

“The Second Ten Years”

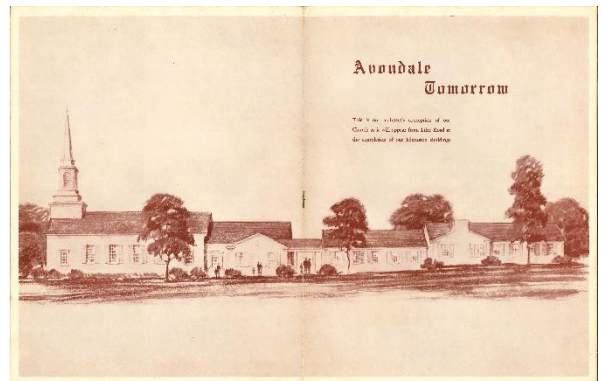
Avondale History 1954 – 1964

As we continue our journey through the decades in Avondale's 75th anniversary year, I will be picking up where Betty Chambers left off and highlighting events beginning in 1954. I hope you will allow me a few personal remembrances. My family joined Avondale in 1949 and I attended Weekday Kindergarten here even before that. So even though I was a part of the Avondale family, it was eye-opening to do the research for what I am about to tell you.

I would describe this decade as years of rapid growth and expansion. We grew in membership from 487 in 1955 to a high of 642 in 1961 and leveled off at around 600 through 1964. Weekly Sunday School attendance averaged 260 children and adults.

In 1954, following a building campaign that yielded \$67,000 in pledges, Avondale was able to complete our first real education building. The new building along Lilac Road was attached to the Sanctuary and provided Sunday School Rooms and a Lounge. Two of the new rooms where the Choir Room is currently located became offices for the Pastor and DCE. Prior to that, Sunday School classes met in just about every corner of the church property including the Chapel that had been partitioned off to house four Sunday School Departments, the Sanctuary and all rooms in the Hut, including the kitchen.

In July of 1955, the Session hired Louise Pendergast (now Chambers) to be Director of Christian Education. Among Miss Pendergast's duties was that of advisor to the youth group. I was in youth group during her tenure and have many fond memories from that experience such as Sunday night dinner and vespers in the Hut, going to Montreat, Camp Stewart, Camp Grier, attending a Billy Crusade in 1958 as well as other local activities.

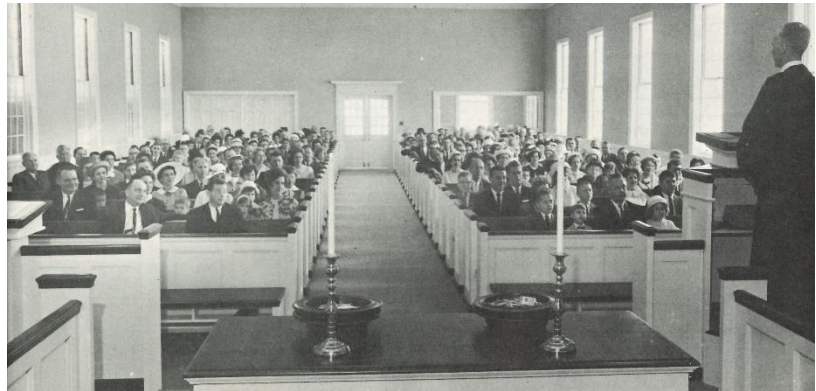


Around this time, Mrs. Mae Jordan was hired as a part-time Choir Director in charge of the Adult Choir, two large Children's Choirs and a Youth Choir. Mrs. Jordan was a sixth-grade teacher at Dilworth Elementary



School. Not only did she teach us about music and singing, we were taught how we were to present ourselves in worship. I still remember her telling us that we were to be the background of the "picture" when in the choir loft and should not make any movements that would distract attention from the minister. I was in the children's choir first and then Youth Choir that sang every Sunday at the early service. In my sophomore and junior years of high school, Mrs. Jordan took a group of us to the Music Conference at Montreat. It was such a wonderful experience that I didn't want to come home. Mrs. Jordan resigned in July 1964.

Due to overcrowding in the sanctuary and lack of parking space, the church instituted two identical services one at 9:30 which was later changed to 8:45 and the other at 11:00 a.m. on Palm Sunday, March 25, 1956.



