

A History of Starbuck United Church



1904 - 2004

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When the first settlers came to the Starbuck area in the late 1800s, they felt the need to meet together and worship in their own way. After many small meetings in homes, the followers of the Presbyterian Church began meeting in Holyrood School, a log building located near the present home of Roy and Inga Livingston, in the early 1880s. The first recorded minutes show the annual meeting took place at Holyrood on May 12, 1886.

It is unlikely that this small group of Presbyterians had professional leadership for, as was the custom in the early Presbyterian churches, any elder could be named as leader by his peers. It is noted in the minutes, however, that a motion was made to follow the "Presbyterian Psalter Hymnal" exclusively for any services and that "the envelope system be used for the collection of money for the purpose of these services."

The first recorded salaried leader of the congregation was Mr. Norman Russell but when his leadership began or ended is not recorded. No salary was recorded but it was indicated that Mr.

Russell should receive the services of a horse (at the cost of \$35) for his travels for the summer months.

At the meeting of May 12, 1886, it was decided to approach the Presbytery of Winnipeg to "prosecute" a call for an ordained minister. It was later decided to ask the other two Presbyterian congregations nearby (at

Blythefield – now Sanford – and Osborne Station) to share in the costs. It was agreed that the congregations would pay their minister a salary of five hundred dollars per year.

At a meeting of January 10, 1887, the joint committees of the three Presbyterian congregations agreed to approach Rev.

James Douglas to accept the call to minister at these three points. Thus, it would seem that Rev. Douglas was the first ordained minister of the Starbuck area church.

At a meeting on March 8, 1887, Rev. Douglas had agreed to reside in the area but indicated that he would need living accommodations. It was agreed to build a manse near Holyrood School "to have a frontage on the river and to comprise at



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least two acres,” the cost for manse and stable not to exceed six hundred seventy-nine dollars. At a later meeting of the joint councils, Blythefield congregation agreed to pay one-half of this cost. It was also recommended that the buildings be so constructed that they could be moved later, if needed. When the tenders were called, however, the lower of the two received was for seven hundred fifteen dollars. It was agreed that this would be accepted, provided the building be started no later than May 12. However, due to an unrecorded problem, a meeting of May 16 awarded the contract to the second lowest contractor. At a further meeting of May 26, the contract price

was reduced by forty-five dollars if the congregation would do the painting of the buildings. (It is of some note that for many years to come, the raising of the necessary finances to pay for this manse would be a major problem for the young congregation.)

By 1888, a new Holyrood School had been built further west along the River Sale to replace the log building and the Presbyterian congregation moved into this fine new building. Here Sunday School classes could also be held for the children. As well, a reed organ had been obtained to enhance the congregation’s singing.



A view of the new Holyrood School—circa 1888

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A view of Starbuck, circa 1905, with the Presbyterian church visible at the right and the Catholic church, built at the same time, at the left rear.

By this time, the small cluster of dwellings (which would become the village of Starbuck) was rising fast west along the River Sale and consideration was made to relocate the congregation from Holyrood School to this larger collection of homes. In 1901, a new school had been built in the Starbuck area and for the next three years, church services alternated weekly between these two school sites.

At a meeting on October 2, 1899, a committee was struck to investigate the possibility of building a church for the Presbyterian congregation. (This committee consisted of many early pioneers of the area – Robert Houston, Alex Houston, Alex Hay, S. McIntyre, William Livingston, Thomas Burns, J. Burns, Tom

Greenway, John Houston, W. Orr, M. Olsen, William Dunlop and J. Lowry.) On October 18, the committee reported that a suitable site had been found in the village of Starbuck and that Messrs. Simpson and Loree had offered the land free. The committee recommended that this site was the best of the many they had investigated. The proposal was presented to the congregation at a meeting of January 19, 1900 and received approval and the expressed hope that the building of a church could proceed as soon as the means could be found.

At a meeting of the congregation on May 16, 1900, three trustees were elected to oversee the new church proposal. They were R. Houston, I. A. McRae and W.

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Orr. This committee was empowered to meet with the architect, Mr. Russell, to have plans drawn up for the proposed building. By June 25, these plans were ready and were presented to the church council for their approval.

