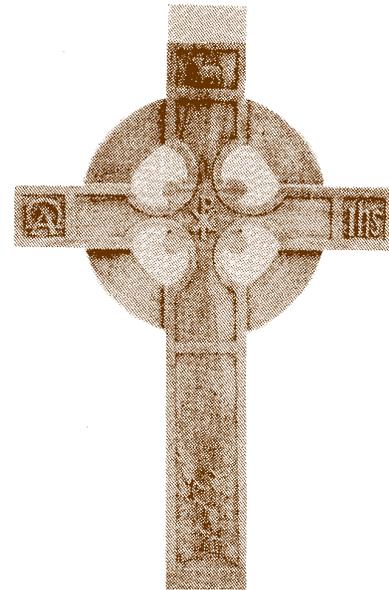


*First Presbyterian Church of Littleton  
A Centennial History*



*chartered November 4, 1883*

## Pastors of the Church

Thomas E. Bliss	1883-1888
D. M. Hunter	1888-1891
Alexander Scott	1891-1893
Arthur Hicks	1893-1894
William Hicks	1894-1899
A.F. Heltman	1899-1902
Horatio S. Beavis	1903-1909
W.S. Griffin	1909-1911
George R. Edmundson	1912-1918
James A. Armstrong	1918-1923
Robert J. Phipps	1923-1931
Lewis S. Hall	1931-1935
William Floyd Kuykendall	1935-1941
P.R. Keplinger (stated Supply)	1941-1942
Maurice G. Dametz	1942-1947
J. Russell Chandler	1947-1964
Hervey W. McFarran (Interim)	1964-1965
Dan E. Hiatt	1965-1981
Warren H. Rutledge (Interim)	1981-1983
Craig S. Davies	1983-1990
F. Andrew Carhartt (Interim)	1990-1991
Jonathan Masters Hole	1991-2002
Larry Grimm (Interim)	2002-2003
Jeffrey L. Kane	2003-



*The Celtic Cross pictured on the cover was carved by Dr. J. Russell Chandler. It is made from a piece of olive wood brought from South America by Bob Robinson, who along with fellow-parishioner Del Peden designed the cross. It has remained in the sanctuary as a central symbol of our faith and our Presbyterian heritage.*

**Text:**  
Janet Brett

*In Remembrance*  
1928-1986

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Virginia Kirkpatrick

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Englewood, Colorado  
1986

The Rev. Craig Davies came to the church during the Centennial year of 1983. The celebrations included a congregational dinner and a meeting of the Denver Presbytery at our church.

The next seven years were a period of rebuilding and emotional recovery that created a cohesiveness in the church which had been absent for a long time. The education program was vitalized by the hiring of a Director of Education: Bonnie DeLong, and the classes of children, youth and adults grew steadily. The children's library was established and dedicated to the memory of Janet Brett who had worked faithfully for the youth and the church.

In 1989 the need for renovation and change became essential and a special fund was established to pay for extensive remodeling and renewal of the sanctuary, Ayres Parlor, Ficklin Hall, Chandler Hall, the kitchen, offices, and repairs of the organ.

In 1990 Rev. Davies left our church and the Rev. Andy Carhartt became the Interim Pastor. His ministry was characterized by warmth and concern for people and problems: peace, AIDS, social issues and the needs of all members of the church.

After a year of study and interviews the Pastor Nominating Committee presented the name of Dr. Jonathan Masters Hole as the candidate for the permanent pastor. He was elected and officially installed on September 8, 1991.

changes in American society and in the Presbyterian denomination, have remarkably similar conclusions. In 1933 it was written: "Changes, changes, changes in everything. No, not everything, for the love of God is ever the same. The story of Christ never grows old." In 1983 these same sentiments were recorded; "The world and our society will change in ways we cannot see clearly, but the basics of our faith -- the questions it raises and helps us to answer about the purpose, direction and quality of life -- will be unchanged. Jesus will be the central figure in 2033, just as He is here today."



