

Through The Years – May 2019

Rev. Richard W. Pettit and his wife, Mary, served the Mentor Methodist Church (as it was known then) from 1947-1957. During their time, the church more than doubled in size as the Mentor community grew following World War II. Perhaps a few of our senior members remember the Pettits.

A native of Iowa, Rev. Pettit graduated from the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology after receiving a bachelor's degree from Cornell College in Iowa. While at Oberlin, he met his wife. Rev. Pettit's first assignment as a pastor came while still a student at Oberlin. He served for two years at Mentor Plains Methodist. He commuted to Mentor from Oberlin each week by taking the bus. Once in Mentor, he borrowed a bicycle to get around. He stayed with various families on the weekends. Rev. Pettit was fond of saying that the second sermon he preached was the hardest because he had told all he knew in the first!

His first assignment after graduation was as associate pastor of First Methodist Church in Cuyahoga Falls. He served there three years before moving to Mentor to take over as pastor of our church. During his tenure at Mentor, two major building programs were completed. A fellowship hall and kitchen were built in 1951. The education wing was added in 1957, the final year of Rev. Pettit's pastorship here. This addition included classrooms, pastor's offices, a parlor, and restrooms. This was at a time when our sanctuary was located at what now is the Chapel.

When Rev. Pettit left Mentor, he moved to the Bay Methodist Church in Bay Village. He then accepted the pastorship at Ridgewood Methodist Church in Parma. Rev. Pettit was named District Superintendent of the Norwalk District in 1974. Interestingly, he succeeded Rev. John Freiling who had been Mentor's pastor from 1961-1968. After his term as D. S. was completed, Rev. Pettit moved to Akron to continue his ministry. He retired in 1984.

The Pettits had three daughters. Martha Ellen (Pettit) Ressler who resided in Pittsburgh, PA, Elizabeth Ann (Pettit) Williams who lives in Tampa, FL and Lois Jean (Pettit) Stanley who makes her home in St. Petersburg, FL.

Rev. Pettit went to be with the Lord in 2003. Mary left us in 2008. We at Mentor Methodist owe them a debt of gratitude for their work pastoring to our congregation and the vision to add needed facilities to our church. I would like to thank Lois Pettit Stanley for providing much of the information in this article.

Do you have any MUMC history you would like to share with the congregation?

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