By 1902, it was discovered that the Registrar's office in Winnipeg had refused to grant a title of land for the two lots which had been offered for the site of the new church. However, thanks to the intervention of Mr. Halland, a local business man, the matter was resolved.

At the annual meeting of January 20, 1903, a motion was passed that the building committee should circulate a subscription list to the congregation to ascertain if funds would be obtainable for the building of a church. By the next meeting on May 2, 1903, a subscription list of \$1,300 had been realized. It was therefore recommended that the plans for the church be shown to the congregation and discussed. After much discussion, it was agreed unanimously that the proposed building seemed too small. A motion was passed that the building be six feet longer and two feet higher and that no basement (only a two-foot footing) be made at this time. (The architect agreed to the changes!) Tenders were called, to close by June 5, 1903.

Two tenders were received. F. W. White tendered for \$2,758 and Gunder Johnston for \$2,575. It was decided to notify Mr. White that his tender was too high and to wait to approve the second tender when there would be a larger attendance. However, at a meeting of June

20, it was decided that even this tender was too high. To help resolve the matter, certain aspects of the building would be considered for removal (for example, foundation, painting, seating) and A. Boskill (obviously a later tender) and Mr. Johnston were asked to re-tender on each aspect. Mr. Boskill dropped his tender by \$750 while Mr. Johnston dropped his bid by \$625. Consequently, the contract was awarded to Mr. Boskill who agreed, provided the building committee drop the painting and the seating, for \$1,940.

At a meeting of June 29, it was agreed that the contractor should wait until at least the end of August to begin construction so that the building committee could canvass for further funding. It was also agreed to advance Mr. Boskill the sum of \$200 at the start of construction. Minutes recorded for September 14 indicate that construction had not yet started and that Mr. Boskill was to be advised to begin as soon as possible. By December 12, the committee agreed that Mr. R. Houston should seek volunteer assistance to excavate a cellar under the new building to accommodate a furnace. As the church neared completion, the building committee authorized the purchase of chairs and, on **January 17, 1904**, the church held its first meeting in the new church (see page 1).

At the annual meeting on January 19, 1904, the congregation passed a motion to separate from Blythefield and to assume all debts for the church themselves. (At this time, a congregation at Prairie View was assisting with costs at Star-

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buck.) At a meeting in June of that year, it was approved to seek a loan from the local bank to meet obligations. It was also proposed that a fence be built around the church and the exterior be painted.

By 1905, many new members had joined the church and current funding was sufficient to meet expenditures. It was reported that a Ladies' Group had been formed. (During its first year, it raised more than \$118.) The old manse was still having financial problems, so it was proposed that it be sold because, by this time, most ministers were students from Winnipeg. Thomas Bailey was hired to paint the interior.

By 1909, it was proposed that a larger platform be built across the front of the church. It was also agreed that the new manse (started in 1906) have the plastering and painting completed. The contract to complete the manse was awarded to Gunder Johnson at a cost of \$205. Mr. C. Stenberg was hired for \$15 to paint the manse, on the condition that the building committee would supply all materials. A further contract was awarded to finish the manse basement (at a cost of \$75, paid by the Ladies' Aid). By 1910, the Ladies' group had raised \$366 to assist with the church and manse expenses.



Members of the Ladies' Group: Mrs. Margaret Houston, Mrs. Orpa Olsen, Mrs. Powers, Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Lucy Ross

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By 1911, a “Girls’ group”, under the direction of the minister’s wife, raised sufficient funds to purchase church pews.

During the next five to eight years, the young church struggled to raise sufficient funds to meet expenses; principally the minister’s salary. Weekly subscriptions were sought, fundraising picnics and concerts were held, and regular canvasses of the community were made. By July 1919, sufficient money had been raised to repaint the basement foundation, enlarge the cavity for the furnace and to incorporate a chute for putting fuel into the cellar.

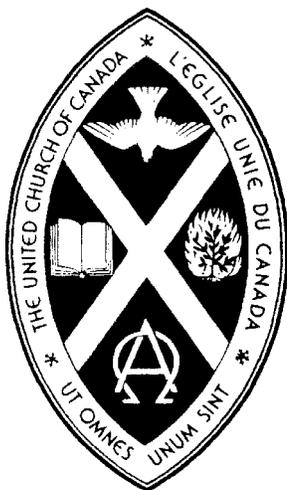
By 1921, Ferndale church (although Methodist) was contributing \$200 per year to the costs at Starbuck and was sharing a minister. Thus, it seemed a

natural movement when, in 1925, the Presbyterian and Methodist branches of the church united with the Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada, without a single dissenting vote registered from the Starbuck congregation.

