

History

of the

Hills United Reformed Church

Welcome to the history page of the Hills United Reformed Church!

You know, history is about more than simply keeping a record of past people and events. It's about recognizing how God has been working in the lives of His people, turning the circumstances they face to serve His purposes and to benefit them.

We certainly have experienced God's loving care here in Hills. As a congregation, we've never been extremely large – but we often have been blessed! We have been blessed by the people God has brought to us, blessed by the children He has allowed us to welcome and nurture, blessed by the community in which we live. We've even been blessed by the struggles and hard times we've experienced – and there have been a few of those.

So with that in mind, let us tell you a bit the Church in Hills.

MOTIVATION FOR A CHURCH

The families who established the Hills congregation came from the Sioux County, Iowa, colony of Dutch immigrants and from New Jersey. Since they were far removed from an organized church of their faith, their great desire for Christian fellowship brought them together at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Van Hill. After some time, it was decided to rent and meet in Finke Hall in Hills, and still later they gathered together in the basement of the cafe building. It was at these early meetings that our forefathers enjoyed Christian fellowship and were edified by sermon reading, singing songs of praise and drawing nigh to their faithful God in prayer.

After more families were added to the group, the subject of organizing a church was discussed. After correspondence was sent to Classis Sioux Center of the Christian Reformed Church, the classis sent their Home Missionary, Rev. H.J. Heynen, to set up the framework of organization.

ORGANIZED IN 1914

With approval from Classis Sioux Center, the formal organization of our church took place on June 30, 1914, as De Christelijke Gereformeerde Gemeente te Hills – Hills Christian Reformed Church.

By this time the group had rented the old brick church from the Bethlehem Lutheran Church to use as its meeting place. Rev. M. De Boer, minister of the Doon, Iowa, CRC, was appointed to take charge of organizing the group. Rev. De Boer delivered an inspirational message based on Acts 2:41-47. The group joined in praise by singing Psalm 133, verse 3. On this eventful day seven families and one unmarried person were enrolled, for a total of 15 communicant and 36 baptized members. Charter members were: Mr. & Mrs. Evert Klomp, Mr. Laurence Silvis, Mr. & Mrs. Hendriekus Smit, Mr. & Mrs. Hendrik Smit, Mr. & Mrs. Johannes Van Hill, Mr. & Mrs. Arie Verhey, Mr. & Mrs. Jan Zandbergen, and Mr. & Mrs. Jan Zeilemaker.

Election of office bearers also took place at this time. Hendriekus Smit and Jan Zandbergen were elected as elders, and John Van Hill was elected as deacon. Mr. Smit and Mr. Van Hill served our congregation as office bearers faithfully throughout most of the first 25 years of our church's existence. In gratitude for his faithful service, the church voted Mr. Smit honorary elder upon his retirement.

So marked the beginning of the Hills Christian Reformed Church – its members going forward in faith, having complete confidence in their faithful God and Father.

A home missionary, Rev. P. Van Vliet, was appointed to labor in the midst of the small group. He arrived with his family in August of the same year our church was organized. The labors of Rev. Van Vliet, who was earnest and kind, contributed much toward the upbuilding of our congregation.

As the group grew in number, the desire to build a house of worship became evident. A congregational meeting was called after the Prayer Day service in the spring of 1915. At this meeting it was decided to purchase two acres of land from John Finke just north and across the road from the present public school. A congregational meeting was called on May 5, 1915, at which time it was decided to build a new church on this land. Plans for building were made and the small group pledged \$1,000 to begin. However, these plans were never carried out. By the providence of God, Rev. Van Vliet received a call from the Inwood, Iowa, CRC which he felt led to accept. Rev. Van Vliet departed from Hills in November of 1916. The building program was postponed, as the little group began to endure a trying time.

DISBAND? THE QUESTION OF 1917

Some families moved and the number decreased from 16 families to 11. Some suggested that it might be best for the congregation to disband. The consistory, after prayerful consideration, decided to continue, looking to the Lord for assistance. From time to time the matter of disbanding was discussed anew.