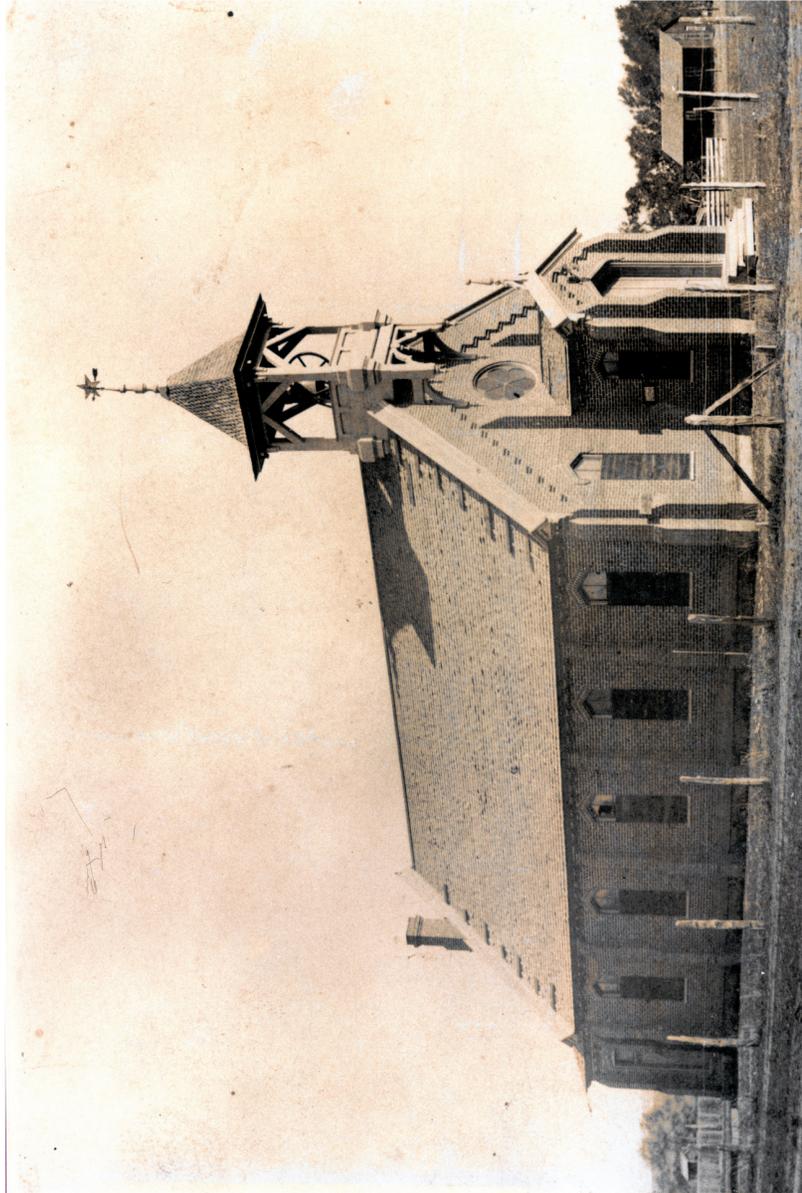
Centennial Birthday Party  
November 4, 1983

## First Presbyterian Church of Littleton

Littleton, Colorado



*"...for the love of God is ever the same." (Golden Jubilee Prophecy 1933)*



Oldest know photo of original building at Main & Curtice.  
C. 1885 Courtesy of Littleton Historical Society

At the Golden Jubilee celebration in 1933, a church member wrote a tongue-in-cheek "prophecy," predicting the state of the church at "the 100th Jubilee of the Presbyterians." Some of these predictions, five decades later, still sound preposterous: air autos, lighting controlled by human voices, "a huge structure...east of the old church." But others, fanciful enough in 1933, were remarkably on target: women ministers, a large pipe organ, changes in traditional sex roles (though as yet we haven't too many "men with flowing marcelled beards and curls hanging to their shoulders.")

