1881-1883	Lemuel Thomas Foote
1884-1885	John Talbot Gracey
1886-1888	Albert N. Fisher
1889-1890	Sion Abisha Morse
1891-1892	Thomas Cardus
1893-1898	Ward Dulos Platt
1898-1903	Frederick D. Leete
1903-1908	Josephus Leander Sooy
1908-1912	Conrad Hooker
1912-1915	John E. Martin
1915-1918	Albert R. Lambert
1918-1920	Samuel W. Robinson
1920-1929	Samuel J. Clarkson
1929-1931	Wilber W. McKee
1931-1933	Herman H. Downey
1933-1934	Robert T. Doherty
1934-1938	Robert Kazmayer
1938-1941	Thomas M. Steen
1941-1944	Kenmore Wesley Haight
1945-1948	Chester C. Beebe
1949-1953	Guy M. Ovenshire
1954-1963	Glenn Ernest Bucher
1963-1970	W. George Thornton
1970-1973	Willard J. Barber
1973-1976	Paul E. Sherman
1976	John D. Rein

[Church merged with Covenant in 1976]

<u>Years of Pastorate</u>	<u>Name</u>
<i>[Before church was established]</i>	
1849, April 1	John E. Robie
1849, April 8	Daniel D. Buck
1849	Sevallon W. Alden
<i>[Once church was incorporated]</i>	
1850	Sylvester Laurentus Congdon
1851	(Supply Pastors, incl. Sanford Van Benschoten)
1852-1853	Alpha Wright
1854-1855	John Mandeville
1856-1857	John N. Brown
1858-1859	Nathan Fellows
1860	Samuel Lucky
1861	Martin Wheeler
1862-1863	Israel Herrick Kellogg
1864-1865	Alonzo H. Shurtleff
1865-1868	Daniel Leisenring
1869-1871	John N. Brown
1872-1874	Reuben D. Munger
1875-1877	E. Lansing Newman
1878-1880	Lemuel Thomas Foote
1880-1881	E. T. Green
1883-1885	Richard F. Kay
1886-1890	George Stratton
1891-1895	George Wesley Peck
1896-1897	Frederick Shrewsbury Parkhurst
1898-1904	George Mortimer Harris
1905-1907	Ray Allen
1908-1910	Burnside Steen
1911-1912	Harvey R. Williamson

[Church merged with Spencer-Ripley in 1912]

**PASTORS OF SPENCER-RIPLEY
METHODIST CHURCH**

<u>Years of Pastorate</u>	<u>Name</u>
1886-1889	John H. Stoody
1889-1890	Arthur O. Sykes
1890-1893	Lemuel Thomas Foote
1893-1895	Thomas J. Bissell
1895-1898	John H. Stoody
1898-1902	Phineas T. Lynn
1902-1906	John M. Walters
1906-1908	Burton M. Clark
1908-1913	Herman H. Downey
1913-1915	Frederick M. Williams
1915-1918	John T. Cameron
1918-1921	J. Harrison Olmstead
1921-1924	Milton Butler Pratt
1924-1928	James F. Bisgrove
1928-1932	Spencer Bacon Owens
1932-1938	Robert E. Brown
1938-1941	Henry G. Budd
1941-1948	Charles Bollinger
1949-1961	Lincoln G. Archer
1961-1966	Allen G. Skiff
1966-1969	Richard G. Harrington

[List continues under Covenant United Methodist Church]

**PASTORS OF COVENANT UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH**

<u>Years of Pastorate</u>	<u>Name</u>
1969-1972	Edward T. Read
1972-1979	Everett B. Fitts
1979-1990	William D. Reeder (1986-1994: Dorothy A. Petrie, Associate Pastor)
1990-1997	Lawrence E. Lundgren (1995-98: Denise Cooper, Licensed Local Pastor)
1997-1998	Justo Gonzalez-Hernandez II
1998-2003	Natalie Hanson & J. Paul Womack (co-pastors)
2003-2011	Paul Gongloff (2006-2011: Ann Kemper, Associate Pastor)
2011-	Ann Kemper (2015-2017: Nancy Raca, Associate Pastor)

**PASTORS OF CALVARY UNITED BRETHREN
CHURCH**

<u>Years of Pastorate</u>	<u>Name</u>
1898-1902	W. H. Stauffer
1902-1905	George Degen
1905-1908	Newton S. Methfessel
1908-1910	John Preis
1910-1913	W. J. Merle
1913-1916	A. A. Holzwarth
1916-1920	P. C. Braunschweig
1920-1924	W. H. Stauffer
1924-1928	E. E. Rife
1928-1930	Frank A. Palmer
1930-1934	Alvin S. Haag
1934-1944	John D. Rein
1944-1950	F. B. Sovereign
1950	R. W. Stenquest
1950-1969	Lester M. Driftmyer

[List continues under Covenant United Methodist Church]



Covenant United Methodist Church
1124 Culver Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14609-5451

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Ann Kemper

Music Director: Dr. Kevin Lieb

Ministry Coordinator: Bob Kern

Lay Leader: Valerie Clark

Church Council Chair: Mark Soule

President of Trustees: John Nagel

Finance Chair: Paul Raca

Treasurer: Tracy Jackson-Adams

Staff/Parish Chair: Christine Doran



The sanctuary [photo taken May 18, 2023]

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