It Was A Community Affair

By CLEO SYMONS
Special Writer

The Community Congregational Church, only church in Lapahup Village, was established as a community project in February, 1947. However, the ground work was started several years before the church came into being.

At the May, 1944, meeting of the Comity Department of the Detroit Council of Churches, the Rev. A. M. Meikle, superintendent of the Congregational Association of Detroit, asked for the privilege of surveying Lapahup Township as it was known then.

The request was granted, and the survey completed during the summer of 1944.

In October of that year, the Comity Department agreed to assign Lapahup to the Congregational Association for the development of religious work. A board of trustees of the Congregational Association of Detroit voted to assume responsibility.

PERMISSION was obtained to use the Auster Lapahup School, located on Southfield Road in the heart of the village, as a temporary Sunday school chapel.

The Congregational Association then proceeded to procure the land designated "High Potential" by the denomination's Board of Homes in New York, thus ensuring a long-range plan for the growth and development of the church and the community.

During the following two years, the Rev. Meikle laid and interest among Lapahup residents. But his efforts failed to bring about a general meeting at that time.

Meantime, in May, 1945, the land was spent before the association was able to produce a building site. In June, 1945, a plot 145 feet by 200 feet was purchased just south of the Lapahup School.

ENLISTING the aid of Rev. Deacon John Rose, Rev. Meikle finally arranged a meeting which took place at the school in November, 1945. A handful of 12 attended, and a sum of $405 was subscribed. Other meetings followed, officers were elected and the first worship service was held October 3, 1945.

Later 40 charter members were received and the Church Covenant was read. Considerable effort was required to transform the school auditorium into a sanctuary. But sailors such as Charles Fey and Thomas H. Myers went early Sunday morning and worked miracles before the congregation arrived.

A platform was devised by hauling together two sections of the stage, and a pulpit, similarly put together, was bolted to the platform. Chairs were set up, blackboards and windows covered with drapes and a carpet was laid down. After the service, all church paraphernalia had to be removed and the auditorium cleaned for school activities.

RAISING FUNDS for a proper church building of their own became everyone's responsibility. The ladies of the congregation labored as only dedicated church women can, pouring out on supper, strawberry festivals and bazaars to bring in money. But it was not enough.

Letters were sent out announcing a special fund-raising program. The response was from the Rev. Dr. D. W. White, minister of the Central Congregational Church of Detroit and past president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, inspired several hundred lumbermen to "stretch their giving muscles" to the utmost.

The goal was finally reached, and on Sunday, Oct. 9, 1945, the cornerstone of the present building was laid. The red brick structure with a white cupola, harmonizing with the present mansion at the town site, was erected at a cost of $40,000.

THE FIRST service was held on May 6, 1946, although the building was not yet fully completed. It was formalized Oct. 22, 1946.

In 1964, another step forward was made. The present sanctuary became a reality, and the rest of the block of land was secured for future needs.

The church plant—building and surroundings—now an entire block, surrounded by Southfield, Coldwater, Monterey and E. California avenues—was completed.

Two additions have been made since 1954. The first, in 1957, provided administrative offices and a new rooms for children. The second, in 1961, completed classrooms for all grades through high school, plus a church office. Plans are already made for further additions and facilities.

UNDER THE leadership of Rev. John A. Rose, organizing minister who served 16 years, the church grew from the original 14 charter members to the present 400. A total of 400 members have been added to the congregation.

The present minister, Rev. Philip Gentilis, is assisted by a staff of 15 people who give full or part-time service to the church. They include Mary C. F., music director of music; Philip J. Loskey, secretary; Margaret Swanberg, financial secretary; Florence Dole, records; June Caster, director of nursery school; June Smith and Virginia Leake, teachers in nursery school; Lee Whitman, custodian; and Dorothy Whitman, bookkeeper.

Organizations within the church include the Women's Association; Men's Fellowship; three social groups known as Matrons; Social and Junior High Youth Fellowships; Scout groups; and three choirs.

TWO SERVICES for both adult worship and church school are held each Sunday morning except during the summer months. A half-hour nursery, with registered care in attendance is provided for babies all year.

The church also maintains a registered day nursery five days a week for preschool children of the community.

COMMUNITY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
First service in present building took place May 6, 1956.

OLDS GIVES WAY TO NEW

By MARY LYNN DICKERSON
Special Writer

In a log house on the Syl farm near Wing Lake, the first church in Franklin was organized. The year was 1831, barely three years after Franklin was officially named.

The present church, built in 1907, was erected by the Rev. Horace and E. A. Hall, the congregation occupied its first church building in 1854. The church stood north of the village on the west side of Franklin Road, near the Pickering town line.

Preachers were supplied by the Pontiac church for several years. Bacon Hall was a pillar of the church until sometime in the 1850's when it was discontinued.

MEANTIME, in 1944, a Methodist Protestant Church was organized with 150 members. Rev. Lemuel Smith and Rev. Albert Earl became the first pastors of the Franklin Christian Church, which united, in 1958, with the American Baptist Association and later United Church of Christ.

The church, now known as the Franklin Community Church, is the oldest continuous organization in Franklin and the first church of its denomination in Michigan. In 1961, the church moved to German Mill Road, where it had been the church home of the Franklin Baptist Church for the past year.

Built in 1963 at a cost of $170,000, it was a one-room frame structure.

The addition in 1966 included a library and a Mr. and Mrs. Peter Dwyer, who were presented with a new cement and brick exterior. The new addition in 1965. This building served until the congregation had grown to over 200 members.

After several years' planning, a red brick colonial styled church was built two blocks west of the Village Green. Rev. Robert Searles held the first regular services in the new church on July 15, 1963.

Membership has now grown to over 500, and construction is expected to be started in June, 1964, on a new educational wing and fellowship hall. Rev. Kenneth Callis and the Rev. G. D. Price, former Franklin Community Church at this time.


MEMBERSHIP in Franklin Community Church has just been reported by Mrs. Edward Dunlap, who served the church in 1936-37. Mrs. Dunlap now resides in the Chelsea home, and one of her daughters, Mrs. James Bailey, still lives in Franklin.

The white painted, hundred-year-old building on German Mill Road is serving a new congregation, organized March 24, 1962, under the sponsorship of the Gal- lembe family, which has organized 53 churches in the past 10 years. Rev. Lawrence Mattis began with a nucleus of three families and is conducting membership classes at the present time. The charter membership rolls have not been closed yet. The first baptism was held Palm Sunday.

This historic old church will see a new generation mature in the town that time forgot.

Round-Trip Ticket Across State—$2.25

Many Birmingham citizens took advantage of the round-trip ticket offered by the local railroad in 1878. An extension to Grovesdale was promoted and talks from Birmingham could travel all the way across the state in only six hours—for only $2.25.

This special price, which included the fare to Grovesdale, was a real bargain in the days of the rural farm. The said that the cars from Birmingham was filled.