In November of 1983, an adult church school class assembled to write a new prophecy, one depicting the condition of First Presbyterian Church of Littleton in 2033. Just as in its predecessor, some predictions bordered on the fanciful while others seemed logical outgrowths of current cultural and religious trends. But the concluding paragraphs of these two prophecies, separated by fifty years that have seen profound



Centennial Picnic  
July 17, 1983

Following its dissolution, Reverend McFadden returned to the east, and the building remained vacant until its purchase in 1886 by the Presbyterians. In 1904 the widowed Mr. McFadden married Denver resident Mrs. Harriet Fox, a former member of this short-lived Littleton church. Considering the bell his personal possession, McFadden presented it to his bride as a wedding gift. However, the Reformed Episcopal Church --now a respected denomination itself -- claimed ownership, citing the inscription as evidence. While honeymooning in Colorado, Mr. and Mrs. McFadden attended services in the now-Presbyterian Church. As the newlyweds walked down the aisle, the bell was rung in their honor and thus was dubbed "The Bride's Bell." The ownership controversy was finally settled in 1926 when Harriet McFadden sent a letter to the Presbyterian Church formally giving them the bell. With the completion of the new building in 1930, the bell was relocated in the impressive bell tower designed by Mr. Benedict. Today it still rings at weekly worship services and, of course, for every wedding.

Bits and pieces among the old records indicate that a controversy about the acceptability of smoking in the church building raged on sporadically for years. The matter finally was settled by the inducement of lower insurance rates on fire coverage if we would post "No Smoking" signs, so that what had been an ethical problem in 1922 was solved by a financially pragmatic decision forty years later.

Hints at dissatisfaction with pastors, of serious dissension within the session, of inter-personal problems abound. One cryptic 1932 memo to the Clerk of Session states the writer's intent to refuse nomination as an elder, saying, "At first I thought I would frankly give the reason I would not serve if elected, but there are times when the less that is said the better so prefer to be just dumb in the matter." Good for a modern chuckle is an excerpt from a 1940 letter to the pastor regarding nominations for the Board of Trustees: "He said they were going to put a woman on the board but did not say who or did he say who 'they' were."

## Beginnings

No doubt about it -- Littleton was an up-and-coming town. Irrigated farming and a thriving flour milling industry guaranteed a comfortable future for the village of 700 citizens. (A Denver realtor, with an eye to sales, advertised Littleton property: "As a suburban town it has no equal in the state, being beautifully situated on three lines of railroads.")

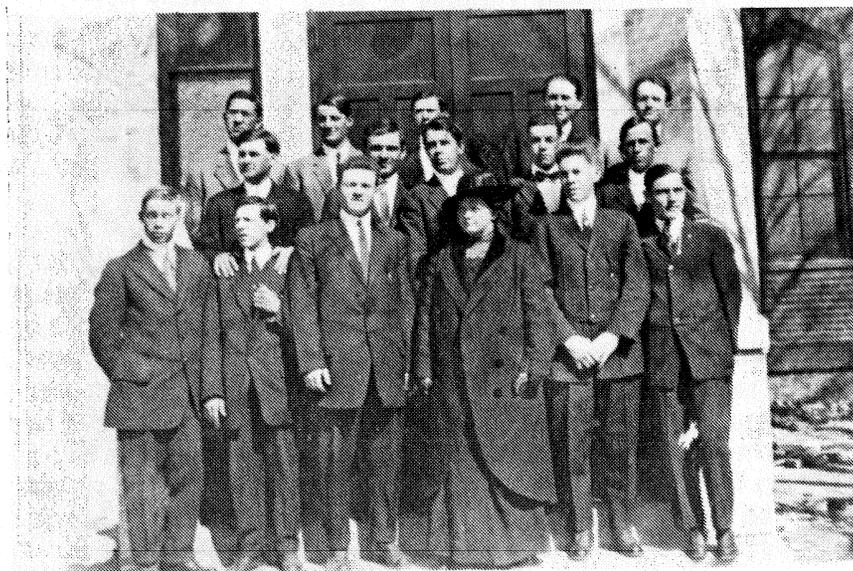
On November 4, 1883 a group of eighteen individuals, apparently sharing this optimism about their home town, organized the Presbyterian Church of Littleton. Their confidence is remarkable considering that the eighteen shared just seven family names and came from five different denominational backgrounds. Their common bond was belief in the Evangelical (Reformed) mode of Christian worship, an alternative to Episcopalian practices, which was the only other denomination in Littleton at the time. The new congregation adopted as its motto "In Essentials, Unity; In Non-Essentials, Liberty."

