

only about seventy. Father Carrier was very able and expanded the membership rapidly. By 1964 their peak year there were 466 church members or 165 families. Additions to the building were made, and it was air conditioned. A new rectory was purchased in 1956 at 2108 Hallwood Drive; it has since been sold. The rectory is no longer in the VECA neighborhood. In 1961 Carrier Hall, a new, roomy structure to accomodate parish functions, was completed at a cost of \$30,000.<sup>38</sup>

Each June for the last twenty years the Men of the Church have sponsored an Ice Cream Festival on the front lawn of the church. They have a cake walk and game booths. Women of the parish bake cakes which are served with the ice cream.<sup>39</sup> There is traditionally a "Winter Wonderland Bazaar" in November and rummage sales during the year.

According to Father Charles H. Sykes, the membership is now about 300, with only 15-20 percent of the congregation living in the neighborhood.<sup>40</sup> While a move to another location may have been considered in the past, it is likely that the current trends in the neighborhood will cause them to remain at the present location. More people are moving back into the community and joining the church, which has probably the highest service of any Episcopal church in Tennessee.

#### EVERGREEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 613 University

Evergreen Presbyterian Church, which is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, U.S., was organized in 1910 in the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Carruthers, who lived in Glen Mary, the original Galloway home. There were thirty-six charter members. Second Presbyterian Church sponsored Evergreen; it gave the congregation \$10,000 and furnished the first pastor, The Rev. D. W. McIver. Col. Robert Galloway gave them the lot at the southeast corner of Autumn and Dickinson with the understanding that the land must always be used as a church.<sup>41</sup> Since the original building site had inadequate parking, the church felt it necessary to make plans to move during the 1930s.



In 1947 it purchased 9.7 acres from Southwestern for \$50,000. The cornerstone of the new building was laid December 24, 1950, and the first service in the new sanctuary was held October 7, 1951. The red brick building is of Williamsburg Colonial architecture. The sanctuary seats 1,000; the building also houses church offices, classrooms and a 500-seat fellowship hall. The 156-foot steeple is topped with a Celtic cross. (See picture) The building cost approximately \$500,000. In 1954 the Educational Building was completed at a cost of \$300,000. Walk C. Jones and Walk C. Jones, Jr., were the architects.<sup>42</sup>

In the fall of 1953, the church opened a kindergarten. Mrs. Taylor Reverly, wife of a Southwestern Bible professor, was the organizer and first director. After assisting Mrs. Reverly, Mrs. Eugene L. Heffernan, Jr., succeeded her. Mrs. Heffernan recalls that the kindergarten had a steady enrollment of approximately thirty children until the fall of 1971. That year the enrollment dropped to half that number. It was such a decline that the church decided to close the kindergarten in the spring of 1972. One can easily relate this decline to the situation in the neighborhood at that period. Children were being moved from the public schools, and families were leaving the neighborhood.<sup>43</sup>

Evergreen is a church with close ties to Southwestern. In 1956 the W. J. Millard Chair of Bible and Humanities was established at Southwestern to honor Dr. Millard, who served as pastor from 1934 until 1959 when he was named Pastor Emeritus. Many of the Southwestern faculty members have taken active leadership roles in the church. Beautiful cherry trees were sent from Japan in 1958 in acknowledgment of the church's support of the International Christian University at Tokyo, Japan and were planted on the church property. Dr. Van M. Arnold succeeded to the pastorate in 1959. In 1970 the church built the Recreation Building and established a neighborhood recreational program. Architect John Millard, Jr., son of the pastor emeritus, was the architect for this building.<sup>44</sup>



Evergreen has been consistently active in the neighborhood. It played an important part in the formation of VECA and continuously seeks ways to meet the needs of the area. It has a Mother's Day Out program, a summer reading program, and a summertime recreational program. It cooperates with Lindsay Memorial in a food and clothes-closet. The Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association's Home Delivered Meal Program is headquartered at Evergreen.<sup>45</sup> Today 70 percent of those who use the Recreation Building are black. Annah Lee Early thinks it is better to have the young people in the gym than on the streets; some don't agree. Appreciation for the program was expressed by George Brown, Jr., whose son is an active participant in the program.

I think that (the activities there) have made a significant contribution to . . . my son's growth and development, because he has spent innumerable hours there.<sup>46</sup>

He continues by saying that "the recreational activities that have generated from Evergreen have been outstanding."

The Rev. W. Ned Hollandsworth became the minister in 1977. Today there are 840 members. The membership has remained static during the past few years; the young people who have joined the church have replaced the elderly who have died or become inactive. The church has instituted a helpful program called "Do It Yourself, For Others." It is a plan to help the elderly or impoverished with home maintenance and repair problems.<sup>47</sup>

FIRST UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH, 1548 Jackson Ave.