By 1929, the church became equipped with electric lighting and in December of that year, Mr. Myrton Mills was paid \$50 to install electrical wiring. The church also agreed to pay \$1 per month to cover the cost of electricity. Tragedy struck on January 27, 1929 when a fire started in the building. However, through the quick response of people nearby, the damage was limited. Repairs totaled \$45 for new floor boards, painting, cleaning the pews and refilling the fire extinguishers. By April of 1929, the Ladies’ Aid proposed to trade in the old organ and purchase a new one, the cost of which would be borne by the group.

It is of interest that the first – and only – person from Starbuck to be ordained into the ministry of the United Church was Miss Marguerite Miller who was recommended by the congregation on October 18, 1948 and who preached her first sermon after ordination at Starbuck on June 12, 1949. In appreciation, the congregation presented her with a clerical gown. Miss Floris Olsen became a deaconess and served as a diaconal minister.

For the next twenty years, as with all groups, the congregation struggled with the many responsibilities of maintaining their church – raising sufficient funds to



The crest adopted by the new United Church of Canada used symbols of the burning bush for the Presbyterians, the dove for Methodists, the Bible for Congregationalists, and the Cross for the union of all. The Alpha and Omega letters represent “beginning to end”.

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pay salaries and maintain the building, seek volunteers to teach Sunday School and serve on the Boards, and recruit new members. However, by 1949, it was deemed necessary to build a proper basement under the church so that room could be made for meetings, teaching classes, etc. A motion on June 26, 1949 approved the hiring of Mr. Siddle, at a tendered price of \$3,315 for the basement and \$800 for raising the church. Steel girders would be used to support the building instead of posts in the basement and that an oil furnace would be purchased to heat the building.

The church was raised and huge timbers were placed under it. These were well greased and the church was then moved sideways off the existing foot-

ings. On the morning of July 25, 1949, the municipal bulldozer, operated by Alvin (“Toad”) Miller began the work of excavating the basement. However, the number of curiosity seekers who had gathered impeded work. The following morning, Toad began work at five in the morning and had the basement dug before the onlookers arrived. Mr. Siddle and his crew then set to work to erect the forms for the concrete, the work was completed, and the church was returned to its new spot above the basement in time for the dedication service on September 25th of that year.

Many additions were made to the church in 1950. The ceiling was insulated to reduce heat loss, a new sign was built by the minister, Mr. Lucy, and painted



Participants at the 1950 mortgage burning (L-R): Howard Livingston, Jack Houston, Thelma Norton, Hesper Fetterman, Edna Houston, Carrie Livingston, Rev. Allan Simpson, Lowery Houston.

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by Alex Wishart and the Girls' Explorer group provided a pulpit lamp. In August of that year, the family of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Houston presented a communion table in memory of their parents, and an iron railing was provided for the front steps in memory of Mr. and Mrs. George Dunlop. By the fall of 1950, all costs were cleared and a "mortgage burning" ceremony was held.

On March 27, 1958, a new electric organ was purchased by the Ladies' organization at a cost of \$1,795 and, in 1962, Mr. Howard Clifford had built a new pulpit for the church. A new oil furnace was installed that year. It was also voted to paint the ceiling and floor of the basement and to line the walls with hardboard to improve the beauty of the basement meeting room. In 1963, Mr. Harold Westerlund built new storage cupboards for the Sunday School.

By 1967, it was decided that new windows were needed for the church and stained-glass windows were installed by May 1969. During the installation of the windows, it was noted that the outside walls of the church were bowing outwards. This was caused by the lack of bracing across the top of the walls. Many ideas were proposed to correct this fault but the final decision was made to install two heavy metal brace rods to connect the outside walls. Due to the age of the building, these rods were tightened slowly over a period of several days to bring the walls back into alignment. (With a coat of paint on them, the rods seem almost invisible.) Outdoor chimes (played from

an amplifier in the church) were placed in the steeple tower.