The Reverend Thomas E. Bliss, a Denver pastor who had at various times carried out ministerial duties on an informal basis in Littleton, was called as the first pastor after the Denver Presbytery had formally organized the new congregation. During the early years he served as pastor, moderator, and Clerk of Session. The first session consisted of two elders, who also served as two of the five trustees.

At first the new church met in the local school, but by 1886 the congregation had grown sufficiently to warrant the purchase of a vacant church building at the corner of Curtice and Main Streets. Members immediately went to work improving their property; an item in The Littleton Gazette of October 6, 1888 noted, "The ladies of the Presbyterian Church have been working faithfully this past week, raising subscriptions to build a neat fence around the church, and make other needed repairs." As the town grew rapidly, so did the Presbyterian Church of Littleton. Certainly in those early years it possessed a dedicated reporter; hardly an issue of the early local newspapers does not contain one or more mention of the congregation's activities.



Ladies' Aid Society enroute to picnic, June 24, 1910. Picture taken on Main Street. Courtesy Littleton Historical Museum.



Mrs. Harry Nutting with her Sunday School class, March 15, 1914. Courtesy Littleton Historical Museum.



Dr. Chandler laying cornerstone of Friendship House. 1949

### **Fallible Humans, Infallible Truths**

In the sub-basement of the church building, in a walk-in vault, lies much of our church's history. Boxes are filled with tantalizing odds and ends of handwritten memos, financial and legal records, faded carbon copies of letters dealing with problems in the church. The locally famous story of how we acquired our church bell, "The Bride's Bell," is told and re-told. The bell's fascinating history began in 1874. In that year the Reverend James McFadden, pastor of the Episcopal Church, left that pastorate because his liberal views were causing much dissension in his congregation. He organized the Reformed Episcopal Church and built a small new church at the corner of Main and Curtice Streets. The bell was a gift from a personal friend of McFadden and was inscribed: "Presented by Rev. Dr. S.H. Tyng, Jr., to the Church of the Rock of Ages, The First Reformed Episcopal Church Erected in America, 1874." The new congregation, however, survived only a few years.

Aid Society, The Women's Service League, The Women's Association - have evolved into today's United Presbyterian Women. UPW ministers in many ways through circles and monthly meetings, through Country Store workers who labor all year at handcrafts to benefit Presbyterian missions, through Bible study and financial aid to the church, and to chosen missions.

As in many other churches, music has always been an important and integral part of worship at Littleton First. Its claim to uniqueness in this field, however, came in 1962 with the purchase from England of two octaves of handbells. Though handbell choirs now are in many churches, at that time they were such a novelty that only one other church in the Denver area -- and that a large, wealthy downtown congregation -- owned handbells, and for several years ours was the only handbell choir in the Denver Presbytery. Over the years two more octaves were added, and recently a three-octave hand chime set was purchased to encourage children to learn to ring bells. Presently, along with performing monthly at Sunday worship, the Bell Choir does considerable community outreach by ringing at nursing homes, service clubs, and at other locations in the metro area.

Perhaps Littleton First's outstanding claim to uniqueness has been its consistent dedication to mission, carried out in several ways. Nearly always it has been near the top of the list in per capita mission expenditure in the Denver Presbytery. Following World War II, the church spearheaded a community project, the building of Friendship House. This house was to serve as a temporary home for a succession of European families seeking a new life in the United States after the chaos of the war left them homeless. From a Hungarian family in 1949, the first occupants of Friendship House, to a H'Mong family in 1979 who temporarily occupied our vacant manse, the congregation has assisted some ten refugee families in building new lives in a new country after wars had destroyed their homes and their livelihoods. And this strong sense of mission, manifested even within the structure of the denomination, caused history to repeat itself. Just as we helped found two new Presbyterian churches in the 1950s, so in the 1980s we are helping to sponsor one of two new Presbyterian churches planned for the ever-expanding south suburban area.