The consistory decided to put it up for a vote at a congregational meeting held in September of 1918. A vote of four to four proved that the group was equally divided on the issue. It was then decided to consult Classis Sioux Center. Classis recommended disbanding, and the consistory at their October 9 meeting agreed. However, this decision was never carried out. Again this issue was brought before a congregational meeting held in February of 1919, at which time it was decided by a vote of 4 to 2 to continue.

At this time a parcel of land with a home on it was put up for sale. This property was purchased, with the house to serve as a parsonage. This is the present site of our church and parsonage. The old parsonage served as a janitor's home for many years but later was sold to make room for the new parsonage, constructed in 1962. It was decided that the two acres first purchased would serve as a cemetery for our congregation.

After four years without a pastor, the Lord directed Rev. J. B. Vanden Hoek to accept a call to Hills. The congregation welcomed its first regular pastor in February of 1920. During Rev. Vanden Hoek's stay in Hills, the number of families again increased to 15. Rev. Vanden Hoek was instrumental in the organizing of two societies in 1922: a Young People's Society and De Martha Vrouwenvereniging, which was a ladies aid society. Rev. Vanden Hoek also was a man who dared to speak publicly against the desecration of the Sabbath in our town.

Rev. Vanden Hoek labored in our congregation for four years before retiring from the ministry. After his retirement the congregation did not call another minister immediately. Again voices were heard that it might be well for the Hills Church to disband, but the Lord's will was different.

SOCIETIES & A NEW CHURCH BUILDING IN 1929

The congregation called Candidate Martin Van Dyk, and the Lord led Mr. Van Dyk to accept our call. Upon receiving this news, the congregation took new courage. The new pastor was installed in September of 1925.

During this ministry, the congregation enjoyed happy days. The Lord blessed Rev. Van Dyk's energetic leadership and fiery preaching. A Christian School Society was organized in 1927, a Choral Society was organized in 1928, and the Young People's Society was revived, after a period of being discontinued.

In the final year of Rev. Van Dyk's stay, a fine new church building was constructed at a cost of about \$6,000. The members of the congregation did most of the work themselves. Special recognition was given to Gerrit Fransen and Peter Ackerman, who supervised the building operation.

It was during this period, in the late 1920s, that the annual Sunday School picnic began to be held in the grove of the Van Goor farm. This practice continued until 1934, when it was moved to the Hills Park and celebrated on the Fourth of July. The annual Sunday School picnic included a dinner at noon, followed by games for the children and ball games for the adults. A canteen was set up, and everyone ate throughout the afternoon.

In 1929, Rev. Van Dyk was given leave to visit Holland. While there, he received a call from the Nieuweroord Reformed Church in Holland, which he felt led to accept this call. The congregation was very disappointed and discouraged, but they were thankful for Rev. Van Dyk's faithful labor in their midst. By this time, the congregation had increased to 35 families.

After being vacant for almost a year, a call was extended to Candidate Gareth Kok, who became our new pastor in September of 1930. The Lord continued to favor us through the ministry of this man of quiet ways and of earnest, lucid preaching. The congregation continued to increase in number, growing to 51 families. A complete Sunday School program again was organized during the summer months. During Rev. Kok's stay, two additional societies were organized: a Men's Society, organized in 1933, and a Young Men's Society, organized in 1934.

ADOPTING THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE IN THE 1930S

Rev. Kok's tenure also marked the time when it became evident that there was a need for more services in the American language. At first the consistory decided to hold two such services a month, and this was the beginning of the complete transition to the American language. Older members would very much have liked to keep the Dutch language, but they saw that the younger generation needed the gospel preached to them in the language they could better understand.

After faithfully serving our congregation for four years, Rev. Kok was led to accept a call to the Bellflower, Calif., CRC in 1935.

After Rev. Kok left, the congregation experienced a relatively short vacancy. In September of the same year, Candidate Edward Visser accepted our call. During this period a third American language service was added each month. A second ladies aid group, known as the Esther Circle, was organized in 1937, using solely the American language in their Bible study.

