

The Builders



The Identity and Witness of Central United Methodist Church of Muskegon, Michigan

A Different History

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the phased-out lumber mills. These companies, many linked to the growing automobile market, were thriving. The promise of peace and prosperity was great.

Nonetheless, the Muskegon Methodists could not do it all alone. They sought help with the project from the Bureau of Architecture of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. Architects S.M. Conover and T.M. Sundt suggested using *Church Management Magazine's* competition-winning design for churches in the \$300,000 class, and those plans were adopted. The church also sought professional help with financing the project. In February 1927, a fundraising campaign conducted by H.H. Patterson of Cleveland, Ohio, secured cash and pledges of \$130,000, enough to start the project. In the highly optimistic atmosphere, the funding appeared clearly manageable, and an invitation

for bid was published. The winning bid of \$202,974 from George Lather and Sons, was well within the cost estimate, so the congregation proceeded with great optimism.

On October 11, 1928, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new church was held. A passage from the church archives captures this event: After appropriate exercises of hymns and prayer, the pastor, Dr. A.R. Johns, dug the first shovel full of dirt. Many others followed in turning the sod. At the close of this episode, the great steam shovel began excavating in earnest. The concrete foundations were put in that fall, and work stopped until spring. In April 1929, work was begun again. On Sunday afternoon, May 19, 1929, the cornerstone was laid with appropriate ceremony by Mr. George B.M. Towner, president of the Board of Trustees.



The old property at Clay and Jefferson was sold for \$90,000, and the beloved bell sent off ignominiously to scrap. The last service in the red brick church was held June 29, 1929. For two months while the basement of the new church was being built, services were held in the auditorium of Muskegon Senior High School. By

Sunday, October 6, 1929, the parish hall was ready and services were held there while work on the sanctuary continued. The red brick church had served the community for forty years, but it was ultimately torn down and the property converted to use as a local bus terminal.