The building itself became a popular spot for various secular uses, including the 1901 Commencement for the Littleton Public School. (Certainly there was less anxiety in those days about the Church being sullied by contact with the secular world: in the modest bulletin printed for the January 1, 1905 service, there appear six ads for local businesses.)

By the first decade of the new century, the modest building could no longer contain the burgeoning membership and increased activities. In 1913 a large addition was built to accommodate the expanding Sunday School and other activities of a busy congregation. This addition gave a totally new look to the church building which was by now an integral part of a fast-growing downtown area. As the town and the congregation grew, even this additional space soon proved insufficient, with noise and dust from the business district disrupting worship services. In June of 1926 the Board of Trustees recommended to the congregation that a new building be constructed. A site at the corner of "Littleton Broadway and 6th Avenue" (Now Littleton Blvd. and Windermere) was donated by Mabel Ficklin. (Granted, there was some grumbling from a few old timers who were dubious about the wisdom of building "way out east of town.") Mrs. Ficklin's gift was abetted by a generous cash donation from her husband William. Mr. Ficklin also served as chairman of the General Building Committee, with several sub-committees under its jurisdiction, a job which was to entail several years of work for him. A fund-raising campaign was begun and bids were solicited from architects and contractors. A locally renowned architect, J.B. Benedict, was chosen to design the new building and Mead and Mount Construction Company to build it. Ground-breaking ceremonies took place on July 7, 1929, but not before members of the Building Committee itself spent a Saturday afternoon clearing brush and weeds from the new church site.

The original building included what is now the sanctuary and Ayers Parlor on the main floor, the balcony and adjacent rooms on the second, and on the lower level Ficklin Hall, the kitchen, and the present choir and music rooms. The cost? A total of \$42,547 for construction, plus \$1,523 for pews and other sanctuary furnishings. The first service was held in the new building on January 12, 1930.



Ladies' Aid Society mock wedding. Date unknown.

### **Struggling, Stretching, Growing**

Occupancy of the new building coincided with the start of the Great Depression, and the new church was not spared in the general economic hardship. Membership fell off and many pledges went unpaid, as did the debts incurred by the construction. As the congregation struggled to meet such basic expenses as the pastor's salary, Mr. Ficklin spent many months courteously soliciting payment of pledges, many responded with token remuneration and promises of intent to fulfill their obligation; others apologetically declared themselves "flat broke" and unable to pay. The congregation struggled and held on, finally resorting to a novel "Wee Cans" Campaign. Parish families contributed small change to their own "Wee Can," and the collective cans were emptied every six weeks. It took thirteen such collections, in the form of some 400 pounds of small change, to raise the needed \$4,700. Little wonder that a joyous mortgage-burning ceremony accompanied the 1945 celebration of the church's 62nd anniversary. All of these difficulties did not prevent the members from treating themselves to a Golden Jubilee in 1933 to mark the 50th anniversary of the church's founding.

### **But What Has Made Us Unique?**

First Presbyterian Church of Littleton is well-known today in the area of being a "traditional" church, leaving avant-garde worship forms to younger and more experimental congregations. But still, throughout its hundred-plus years, there has been a consistency of strength in certain areas, emphases which are so interwoven into the fabric of the church's history that even when they have been temporarily "put on the back burner," they emerge again with new strength.

Starting with those original eighteen members, the congregation has always been comprised of a mix of ages and backgrounds. Some members drive ten miles or more to services; others walk a few blocks from their neighborhood homes. Periodically a rosebud graces the pulpit, one time honoring the birth of a baby, the next honoring the birthday of a nonagenarian. A few names have been on membership roles fifty years or more; others appear and are gone in a year or two as Littleton becomes another stopover in mobile lives.