It was during this period, in 1936, that a summer Bible School began to be held in the Church basement. This school was taught five days a week, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., for four weeks in the summer. It continued each summer until Hills Christian School was started in 1949.

Hills CRC also began holding its annual Mission Fest during the decade of the 1930s. Initially including the Hills, Rock Rapids and Sioux Falls congregations, the event was held at the Hills City Park. Mission Fest began with dinner at noon, with a missionary addressing the assembly in the afternoon. For the children, the missionary's wife often had a program. The program concluded with a time of fellowship and lunch. An evening program often featured a slide presentation showing the work being done on the mission fields. At one of our early Mission Fests, Miss Johanna Veenstra addressed our group as the first CRC-related missionary to work in Africa. The Mission Fests continued for many years, although each congregation started having their own evening Mission Fest in the 1950s.

In the mid-1930s, efforts were begun to purchase a different parsonage, as the old one had proved to be inadequate. Our area was experiencing serious economic troubles; and as a result, many families moved away. Rev. Visser's stay with us was brief. In 1938 he received a call from one of our neighboring churches in Doon, Iowa, and was led by God to accept this call.

AN ANNIVERSARY AND A DAUGHTER CHURCH

The congregation called Rev. Paul De Koekkoek that same year, having just purchased a different parsonage on Fourth Street from Mrs. John Finke.

Rev. De Koekkoek proved to be a very energetic man who was faithful in doing the work God had called him to do. Under his leadership, the King's Daughters Society was organized in 1938 for the

single young women. It was during Rev. De Koekkoek's time that the congregation celebrated its 25th anniversary and decided to hold half of its services in the American language and half in Dutch.

Around this time, a second-hand pipe organ was purchased from the Cathedral in Sioux Falls for \$400. Our church also had a very active Choral Society during this period, under the directorship of Mr. Tim Fikse.

Rev. De Koekkoek was instrumental in organizing the Luverne CRC. The Luverne group first became a branch church of Hills. Then, on April 27, 1944, it became an organized church comprising 14 families and 61 souls.

In the early part of 1945 Rev. De Koekkoek received a call to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Feeling that he had to accept the call, his faithful service to our congregation was concluded.

The congregation was again blessed with a short vacancy as Rev. John G. Vande Lune from Colton, S.D., accepted our call. Rev. Vande Lune was one of our few pastors who had many years of experience in the ministry. This proved to be very beneficial to our congregation, in that sound advice was received from him on many matters.

It was during the last few years of Rev. De Koekkoek's stay and the first part of Rev. Vande Lune's that our country was involved in the Second World War. Many of the young men of our congregation were called to serve their country in the armed forces, and it was only by God's grace that all of the men's lives were spared, that they might return home to their loved ones. An evening of home welcoming was given by the congregation to the servicemen after they had all returned home.

In 1948 it was decided to replace the old coal furnace of the church with a new oil furnace. The old coal storage room was given new life as the congregation's new inside restroom.

HILLS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL BEGINS IN 1952

After more than 20 years of planning, saving and praying by members of the Hills CRC, the Hills Christian School officially began in 1949. The consistory granted permission for the school to hold its classes in the Church basement, with the school board agreeing to pay a share of the electricity, heat and janitor costs. School began that fall with 30 students gathered in the Church basement under the instruction of Mr. Bernard Lyzenga.

The school continued to be a concern of the church, with a plot of land purchased in April 1951 for \$1,000. A school building from Tyler, Minn., was purchased later that year and was slowly moved from Tyler to Hills. Unexpected obstacles in the town of Beaver Creek required that the building be left on the street in Beaver Creek on a Saturday evening, with workers waiting until Monday – after their Lord's Day rest – to remove the obstacles and conclude the trip to Hills. The new school building was dedicated on December 31, 1951.

In March, 1953, the Young People's Society donated a new outside bulletin board to the church. Also in 1953 the congregation decided to change from the common communion cup to individual cups.

After serving our denomination as a minister for 40 years, and our congregation for more than eight years, Rev. Vande Lune asked for and received his emeritus status in August 1953.