As I learned while researching for this presentation, March 25, 1956 happened to be the Sunday on which my Confirmation Class was received into full membership at Avondale. There were 19 members in that class and during the next 10 years, I found that Confirmation Class size ranged from 19 to 30 students each year. Confirmation classes were always presented to the congregation on Palm Sunday so that we could partake of the communion elements for the first time during Holy Week.

Looking at Session Minutes for this second ten years, I found several more current members who were received into full membership at Avondale:

Our recently departed Dollie Sitton was received in 1959, Tim Chambers and Barbara Hopkins Darling were received in 1960, Mike Love was received in 1961 and David Caudle in 1962.

In 1957 a Planning Committee was appointed by the Session, with Louis Meacham as chairman, to determine the future needs of the Church. In its report, the committee anticipated an increase in membership to 750 and stated that a minimum of three acres of land would be required for buildings, off-street parking and recreation facilities. The original land was only one acre. The only parking at Avondale at that time was angle parking on both Avondale Avenue and Lilac Road next to the Sanctuary. Fortunately, Avondale was very much a neighborhood church and a large portion of the congregation lived within walking distance of the Church.



In November of 1959, pursuant to the Planning Committee's recommendation, the Church purchased from members, Mr. & Mrs. Ed Kimbirl, adjoining property consisting of two acres of land and two dwelling houses for the sum of \$40,000 plus costs. The larger two-story house would eventually house the church office, pastor's study, and conference room. Some Sunday School classes met in that building as well. The smaller house became the "Mom" Eudy Youth House although I read that the Aitken Sunday School Class moved from the Lounge to the "little house" for a while before it became the Youth House.

In February 1960, the Session appointed a Coordinating Committee composed of Douglas Aitken, Henry Cromartie, Louis Meacham and Earl Chambers, Chairman, to direct and coordinate the development of our property. The over-all property utilization plan was unanimously approved and the congregation authorized a fund-raising campaign with a goal of \$115,000 underwritten by three-year pledges. The campaign was completed in June of

1961 with \$87,000 subscribed. With the aid of a long-term loan, the expansion, including the cost and development of adjacent property, a parking lot, a children's building and the enlarging of the Sanctuary was completed at a total cost of approximately \$193,000.



When construction was nearing completion, the opportunity to secure additional property fronting on Lilac Road was suddenly thrust upon the Church. Feeling it unwise to appeal to the congregation as a whole for additional funds, the officers of the Church and a few other concerned persons contributed cash funds for the purchase of this property which gave a much-needed access from Lilac Road to the parking lot which was thought to be invaluable for the future needs of the Church. A Service of Dedication was held on December 2, 1962.

In 1963 a Committee to Study the Building Campaign to be conducted in Spring of 1964 was formed. The purpose of the campaign was to retire the building mortgage and for Avondale's share in Presbyterian Development Fund of the General Assembly. The goal was to include current debt only without future new construction.

So Avondale continued to grow and build. It struck me as I was reading through Session Minutes that the church seemed to be focused inwardly on growth and Christian Education within our own membership with not much mention of mission in the community or beyond. However, I discovered that a very significant portion of the budget was earmarked for giving beyond Avondale through contributions to Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly causes.

I leave you with something that I found in a stewardship publication. Writing in October 1956, Rev. MacLean describes an infant church as one that depends in part upon the gifts of others. She cannot stand on her own feet and provide for her own needs. A church

that grows and gains strength until she is able to support herself and possibly do a bit for others is considered an adolescent church. A church that provides not merely for her own needs but who reaches out hands of helpfulness in equal measure to others has entered maturity. He said that this is the kind of church which the Lord of the church envisions for his people.

He told members; Avondale is coming of age. we passed rapidly through infancy and became adolescent. We have been in a period of adolescence for 10 years. The time has come for us to move on, to grow up. The Lord is calling us to maturity.

Stay tuned for more Avondale history as we continue to walk through the decades.

Submitted by Stewart Farris
June 30, 2019



Avondale Presbyterian Church
75th Anniversary / 1944-2019

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www.avondalepresbychurch.org/75thanniversary

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