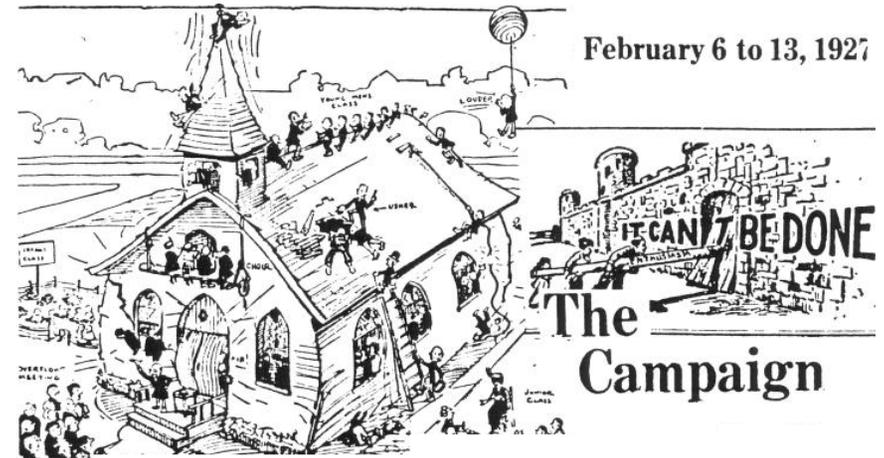
A constant emphasis has been placed on Christian Education, not just of "Sunday School for the kids," but for all ages and in many forms. Adult classes, addressing topics ranging from traditional Bible study to social issues to tackling everyday living problems from a Christian viewpoint, have long been an integral part of Sunday morning scheduling. From this basic belief in education for all ages have sprung many godchildren: a strong youth program; sharing groups in which individuals meet informally to explore their faith, support one another in their life's crises, and strive to fulfill Christ's promise that where "two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them;" couple-and-family oriented organizations dedicated to dual purposes of socialization and service; singles' groups which changed as the structure of society changed.

From that first group of "ladies who gathered subscriptions" to fence in the first church building, the women of the congregation have through the years been one of the great strengths of the church. Earlier organizations - titled The Ladies

During the late 1970s a wave of conservative theology swept through American Protestantism, and the United Presbyterian denomination was not spared the upheaval that accompanies a swing in the theological pendulum. Within Denver Presbytery alone, four churches had suffered irreversible splits. Over a period of several years this same discord, plus some severe personality conflicts within the professional staff, caused First Church of Littleton to become the fifth within the Presbytery to be threatened with irreconcilable differences. Upon formal appeal from a dissenting faction of the session, Denver Presbytery's Committee on Ministerial Relations conducted a thorough, if painful, investigation of the congregation's problems. At its March, 1981 meeting, Presbytery removed the senior pastor from his position at First Church. Much of the congregation, in sympathy with their pastor's stance, removed their membership and assisted him in forming Trinity Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

It was a forlorn group of seventy worshippers who gathered in the sanctuary on the Sunday following Presbytery's action. However, continuity was maintained first through a series of able supply pastors, then by an interim who served for eighteen months. During this time, many formerly active members who had dropped away during the conflict returned and many newcomers decided to make First Church their home. With the conflicts basically resolved, Presbytery soon granted the session permission to form a Pastor-Finding Committee.

Although a Centennial Committee had been working for over a year to make the church's 100th birthday in 1983 a memorable one, the lack of permanent leadership cast a shadow of doubt and concern over the proposed celebration. These fears were dispelled when the Reverend Craig Davies arrived in February, 1983, to serve as senior pastor; immediately he became an enthusiastic participant in the Centennial. The church then treated itself to a year-long birthday party, culminating in a memorable Centennial Weekend from November 4th-6th to mark the actual founding date one hundred years before. Over two hundred people squeezed themselves around gaily decorated tables the night of November 4, 1983, to share a birthday feast.



