

Lowe Avenue Presbyterian Church, 1887 - 2009

When the visible sign of water and its capacity to cleanse is administered, in the name of the Triune God on an infant or an adult at the Church in Carson, Iowa, something of the living past will have been bequeathed to the person receiving the sacrament and to the people assembled there, because the baptismal fount came from the sanctuary of Lowe Avenue which served as a Presbyterian presence in the Walnut Hill neighborhood of Omaha, Nebraska, for the past one hundred and twenty-two years. Similarly, when the members and friends of the Carter Lake Community Church follow the lectionary readings from the pews, some of the Bibles from which they are inspired will also be from Lowe Avenue. In like fashion, certain editions of *The Presbyterian Hymnal* used at First Church, Bellevue, Nebraska, and the hymn board now in use at the Fort Calhoun Church, came from the congregation situated at 1023 North 40th Street. When the Cook brothers, David and Will, play the piano during corporate worship at Hope Church in southwest Omaha, they will be coaxing keys of an instrument from Lowe Avenue.

As important as these non-living resources are, they are eclipsed by persons from the Lowe Avenue Presbyterian Church who have gone out from that place to serve a wider world. Here are but a few examples. There was Dr. J. W. McKean who brought medical and organizational skills to bear in Thailand against leprosy and disorder; Charles H. Fleming, the son of charter members Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Fleming, became an ordained pastor of the Word and Sacrament; the story was similar for William A. Denny, William Dean Osick, Richard Sleyster, and yours truly. Elders Mary Claassen, Vonice Darling and Ray Kellogg were all moderators of the Presbytery. Closer to home were Jean Landale, Steve and Margaret Mago, Carl and Ruth Mayer, George and Lilly Nelsen, Elam and Annie Rupe, and Emerson and Edna Westgate: for these are examples of individuals through whom the Holy Spirit worked mightily in making an impact for Christ in the lives of others.

Lowe Avenue was a congregation that opened its doors to those outside itself. During the administration of Robert W. Jeambey, and for a number of years after his tenure, Project Embrace was a cooperative ministry carried on by a number of churches in the Omaha area "designed to respond to the cultural, educational, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of children and their families." Walnut Hill Presbyterians played a key role in this effort that engendered enthusiasm, purpose, and a hands-on attempt to broaden the horizon of newcomers to the community. Parallel to this innovation were intentional endeavors to provide a Food Pantry and Clothes Closet for those in need. Hospitality was accorded to Presbyterian Outreach's School of the Arts, the River City Chorus, the Wood Carvers, and certain chapters of the Alcoholics Anonymous.

There are many components to the history of God's people. The message is handed over by those who precede us in time and location. We, in turn, convey what God has done for us in Christ to others. The stations along the way, such as Lowe Avenue Presbyterian Church, are important – but they are not the message. It is as the Apostle Paul has written, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Our task is to live and share the gospel in our time and place. This is what the members of Lowe Avenue Presbyterian Church have done and as a result others are given the responsibility of doing the same.

Charles L. Bulger