Our congregation then called Candidate Gerrit Bernard Dokter, who accepted our call and arrived soon after Rev. Vande Lune left. At the congregational meeting when Rev. Dokter was called, it was decided to have all worship services conducted in the American language. Society life became very active, with both Rev. and Mrs. Dokter taking an active part. The congregation remained at 45 to 50 families for several years.

It was during this period, in 1954, that the congregation installed a new speaker system in the Church which included an FM radio transmitter. This allowed us to broadcast our services up to three miles away, for the sake of shut-ins, those who were sick, and members of the community. We continued this practice for roughly the next 50 years. Eventually, however, the transmitter began causing interference with a later sound system. The combination of technical difficulties and the unit's decreased usefulness finally convinced us to retire our broadcasting equipment in 2004.

Rev. Dokter felt in his heart that he would like to serve in the armed services as a chaplain and be a witness to our men in the service. In the fall of 1956, he received a call to become a chaplain. After he had served our congregation for three years and three months, the congregation was sorry to see Rev. Dokter and his wife leave.

NEW ORGAN PURCHASED IN 1958

After issuing several calls and receiving declines, the congregation was led to call Candidate Gerald Van Oyen. He was ordained and installed in September of 1957. Rev. Van Oyen also was a young man, but by God's grace he developed into a very able and powerful minister on the pulpit. God blessed him with the ability to do personal work among the members, which created a warm feeling between the congregation and their pastor.

The old pipe organ had become difficult to repair, so in April of 1958, the congregation decided to purchase a new electric Allen organ from Hartog Piano in Edgerton. In May of 1958, the congregation decided to have evening services instead of afternoon services for four summer months on a one-year trial basis. The following year it was voted to have evening services for the summer months permanently, with this period later being extended to five months.

In August of 1958, the Young People's Society donated a new baptismal font and two song boards. In July of 1959, the Esther Circle donated new pulpit furniture, and a matching communion table was given as a memorial gift.

Rev. Van Oyen received several calls but gladdened the hearts of the congregation as he was led to decline these calls. But finally he received a call from the Calvary CRC of Pella, Iowa, and felt it was God's will that he accept this call. After serving our church three years, a bond which had been closely knit between pastor and congregation had to be broken.

DECLINES & DISCOURAGEMENT IN 1961

After this the congregation experienced a long vacancy. The congregation received 17 letters of decline from the various ministers that were called. With each letter of decline we were met with discouragement, and it was only by God's grace that we were able to go forward in faith to make a new call. Exactly two years later, in November of 1962, God answered our prayers with a letter of acceptance from Rev. John Kruis of Peers, Alberta, Canada.

During the two years of vacancy, the congregation sold the old parsonage and the janitor's house, building a beautiful new parsonage for about \$18,000 next to the church building, where the janitor's house had stood. We rejoiced in the Lord that we as a congregation were able to provide a nice home for Rev. Kruis and his family, as well as for our future ministers and their families. It was during Rev. Kruis' stay that our congregation celebrated its 50th anniversary. He very ably led us in that important event. We as a congregation were truly grateful to the Lord for His wonderful blessing.

Rev. Kruis served our congregation faithfully. He thoroughly believed in the infallibility of God's Holy Word, and his preaching brought us much joy and comfort. After he had served our congregation for four years, the Niekerk CRC of Holland, Mich., extended a call to our pastor. God led Rev. Kruis to accept this call, so our ties as pastor and congregation came to an end.

That same year the congregation called Candidate Dennis Boonstra, who through the Lord's leading accepted our call. Rev. Boonstra was a man of quiet nature, but he faithfully carried out the ministry of God's Word to us. He and his family were with us for three years. Then the CRC of Sioux City, Iowa, extended a call to him, and after prayerfully considering, he felt that God was calling him there. Rev. Boonstra made his announcement to the congregation in a rather unique way by tying it in with his sermon on Sunday morning.

After issuing several calls and receiving declines, in August of 1970 the consistory proposed to the congregation that they cease calling for one year and engage Mr. Julius Levering as a stated supply. The congregation accepted this proposal, so Mr. and Mrs. Levering and their daughter occupied our

parsonage for one year. The congregation greatly appreciated their work in the midst of the true preaching of God's Word, leading our catechism classes and visiting our sick and aged members.