The first congregational meeting was held in 1924 at the YMCA building with nine persons present. Following a period of slow growth, the first minister was called in 1926. A building on North McLean, possibly the one used earlier by Evergreen Baptist Church, was used by the congregation during part of 1926. Here on May 26th the



constitution and bylaws were revised and adopted; this date became the official one for the organization of the church. During these months, the small group acquired the property at 1542-48 Jackson Avenue and erected the present Parish House. In 1928 The Rev. Victor D. Derrick was called to the church while still a student at Chicago Seminary. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Parish House basement served as the meeting place of the Jackson Boulevard Improvement Club, an early neighborhood organization. The Kentucky-Tennessee Synod was formed in 1934, and First United became a member of this body.<sup>48</sup>

The Rev. and Mrs. Derrick ministered to the church that had possibly the only combination church and parsonage in the city. Half of the building was the church auditorium and the other half was the apartment of Pastor Derrick and his family. The Press-Scimitar described the church as having a feeling of "homelike-hospitality."<sup>49</sup>

The cornerstone of the Gothic nave for the sanctuary was laid in 1949, and construction began on a \$55,000 building on the lot west of the old church. Members and friends contributed furnishings and retired their debt in 1960.<sup>50</sup> In 1955 they purchased a parsonage at 779 North Willett Street, and that debt was also paid in full. In 1961 the membership hit its high. Pastor Derrick was voted the title of Pastor Emeritus in 1967.<sup>51</sup>

During the late 1960s and 1970s the church had three pastors, none staying more than four years. In 1974 the old house-chapel was converted into an office complex. Lutheran Social Services of Tennessee leases some of this office space. It houses Project MEET, which sponsors a congregate meal program for senior citizens and provides the meals for the Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association (MIFA) Home Delivered Meals Program.

In March 1977 The Rev. Eugene L. Epting became the pastor. He reports that the church has never been a true neighborhood church. Since it is one of only four of this denomination in Memphis, its members come from the entire city. Presently the church has a membership of 300.



members. The church activities include a Pot Luck Supper on the third Sunday of the month, Coffee and Fellowship, and Junior Choir for young people in the first grade through age 15.<sup>52</sup>

SAINT TERESA, CHURCH OF THE LITTLE FLOWER, 1644 Jackson Ave.

This church had ties to Greenlaw in North Memphis. The Rev. James P. Whitfield, pastor of St. Brigid Church at North Third and Overton, was appointed to organize a new parish which would include an area to which many of the St. Brigid parishioners had moved. The parish was placed under the patronage of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus. "The church followed the people out."<sup>53</sup> The boundaries of the new parish were drawn: Wolfe River to North Parkway, Trezevant to Ayres. A lot on Jackson Avenue was purchased. Old Spanish architecture was chosen for the school building which was constructed in 1930. The structure was a combination church and school. The church was on the upper floor, and the school was on the lower. It was dedicated under the title of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, but it has always been called Little Flower. The school opened September 15, 1930, with 266 pupils.<sup>54</sup>

The clergy continued to live at St. Brigid and commuted to Little Flower until 1937 when Father Whitfield was appointed permanent pastor and a house on Jackson was rented. The sisters moved from St. Brigid to the first Little Flower Convent at 1136 North Parkway on January 12, 1937. Sister Catherine Alma Riley was first Superior at the convent. The sisters moved to 1733 North Parkway after 1136 North Parkway was sold.

On March 26, 1950, ground was broken for a new church, and in October of that year the sisters moved to a new convent on the church grounds facing Dickinson, which is their present home.<sup>55</sup> In 1953 Monsignor Whitfield died. He was replaced by the Rev. Joseph E. Leppert who became a very influential priest in the neighborhood. Father Leppert, who was raised to Monsignor in 1966, remained at Little Flower



until 1976 when he celebrated his golden anniversary in the priesthood. During these crucial years, he led in the formation of the VECA organization and encouraged his parishioners to support the biracial neighborhood.

