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TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In 1939 according to the Mid-County Chronicle, there were five established churches in Port Neches: First Baptist, Central Baptist, First Methodist, Assembly of God and St. ~~Catherine~~ ^{Elizabeth} Catholic. Several people wanting a Presbyterian Church here sought guidance from Rev. Sarles of First Presbyterian, Port Arthur. They petitioned Houston Presbytery and were approved.

January 31 First Presbyterian of Port Neches, TX, held their first meeting in the VanBreeman home with 15 charter members and elected four Elders.

In March Presbytery sent a Sunday School Missionary to help with organization and build membership. She held services with twenty families at the Lyric Theater and Sunday school in the labor hall.

Within the next two months the congregation purchased one and a half lots on Wagner Street and called Rev. Carl Hatfield to pastor at \$1200 a year. Houston Presbytery and Presbyterian Board of National Missions provided financial support for the new church.

In order to raise money for a building fund, the church held a Hobby Show in the Port Neches Motor Co. display room. It was open to entries by individuals and organizations with freewill offerings accepted.

In June Rev. Hatfield arrived and ground was broken for a \$3,500 frame auditorium with an attached manse. After contracts were awarded for construction supervision and materials and donations of roofing material from Texaco and paint from Pure Oil, work on the building proceeded with help from volunteers.

Session minutes report that fifteen new members were received in 1939.

In March 1940 the first service was held in the new building, but the manse still needed wiring, wallpaper and screens. Finances were tight. The June treasurer's report shows a bank balance of \$.65, bills for \$201.67, and a building fund of \$40.95. But with more help from Presbytery and National Missions and a special offering of \$15 from each member, the life of the church continued with outreach in the community.

A Men's Club was organized and a joint meeting held with the Port Neches Lion's Club. The Session invited "a small group of Episcopalians" to share our building. The Camp Fire Council and the Music Club had meetings there.

In 1941 the congregation had to make adjustments after the pastor moved on. For the next year worship was led monthly by the Port Arthur minister and visiting christian education directors;

however, sunday school continued weekly.

After the arrival of Rev. Lang in 1942, the Session made plans for an addition to the church, but no material was available and contributions were decreasing. Rev. Lang left Port Neches after a year and Rev. Joel Aldredge was called to the pulpit in August 1943 at \$2100 yearly.

The rest of that year reveals signs of hope: a telephone installed; attendance up 46%; hymnals and communion linens donated; plans for a choir and grants requested from the War Emergency Fund and Presbytery for a new manse. The congregation also made calls of invitation to 370 government trailers.

Progress continued in 1944 with the purchase of a manse, repainting the church. creation of a Board of Deacons, increase of \$50 in pastor's salary, a two-week preaching mission, family night suppers, and the attendance of a young person at the Texas Youth Synod. The women packed 10 Red Cross boxes and the Men held a domino party. The session also ordered hymnals for the evening service and sunday school material. A Cub Scout gift was applied to an outdoor sign. That year, also, the union needed their chairs back and the church purchased pews. It is noted that after one meeting the Session went to a member's home "to assure her of the prayers and interest of the church in time of marital troubles."

Trinity continued to do well in 1945 with average attendance in Sunday school 46, morning service 36, and evening service 10. Session sent the publication LINK to their service members. They were also able to order pulpit chairs to match the pews and an outdoor illuminated sign for \$80. Lent was celebrated with neighborhood meetings in members' homes each week.

In June, however, Rev. Aldredge was called to Tulia; and Rev. Kenneth Mauldin in Port Arthur was asked to preach a 9:30 morning service and moderate the Session as the Elders sought a new pastor. In September they secured a seminary student, Rush Linder, as "acting pastor" for six months. They were also able to clear their debts to the lumber company and to the Board of Christian Education and to purchase insurance.

Linder preached until July 1946 when the congregation voted to accept him as their pastor after he completed his studies.

The following May 1947 Rev. Linder was installed. The Session then voted to conduct a religious survey visitation. At this time the church had a budget of \$2700, accepted their quota of \$234 to the national church and cleared their debts to Presbytery and National Missions.

Rev. Linder served until December 1948 and the Session began 1949 by inviting men in the church and community to fill the pulpit

at \$10 a Sunday as relief to Rev. Mauldin, who again served as Trinity's Moderator and preacher. The treasurer's report shows all bills paid and a balance of \$400.

In May Session brought in a candidate for pastor; but after two split votes by the congregation, decided not to call him. A ministerial student from Port Arthur preached the rest of the summer.

In August the congregation met to issue a unanimous call to Rev. Gerald Blackburn, who accept and served until the following year, 1950.

We at Trinity thank God for all His workers, professional and lay men and women, who have labored in His Port Neches vineyard.