

Mason First Church of the Nazarene

It all began because God's people were focused on the needs of others. In 1930, through the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, the youth group and leadership of Lansing First Church of the Nazarene was inspired to begin a home mission "seed" church in Mason, Michigan. The street meetings quickly found shelter in different homes within the community for "cottage" prayer meetings and finally in local store fronts throughout the next few years. Revival campaigns were held with evangelists like Clayton Kidd and Irma Pierce. Many responded to the message of holiness. As the people began to hold weekly meetings, a young ministerial student by the name of Ernest Martin was asked to preach. He would later become the first pastor of the newly organized Mason First Church of the Nazarene in 1931, with a spirited group of 23 charter members. Reverend E.W. Martin was paid seven dollars per week as he led our baby church during those difficult depression years. Pastor Martin

adopted as his motto: "Respect for the Past, Progress for the Present, Vision for the Future," and the theme verse for the church: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Praise God for this solid foundation upon which our wonderful heritage was laid!

In the mid 1930's, the church acquired the old dance hall on Barnes Street. Some interior alterations were necessary; ticket booths had to be removed in order to accommodate caskets for funeral services. Things could get mighty cold in that old dance hall, but as the church moved Forward in Faith, the Lord continued to warm hearts and change lives. During a particularly bitter cold week one winter, a sparsely populated revival service was held and Mr. Mortiz Eifert,



Helen Stuart's grandfather, found Christ. He then asked Pastor Martin to come to his house and pray with his wife because she too needed the Lord. They did and she accepted Christ as her personal Savior that very night. Not long after his conversion, Mr. Eifert was spotted by Pastor Martin inspecting the old dance hall/church. His comment to the Pastor was, "WE have a problem with OUR building, don't WE?" Though that fact was obvious, so was the fact that there were no funds available. A few days later,

Mr. Eifert placed a check for \$10,000 in the hands of Pastor Martin, a huge sum of money in 1936. With God's direction, and the faithfulness of His people to invest in Kingdom building, our church moved Forward in Faith. It was in that same year of the Eiferts' sacrificial gift that the church purchased land near the railroad tracks at the bottom of the hill on Elm Street.



We began construction of the first "real" church building with everyone pitching in. As they acknowledge one another's gifts, they partnered together and God was honored! As the numbers grew, an education wing was added. From 1936 to 1955, six different ministers would come to pastor Mason First at the Elm Street location. During this time, Mr. & Mrs. Jessie Burgess accepted Christ into their lives which was to make a huge impact in the next step God was leading our church. The emphasis of our church has always been on the teaching of the Word of Life. As a result, space was at a premium, parking inadequate (sounds familiar) and sermons occasionally had to pause for a train whistle. Once again it was time for change ... time to move Forward in Faith.

Under the leadership of Rev. Roy Mumau, plans were made to undertake yet another ambitious building project. The Burgess family made available between seven and nine acres of their farm to the church in a prime area of Mason on Maple Street. Soon the work was underway. Once again, everyone joined in and did their part. The men donated labor for the building's construction; the women did much of the staining and finishing.



The teens played an active role in the endeavor and the children each did their best to "buy a brick."

By early 1957, the first phase of the new church, the sanctuary and south (nursery) wing, were completed. The west (kitchen) wing was added by 1960 as time and money permitted. It is interesting to note that one of Jessie Burgess' children attends Mason First Church today: Josephine Donaldson (June King faithfully attended

until her homegoing in September of this year). Five generations of this family have made our church their own. What a tribute to the ongoing ministry of our great church!

Seventeen years and five pastors have come and gone. It's 1977 and with the able leadership of Rev. Orville L. Maish, Jr., God is still blessing His church at 415 E. Maple Street. Again we went Forward in Faith. God kept His promise, "I will build My church...." Volunteer labor took the initiative and the new sanctuary construction began. On the morning of the dedication, led by the church choir, everyone marched from the old sanctuary (our current gym) to the new one where we now worship. What a time of celebration and thanksgiving!



In June, 1994 just 18 years after this sanctuary was built, we the people of Mason First Church of the Nazarene, celebrated our mortgage burning. But God was just getting started. No time to sit and rest on yesterday's victories and accomplishments because if Mason First is to be all that it can and ought to be in the days to come, our dreams for the future have to outweigh our memories of the past. The next year, we launched into another building project: the construction of our Fellowship Hall. Three years later in May of 1998, nearly 370 people crammed into the Fellowship Hall for its dedication with

DR. C. Neil Strait and former pastor Winn Allison joining us to celebrate the event. With E.W. Martin's motto, "Respect for the Past, Progress for the Present, and Vision for the Future," we are always ready to move Forward in Faith!

We began as a home mission "seed" church and have always kept this mission theme throughout our history. Mr. Eifert's gift of \$10,000 was paid back, as he desired, not to him, but to Kansas City, our International headquarters, to fund the building of a church on the mission field in Japan. Later our church would sponsor the very first lay-project (in Nicaragua) to have the characteristics of what are now "Work and Witness" teams. As we have done in the past, we continue to seek God's will today, responding to meet the growing needs of our church and community. May we today build upon the rich legacy of our past and move Forward in Faith in order that all who come behind us find us faithful to His cause.