Before Mr. Levering came to us, the congregation also took advantage of the Calvin Seminary summer placement program for two summers. During the first summer, Mr. Philip Kok served our congregation; and in the second summer, we were privileged to have Mr. James Scholten. We appreciated both young men very much. The congregation was still vacant so the consistory was led to put these two men on the nomination. A congregational meeting was held, and the Church was led by God to extend a call to Candidate James Scholten, which he accepted.

A NEW CHURCH BUILDING IN 1973

During Rev. Scholten's stay with us, we completed a large building program. At this time voices were expressed that we should enlarge our entryway and make other needed repairs to the building. The consistory appointed a committee to study the matter and make recommendations. After a thorough study, the committee found many needs and recommended an extensive remodeling project. This was accepted by the consistory, and they proposed it to the congregation for approval.

The congregation approved adding to the front entryway, remodeling the whole inside of the building, and replacing all the windows. The congregation was able to rent the local American Legion auditorium to hold our worship services on Sundays while the work was being done. With volunteer help, the inside walls and windows were removed. However, further observation revealed that some of the main structure was deteriorated and had to be replaced. Many members began to ask whether it was worthwhile to remodel the whole building, so the consistory again met to consider the project.

After much discussion it was decided to propose to the congregation the construction of a new church building. This was unanimously approved, so committees were appointed to start the wheels turning. A local contractor, Feucht and DeBoer, was hired to build the church, using all of the volunteer help offered. With much hard work from everyone, God blessed us with a beautiful new church building for a cost of \$94,000, where still today we have the privilege of worshipping our God from Sunday to Sunday. Special recognition was given to Rev. Scholten for his excellent leadership through the whole project. God further blessed us through Rev. Scholten's sincere presentation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, after serving us for four years, God led Rev. Scholten to accept a call from the Willard, Ohio, CRC. We had to bid farewell to a Pastor and his family whom we learned to love and respect.

CASH FOR TRASH IN 1976

After several calls and declines, God led us to call Rev. Henry Baak from Woden, Iowa, and he accepted. We were greatly blessed in receiving spiritual guidance from Sunday to Sunday from the pulpit. A warm friendship was established between the congregation and Rev. and Mrs. Baak.

Mrs. Baak was very instrumental in beginning the cash for trash project for our local Christian School. This proved to be very beneficial for our school financially and continues to this day. Due to crowded conditions in the school, the society voted in the early 1970s to build a new classroom building and gym. This was completed in three phases over the course of several years, being dedicated in September of 1977.

After serving our congregation faithfully for six years, Rev. Baak reached the age of retirement. He asked for and received his emeritation in August of 1981, at which time Rev. and Mrs. Baak retired in Grand Rapids, Mich.

SEVERAL BRIEF PASTORATES

The following summer the congregation again took advantage of the summer placement program for the denomination's future ministers. Calvin Seminary sent us Mr. William Vis. He had already completed his seminary course and was declared eligible for call by Synod that summer. The

consistory made him one of the nominees for the congregation to consider calling. After prayerful consideration, we were guided by God to call Candidate Vis, and he gladdened our hearts in accepting. Rev. Vis already had a family of five children, and as a congregation we appreciated how much this added to our church and school. Close ties were quickly established, and God used him to edify and bless the congregation spiritually each Sunday.

Rev. Vis' stay with us was brief. After about a year and seven months, he received a call to the Gallatin Gateway, Montana, CRC and was led by the Lord to accept this call. We as a congregation were very disappointed, but we were able to submit through the knowledge that God calls one here and another elsewhere.

The consistory was faced with what to do that would be best for the congregation. After much discussion and with the advice of our counselor, Rev. Scheuers of Luverne CRC, we decided to seek the services of an experienced retired minister for a period of time. Rev. Clarence Werkema from Holland, Mich., was approached to see if he could help us in Hills, and he gladly accepted our invitation. The congregation was richly blessed by Rev. Werkema's services – so much that we asked him to extend his stay with us. A close and lasting friendship was established between the congregation and Rev. and Mrs. Werkema.