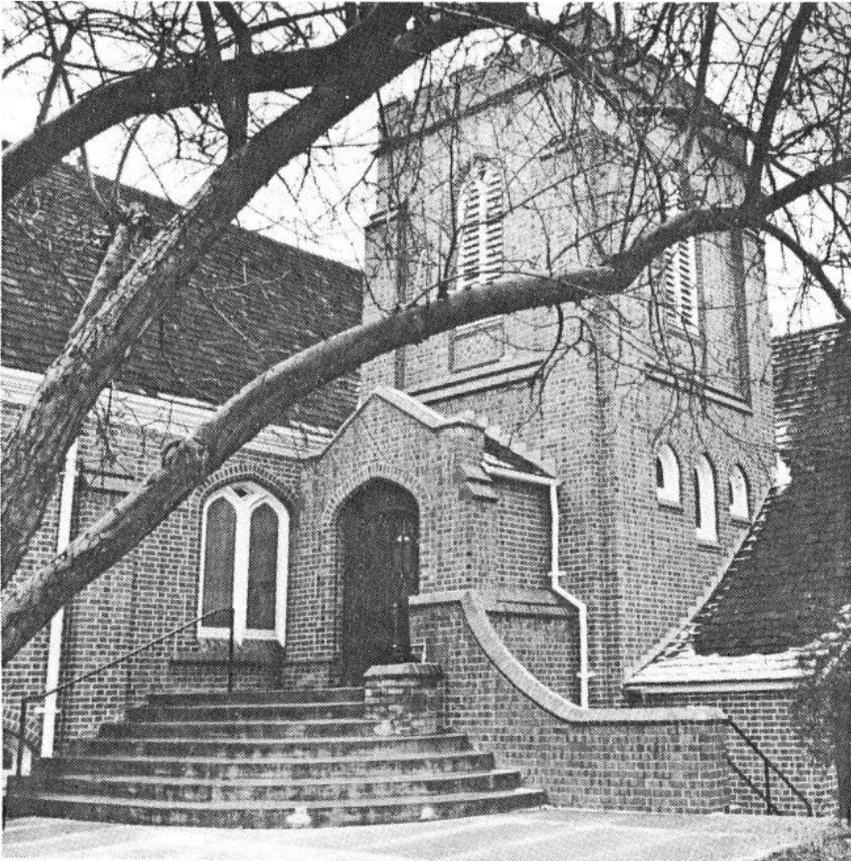
Cartoon from money-raising campaign brochure for new church. 1927.

The 1950s brought radical changes to the life of the Littleton Presbyterian Church. The town had remained a small, though steadily-growing, county seat and agricultural center. In the middle of the decade, several major technology-based industries opened large facilities in the Littleton area, setting the stage for a continuing influx of similar industries. Coinciding with this boom town phenomenon was a nationwide movement, primarily among young postwar families, to join and become active in local churches.



Architect's sketch of new building. 1927

Once again Presbyterian walls were bulging, and the challenge was met in two ways. In 1955 a three-level addition, designed primarily for education purposes, was added to the north side of the existing building, virtually doubling the existing space. The land was again donated by Mabel Ficklin.



Wisely, the session looked at its now-limited expansion space and opted to sponsor two new Presbyterian churches in the Littleton area, Grace and St. James, to serve the suddenly expanded boundaries of the Littleton community. To distinguish the "old" church from these new ones, its name was officially changed in 1960 to "First Presbyterian Church of Littleton."

The small church and the small town suddenly found themselves no longer insular units but rather part of a burgeoning metropolitan area. During the next decade, membership soared to unprecedented levels. But Littleton First met the challenge with enthusiasm. Under the able leadership of one of its most popular pastors, Dr. J. Russell Chandler, new staff plus new programs and additional worship services were added, even while the church managed to remain an influential and stable part of the Littleton community. In 1958 the church, ever conscious of its history, took time to celebrate its 75th anniversary.

With plans to retire the following year, in 1963 Russell and Emily Chandler were surprised with a gift from the congregation of an Easter time trip to the Holy Land. They were not even out of the country when a major crisis hit the church. Suspicious fumes in the basement led to the discovery that the building, situated over a dry creek bed, was rather literally sitting on a tinder box of raw gasoline flowing beneath it. The building was promptly closed down by the Fire Department. (From New York, Dr. Chandler wrote that he knew he was indispensable but didn't think the building would be closed down before he even got to the Holy Land.) For the next ten weeks Sunday services, including Easter's, were held at Grant Junior High School across the street, but many programs had to be curtailed. Litigation ensued as to the source of the gasoline, and a complex and expensive drainage system was installed. Eventually the expenditures were recovered through insurance and the congregation was able to move "back home."

In 1971 the building underwent some major renovations to make it suitable for current needs and to provide a general interior face-lifting. That renovation, plus subsequent exterior work, brought the building and the landscaping to its present appearance.