In all the major crises occurring in this city early in the civil rights movement the then "Father" Leppert was always there ready to lend a hand in whatever way he could, quietly counseling, suggesting, speaking on radio or television.<sup>56</sup>

At one time the church membership was around 600; today it is about half of that number. Many of the members are elderly; some have moved to St. Peter's Manor. "We're one of the churches that on Sunday is not full . . . it's just that there are fewer Catholics that live there."<sup>57</sup> About 30 percent of the church's population is black. There is an active Legion of Mary group and also a St. Vincent de Paul Society to aid the poor and unfortunate. It also has a school aid program and Senior Citizens' Program.<sup>58</sup>

Father J. Edwin Creary became the pastor in June 1979. He has some problems to solve. Little Flower School has been a neighborhood landmark since it opened in 1930 with a capacity of 266 students in grades one through eight. Its enrollment sank to 169 in 1977, and closing seemed inevitable in 1978. The school was one of the first private elementary schools in the city to receive state accreditation and still maintains it. The school is staffed by the Sisters of Charity and lay teachers. It claims to be the most ecumenical and integrated student body of any private school in the city. 35-45 percent of the students are non-Catholic and 70 percent are black.<sup>59</sup> The church has to subsidize the school, but for the present, according to the principal, Sister Marie Celine Osbourn, the school will stay where it is and remain open.<sup>60</sup>



SPRINGDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST, 2212 Jackson Ave.

Springdale Church of Christ is the only church in the neighborhood which has made a racial change. The building originally housed the Jackson Avenue Church of Christ, an all white congregation; in 1978 this congregation moved to Bartlett and changed its name to Sycamore View Church of Christ. The congregation which began as the Firestone Church of Christ at Firestone and Coker moved into the Jackson Avenue building and adopted the name Springdale Church of Christ.

The history of Jackson Avenue Church of Christ began in April 1944 when approximately 125 members began meeting at Southwestern. The Union Avenue Church of Christ purchased the Jackson Avenue property and donated it to the emerging church. The next year the members built the present church building at 2212 Jackson Avenue. The Rev. G. J. Brewer was the first pastor, and he served until 1956. As a neighborhood church it grew along with the neighborhood. The church had peak membership of approximately 500 members in 1957. A decline began in the 1960s as many members moved out of the neighborhood. The Rev. Billy J. Watson became pastor in 1972 and served until July 1979. He advocated a strong outreach program. In 1975 the church integrated. Since March 1978 when this congregation moved to Bartlett, it has been called the Sycamore View Church of Christ. The minister is the Rev. Robert L. Brewer, nephew of the church's first minister.<sup>61</sup>

Brother M. A. Hull has been the minister of the Springdale Church of Christ, formerly the Firestone Church of Christ, since its organization in 1955 when thirteen members started the church at the Firestone Workers Union Hall. Today there are 400 active members; very few stayed from the Jackson Avenue Church of Christ. About 8 percent of the members live in the VECA area, and 70 percent live in North Memphis. The membership has doubled since the church's move. Children are bussed in for Bible study on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings; approximately 125 children take part in these programs. The church also sponsors a Laubach literacy program.<sup>62</sup>



## FAITH TEMPLE, 672 North Trezevant

Faith Temple began as the Central Assembly of God in the early 1940s. The first church building that the congregation owned was at 733 Manassas at Looney. In 1947 The Rev. and Mrs. Paul N. Grubb became pastors of the church. They had been serving as national evangelists. Laura Grubb testified to having been healed and restored to life after having been pronounced dead for forty-five minutes in Sledge, Mississippi. Newspaper articles tell of a city-wide revival meeting held at the Auditorium where "miracle healings" were reported.<sup>63</sup> According to the article, about 2500 attended the revival.

The officers of the church sought a new location, so a larger church building could be constructed. The old Gage home on North Trezevant with its six-acre plot seemed perfect, and the church began efforts to acquire it. This huge, white residence of twenty-one rooms sat far back among the oak trees. It had been a showplace when Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Gage occupied it. (See picture) The congregation purchased the property and proposed to convert it to an inter-denominational house of worship. To do this, the Grubbs withdrew from the Assembly of God Church. This decision to use the house for a church met with vigorous protests from the neighbors. Ernest B. Williams, Jr., who lived next door at 694 N. Trezevant, wrote a letter that was sent with a petition of 300 names opposing the church. Both the Hein Park Club and the Springdale Civic Club met to protest. On the other side, the Rev. Mr. Grubbs was able to obtain many signatures on a petition favoring the move.

At this point the church owned the property, but the question was whether they could occupy the house for a church. A public hearing was held; headlines and pictures appeared in the Commercial Appeal on September 22, 1948. The Rev. Paul Grubb argued his case which was settled by the city concluding that the house was not fireproof. Consequently the city issued a temporary permit to use the Gage house with a stipulation that Grubb must present an acceptable set of blueprints for a fireproof auditorium.



This was done, and in May 1950 ground was broken to build a large structure which would seat 3,000 at an estimated cost of \$300,000. While the first section was under construction, services were held in a frame building on the property. The Gage mansion housed the Sunday School.<sup>64</sup>

The church struggled always to build. Bonds were floated four times to finance the construction costs which by 1974 had amounted to approximately \$500,000; thousands more would be needed for completion as designed. The congregation never grew as anticipated; therefore they rented space in the Gage mansion to the Memphis Arts Council until the house was destroyed by fire on June 23, 1968, in the wake of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. The building was insured, and this enabled The Faith Temple to continue working on its construction program.