By the mid 1970s, it was proposed that the four United churches within the Municipality of Macdonald should share costs and ministry and thus the Meridian Pastoral Charge was officially formed in September 1974. This charge would now include Starbuck, Sanford, Ferndale and Avonlea. With the new pastoral charge, the minister took up residence at the manse in Sanford – the central point of the four churches – and the Starbuck manse was sold.

By the mid 1980s, plans were begun to celebrate the church's 85th anniversary in 1989. When the anniversary committee met on June 22, 1988, several fundraisers were planned to provide money for the forthcoming anniversary. A very successful fowl supper was held in the local hall in September 1988. Another suggestion was to have a dinner theatre. Under the guidance of Dorothy and Jerry Talman, a most successful event was held in March 1989. This concept proved so successful that the dinner theatre is still hale and hearty today!

With the success of the above projects, it was decided to improve the entrance-way of the church so it was accessible by physically-challenged parishioners. A wheelchair ramp entailing the construction of a forty-foot structure would have been difficult to maintain, so other ideas were sought. As the old Starbuck hall was undergoing renovations or plans of rebuilding at the time, Fred Overbatten, the engineer of this project, was asked to

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offer suggestions to improve the entrance of our church. His recommendation was to build a lift system and to close the front cement steps.

The trustees met in January of 1993 to discuss how best to improve the church. It was proposed to remove the small front porch and to build a larger addition (to be ground level at the door) to house a lift and a new stairway to the basement. John Kirby, a member of Avonlea church, was contacted to draw up a plan. His proposal was for an 18 by 28 foot addition to the front of the church. This addition would accommodate a lift, a new stairway to the basement and a room to be shared by the choir and the minister. This would permit the closing of the existing basement stairway in the sanctuary and the removal of the small choir/minister's room at the back. To assure that all facilities were accessible to the physically challenged, Alan Simpson (son of Rev. A. B. Simpson, minister when the basement was built) of the Independent Living Resource Centre was consulted and offered invaluable advice. (It should be noted that Fred Overbatten, John Kirby and Allan Simpson supplied their expertise to the church at no cost.)

The proposed new addition would be 24 feet from the street when municipal regulations required that all buildings be 30 feet. A variance was required and was approved quickly. All that remained was to have the blueprints draw up and construction could begin. When the blueprints were received, the cost of the project was estimated to be approxi-

mately \$80,000. Despite the fact that less than half this money was available in the building fund, the congregational meeting of March 20, 1994 gave full approval for the project. The Meridian Board and the Carman Presbytery gave further approval and on June 26, 1994, Harold Curtis, a long-time member of the church, turned the first sod.

Under the direction of the volunteer project manager, John Marshall, and ably assisted by Les McIntosh, the dismantling of the front porch was begun on July 2, 1994. Quotes for the drilling of piling for the addition were received (\$14,445) and the piling was drilled in on August 16. Excavation was made for the lift and the new stairwell and weeping tiles were installed. By September 2, the concrete was poured.

As there were no services during July and August, the work could move on unabated. However, when services resumed on September 9, temporary facilities were needed to get into the sanctuary. The new addition was enclosed entirely by September 24th and the work of insulating and completing the outside siding were begun. By October 28, the exterior siding was completed and a large lighted cross (built by John Marshall) was installed over the front door. By December 7, the new lift was installed (at a cost of \$15,395) and work was begun on completing the interior of the addition and the closing off of the older portions of the sanctuary. By February of 1996, all was completed.

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Of interest is that the new addition cost only \$56,832 – not the \$80,000 as first assumed. This was accomplished through the work of the many volunteers. To further enhance the beauty of the building, a flagstone sidewalk (with stone donated by John Hall) was built at the front entrance. To further upgrade our church, in 1997, a new exit was created near the front of the sanctuary and a wheelchair ramp was constructed along the north exterior of the building.



As the dinner theatre was now a vital part of the life of the church, adequate storage was needed for the costumes and props. Several proposals were made, including building a separate storage building between the church and the river, but estimated costs seemed prohibitive. However, under the able skills of Len Pedersen and assisted by Les McIntosh, a storage unit was built in 2002 above the ministers' room.

This report is intended as an overview of the 100-year history of the edifice we proudly call Starbuck United Church. Several aspects of the story have been given only passing mention, such as the many anniversary celebrations through the years. Much of the information has been gleaned from the original minutes of meetings, most of which are now stored in the United Church Archives in Winnipeg.