In May of 1986, a trio was presented to the congregation. The congregation was led to call Rev. Samuel Ten Brink from First CRC of Kalamazoo, Mich. After a short two weeks we were glad to learn that God had led him to accept our call. Rev. Ten Brink again was one of our older ministers, and we expected that his service to our congregation would be his before retiring. However, we hoped to enjoy one another's fellowship for at least four or five years.

In March of 1987, the congregation decided to purchase a new Allen 2110 electronic organ for a cost of \$14,600. This was dedicated on July 12, 1987, during the evening service.

We were soon reminded that man's plan is not always God's plan. Rev. Ten Brink suffered from diabetes, and his illness began to progress rapidly. Soon it affected his eyesight to the point where it prevented his continuing to work as a minister. His announcement to the congregation of needing to discontinue his work was received with many tears, for in our short time together we had drawn very close to him. After just one year and a few months, we had to bid farewell to another of our pastors. Rev. Ten Brink received early emeritation, retiring with his wife in Grand Rapids.

The consistory again took up the task of finding a new pastor. A duo was presented to the congregation in December of 1987, and they were led to call Candidate Timothy C. Turngren, who accepted this call.

On January 24, 1988, the congregation met together for special recognition of Mr. and Mrs. Everett Fikse, who were retiring after serving as church custodians for 22 years. A plaque was given to them from the congregation indicating the years of service and a thank you for a job well done.

During this period, a number of conflicts arose within the congregation, leading to Rev. Turngren's departure in early 1990. A number of families also departed during this period, dropping the size of the Church from 44 families comprising 215 souls in 1989, down to 33 families comprising 123 souls in 1991.

LOOKING BACK ON THE 1990s AND 2000s

However, it was at that difficult time that the Lord reminded His people in Hills that He is with us also as we walk through the valleys.

By His providence, the Lord led the consistory to ask Rev. Dr. P.Y. De Jong to serve the Church from May through November of 1990. A professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Orange City, Iowa, Rev. De Jong offered much wisdom and the soothing balm of God's Word, beginning to bring healing to this time of pain in the Church.

The Lord continued to heal the Church through the service of Candidate Alan Camarigg, a Mid-America graduate whom the congregation called in June of 1991. Rev. Camarigg served the Church

faithfully for nearly six years. He accepted the call of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church of Lynden, Wash., in January of 1997, departing a month later.

However, the congregation soon met the man who would be their next pastor in the person of Mr. Keith Davis, another Mid-America Reformed Seminary student. Mr. Davis served the congregation for the summer of 1997 as an intern, receiving and accepting their call after he graduated and sustained his candidacy exam in 1998.

Before that call was issued, however, the church in Hills experienced another significant challenge. In a number of matters, our denomination had chosen to act in ways which were contrary to God's Word, and repeated attempts to call the denomination as a whole to submit to God's Word were ineffective. After a lengthy period of discussion and prayer, the congregation voted in June of 1998 to depart from the Christian Reformed Church and affiliate with the United Reformed Churches in North America. The URCNA is a federation which formed in 1995 of like-minded former CRC congregations. Sadly, this decision also led several more families to depart from us. God is gracious, however, and He led others to join us.

Rev. Davis arrived and was ordained in September of 1998. With his wife and five children, Rev. Davis was an encouragement to the congregation during this time of transition. However, after about three and a half years, Rev. Davis was led to accept a call from the Lynwood, Ill., URC.

Rev. Davis' departure in May of 2002 began what would be a two-year vacancy for the Hills URC. During this time, God was pleased to provide several men to fill the pulpit and feed God's people with His Word. During the first summer, Mid-America Reformed Seminary student Doug Barnes served the congregation as a pastoral intern. While Mr. Barnes was serving, the consistory sought the help of a retired URC minister, Rev. Jay Wesseling, in filling the pulpit during their pastoral search.

Rev. Wesseling provided the congregation with interim pulpit supply from the fall of 2002 through the early summer of 2004, with his service interrupted only by the service of another Mid-America student, Mr. David Klumpenhower.