Some in the neighborhood have heard that the building is for sale. The Rev. Mr. Grubb denies this. Grubb states that they have no plans to move and that he feels God still has plans for The Temple.<sup>65</sup> The Grubbs themselves have lived in the neighborhood for over thirty years, but Faith Temple has never attracted a neighborhood membership. To many residents it is still an intruder.

#### OPEN DOOR BIBLE CHURCH, 1792 North Parkway

Open Door Bible Church, founded in 1953, is a completely independent religious body. It is conservative and fundamentalistic in its approach to the Bible, and it uses the expository method of Bible teaching, i.e. verse by verse. "Applications are made to present day living as they are revealed in the Bible message."<sup>66</sup> There is a strong belief in missions. All of the ministers have been graduates of Dallas Theological Seminary.

The church met initially in the home of Mrs. Oscar White at 2014 Walker for a period of six months. At a March 3, 1953 meeting the present name was officially adopted; the church sought other facilities in which to meet. They were offered the Upper Room of the Strand Bible Class at 8 South Second Street where they subsequently



held Wednesday night and Sunday services. The seventeen charter members soon purchased a small building at Trigg and Azalia. By early 1958 a larger place to worship was needed. In 1958 the property at 1792 North Parkway was chosen; it was the former Walter Dilatush home. "This had a frame building with room on the lot to build later our present brick church."<sup>67</sup>

The church continued to grow, and in 1962 the brick building was completed. The Rev. Robert D. Kelso came to the church as pastor in 1973 and continues there today. "They surely are an enthusiastic numerous bunch that arrive every Sunday morning," observes Mrs. Nell Aspero.<sup>68</sup>

The church's membership is scattered over the city, but they are aware of the responsibility in the neighborhood. Periodically they distribute tracts in the neighborhood inviting people to visit. They have a Vacation Bible School, and a Christian film is shown every two weeks on Friday night with the public invited. These movies are well attended. Out of their 120 in Sunday School about 40 percent live in the area of the church. The present membership is approximately 150 members.<sup>69</sup>

#### THE EVANGELICAL ORTHODOX CHURCH, 716 North Avalon St.

Another fundamentalist group meets every Sunday morning in the VECA neighborhood at 716 North Avalon; it is an outgrowth of a fellowship which began in the home of Peter E. Gillquist, a former Campus Crusade leader. The North Avalon address is the home of The Rev. and Mrs. Don Berge; he is one of the four elders who lead the group. Bishop Gillquist has moved to California, where he serves as the presiding bishop of the group, "which claims about 50 widely spread congregations and 2500 adult members."<sup>70</sup>

A tenet of their faith is to live near each other and to care for one another. Consequently, the members who are mostly young started to look at various Memphis neighborhoods. They desired an affordable, stable neighborhood which would offer a diversity of ages and economic



and cultural backgrounds. They chose the VECA area. Ten members have homes there; some rent and some have purchased.

This group is important not only because of their different concept of worship, but it is a positive indication that homes in the neighborhood can still attract young, white families. Though they have no black members at present, they hope to attract some from the neighborhood. The members of this group have all joined the VECA organization and say they plan to be active in the neighborhood.<sup>71</sup>

The groups were attentive to the needs of the neighborhood. They played an important role in obtaining Snowden School and in locating both the zoo and Southwestern in Memphis. The group remained active through World War II after which it lost momentum. In 1952 it relinquished its charter, sold the clubhouse, and disposed of its funds primarily to Southwestern and other institutions.

The Jackson Boulevard Improvement Club held its first official meeting in the Lutheran Church at 1248 Jackson, April 4, 1917. A. J. Jenkins, temporary chairman, presided. The next month it considered whether to take women into the club as members. The ladies won and were invited to join. Notices were sent to every home in the neighborhood, a total of 900.<sup>72</sup> Some of the early leaders were Henry Clayton, an employee of H.G.S.W.; Dr. King, a podiatrist; Harry Thomas; and a Mr. Ryan, remembers Ethel Barkman. In 1931 the club modified its boundaries to include the intersection of Watkins and Faxon; "hence along Faxon Avenue east to the terminus at University Circle, then due east to Faxon, north on Faxon to Chelsea, and west to Watkins and south to Faxon."<sup>73</sup> They did not exclude members who then lived outside the boundaries; they could still be members. The Jackson Boulevard Improvement Club offered enticing prizes, a two and a half dollar gold piece, for example, to the member bringing in the most new memberships. Entertainment was a part of their activities. There was the annual summer