Throughout the history of the church, much has been accomplished through the dedication of its many volunteers, through fundraising, help with construction, service on committees, and all other necessities of a successful project. For this, we are eternally

grateful. We have purposely identified few of the many people responsible, those who have had a particularly major impact on the story. A list of all the contributors would be extensive and would surely miss someone whose efforts should be recognized.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to the following for their assistance in preparing materials for the centennial anniversary of our church: Mrs. Bernice Willerton (nee Baldwin), Mrs. Doreen Thompson (nee Baldwin), and to the members of the anniversary committee: Mrs. Pat Thomas-chewski (chairperson), Mrs. Phyllis Olson, Mrs. Inga Livingston, Mr. Bill Livingston, and Mr. Len Goldsborough.

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Non-Resident Ministers, 1885 to 1904

Mr. Norman Russell
Rev. James Douglas
Dr. Bryce
Dr. A. B. Baird
Rev. J. S. Lowry
Rev. W. B. Tait
Rev. J. S. Dobbin
Rev. Menzies

Resident Ministers, 1904 to 2004

Rev. N. Stevenson
Rev. R. B. Cochrane
Rev. D. M. Reid
Rev. J. D. Harley
Rev. G. Bompas
Rev. W. W. Smith
Rev. Wm. Bates
Rev. Fleming
Rev. T. Latto
Rev. J. S. Lowe
Rev. Fulton
Rev. Bygraves
Rev. T. Horn
Rev. J. McNair
Rev. J. S. Wilson
Rev. H. Wyman
Rev. G. McNeill
Rev. S. Leith
Rev. Lloyd C. Stinson
Rev. G. D. Wilkie
Rev. G. Dyker
Mr. Smith
Rev. Reynolds
Rev. A. D. Watson
Rev. M. Johnston-Zuong
Rev. B. Thackery
Rev. G. Fay

Rev. H. Fred
Rev. A. B. Simpson
Rev. C. Manning
Rev. A. Suitters
Rev. Oliver Hodge
Rev. Dick Kendall
Rev. Art Lucy
Rev. Ron Mattock
Rev. G. Whidden
Rev. A. D. Bennett
Rev. Percy Laidler
Rev. Bill Whetter
Rev. George Cook
Revs. Peter and Elizabeth Moffatt
Rev. Linda Murray
Rev. Gaston Vialard
Rev. Ted Dodd
Rev. Jim Hatherly
Mrs. Mary Rance
Rev. Ed and Mrs. Georgina Loucks
Rev. Freda Rajotte / Ms. Lynn Stevens
Rev. Garfield Barber
Rev. Heather Moore
Rev. Peter Mitchell

Note: For many years, Starbuck pulpit was presided over by students in theology training at Winnipeg's United College. Also, with the formation of the Meridian Pastoral Charge, "supply" ministers have assisted on a weekly basis when the one resident minister was unable to hold services at the four points of the charge (later reduced to three points with the closure of Ferndale). Names of these numerous persons have not been recorded.

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Organists

We are very appreciative of the dedication of the following people who served as pianist/organist for our services through the years:

Miss Dunlop	Miss M. Bennett
Mrs. M. O. Olsen	Hesper Fetterman
Edith Houston	Elaine Rex
Mrs. J. S. Lowe	Joan Clifford
Myrtle Lawson	Ruth Gellatly
Marie Hushka	Clark Talman
Margaret Curtis	Lois Johnson
Florence Westerlund	Joanne Schrof

Church Council, 2004

Chair.....	Len Goldsborough
Vice-Chair.....	Helen Livingston
Treasurer	Roy and Inga Livingston
Secretary	Diane Trudeau
Christian Development	Tannis Bohn & Michelle Ammeter
Interchurch	Donna Holmes
Ministry and personnel	Helen Marshall
Music and choir.....	Margaret Porter
Pastoral Care	Sharon Masse
Projects - Chair	Jackie Ell
Projects - Treasurer	Pat Thomaschewski
Property.....	Len Pedersen
Worship.....	Linda Virag & Shirley Weidman

We wish to extend a special thanks to Gordon Goldsborough for the set-up of all pictures and the print alignment in this booklet.