After receiving declines to calls issued for several ministers, the consistory in April of 2004 presented the congregation with the duo of their former interns, Mr. Barnes and Mr. Klumpenhower, both of whom were about to graduate. After the congregation twice cast tie votes, and with no one expressing reservations about either man, the elders placed the men's names on slips of paper in a Bible, prayed, and withdrew one of the slips to select the man they would call. They subsequently issued a call to Mr. Barnes, who expressed his intention to accept the call if he sustained his candidacy examination. He did, and in June of 2004, he and his wife and five children moved to Hills.

The Hills Church's welcome of the Barnes family was quite warm. In preparation for their new minister, before they were even sure who that man would be, the congregation had remodeled the kitchen and dining room of the parsonage and performed various upgrades to the electrical and heating systems. The newly refurbished parsonage then was quickly filled with the help of numerous members of the congregation, who arrived throughout the day after the Barnes family arrived to help unload and unpack.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING RECENTLY?

In recent years, several major events have marked our life as a Church family.

One significant step came with the starting of a church plant in Sioux Falls, at the request of several families from outside the congregation and one family from within. That group began meeting for worship at the Sioux Falls Christian Elementary School in September of 2005. In December of 2006, the members of the church plant and the Hills congregation joined in calling Mr. Spencer Aalsburg, a graduate of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, to serve that work as a church planter. Rev. Aalsburg was ordained and installed to his task in February of 2007.

In the summer of 2007, the Hills church took another significant step by breaking ground on an addition to its building. Through a combination of the labors of LDH Construction (which is partially owned by one of our members) and the volunteer labors of the congregation, additional space was

added to the building's entryway to facilitate visiting after worship. We also added a wheelchair lift to help ensure that all members of the congregation can join us for events held in the basement. Church members are continuing to work on completing a pair of classrooms in the basement.

Those kinds of additions and milestones are enjoyable to think on. But really, they're not a mark of the church's faithfulness or spiritual health.

We see *that* in the building up not of wood-and-brick structures ... but of *souls*. The real mark of our growth or decline as a church – the real measure of our health or illness as a congregation – is found in the hearts and lives of the people who comprise the Church.

In all honesty, we have a long way to go. We still sin terribly, every single day. We occasionally squabble among ourselves, we have disagreements, and we find ourselves convicted by the preaching of God's Word.

But we rejoice to see that God *is* convicting us of our sins. And He is using us to help one another, bringing about change through the mutual discipleship of His saints.

It's a long, slow process – this building of the Church of Christ. In fact, we're certain that it will never be completed until Christ returns. But when He comes back, it *will* be completed – and all who belong to Him will be made perfect (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

Now *that* is something to celebrate!

Thanks for taking the time to get to know God's people here in Hills. As you can see, we're far from perfect, and we've had both good times and bad. But God has been gracious to us through it all – far more gracious than we deserve. May He receive all the glory for the goodness He has poured out upon us, His people – *Amen!*

PASTORS OF HILLS CRC/URC:

P. Van Vliet	1914-16	J.H. Scholten	1971-75
J.B. Vanden Hoek	1920-24	H.P. Baak	1975-81
M.H. Van Dyk	1925-29	W.D. Vis	1982-84
G.S. Kok	1930-35	C.G. <i>Werkema</i> *	1985
E.F. Visser	1935-38	S. Ten Brink	1986-87
P. De Koekkoek	1938-45	T.C. Turngren	1988-91
J.G. Vande Lune	1945-53	P. Y. <i>De Jong</i> *	1991
G.B. Dokter	1953-56	A. Camarigg	1991-97
G.F. Van Oyen	1957-60	K. Davis	1998-2002
J.G. Kruis	1962-66	J. Wesseling*	2002-04
D.W. Boonstra	1966-69	D. Barnes	2004-Present
J. <i>Levering</i> *	1970		

* Served as interim pulpit supply.

Special Thanks to Gerald Haak for filling in many of the blanks. Thanks also to the many men who have served as clerk of our consistory/kerkeraad, keeping the records of the Church for the generations to come!