

TPPC CHURCH HISTORY: 1888 - 1900



Our church had its start in the summer of 1888, when residents of the newly-developing trolley suburb of Takoma Park decided to build a church. They had been meeting in houses and under a tent set up at the corner of Maple and Tulip Avenues—with one man bringing a parlor organ in his wheelbarrow to the services.

Thirty-three people attended the first organizational meeting with the unanimous outcome: "Resolved: That we build a Union Chapel."

Mr. B. Franklin Gilbert, the main developer of the suburb, announced he would donate a lot for the building. Within minutes, pledges of \$500 toward a construction loan were raised. In an excess of enthusiasm, the group adopted a resolution that each member would meet at the chapel lot on a Saturday morning with tools for the purpose of excavating a foundation, but no one appeared on the appointed day.

Undaunted, the group went ahead with plans for the chapel. It was ladies first with money for the building; a group of 26 women made the first cash payment of \$100 to get things rolling. Finally, in May, 1889, after an expenditure of more than \$1,000, the congregation had its first religious service in the basement of the new chapel.

Originally a non-denominational gathering place, the chapel was rented for concerts, lectures, and other entertainments, as well as by other denominational congregations including Methodists and Episcopalians. Facing financial hardship, the church founders decided to affiliate with the Presbyterians who agreed to assume the mortgage and supply a minister. The Union Chapel formally became a mission of the Washington City Presbytery on June, 1892, and in September, 1893, a group of 35 charter members established it as a Presbyterian church.

Temperance was a prime concern of the congregation and the pastor was instructed to devote at least two sermons a year to the subject. By the turn of the new century, the church was thriving and had grown to 180 members, from the original 35.