

# Fifty Year Jubilee

1869—1919



St. James' Church  
Forest, Ontario

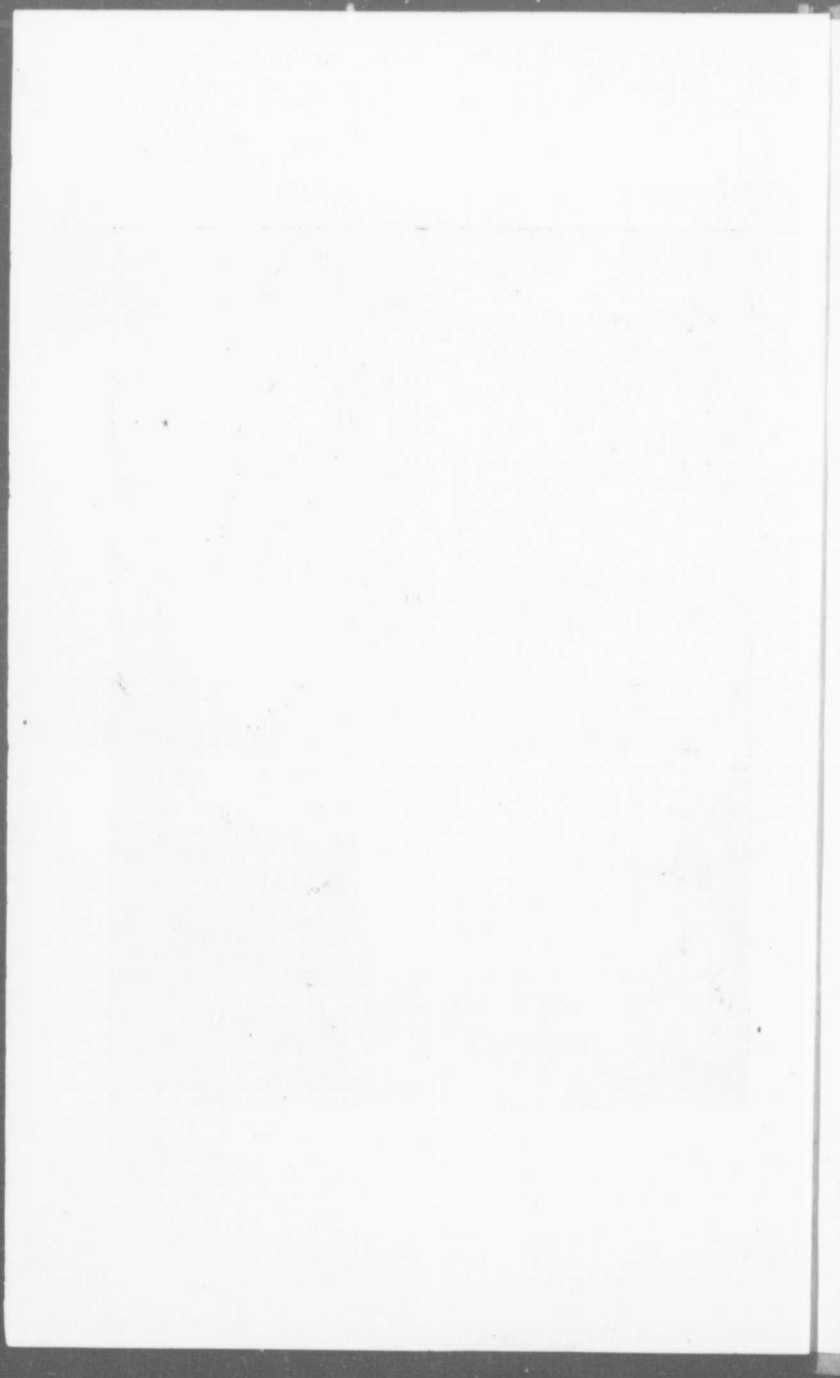


**Dedicated**

to those who have served the Congregation during the  
past fifty years—some of them of sainted memory  
—to whom we owe more than we can tell.

Published on the occasion of the Fiftieth  
Anniversary Services, held Oct. 5 and 6,  
1919. Rev. R. P. MacKay, D. D., of  
Toronto, preached.





## Introductory

The Committee to whom was committed the task of preparing this historical sketch of the congregation, in issuing it in Souvenir Form, do so in the hope that it may be of interest to those who have served the congregation in the past, and an inspiration to those who shall carry on the work in the future.

The Committee wish to express their appreciation of the help that has been given by those who knew the congregation in its beginning and who are still working in our midst.

Owing to the inability to find in full the earliest records of the congregation some important events and names may be omitted. For such omissions we ask forgiveness, as they were not intentional. We have endeavored to do the best with the material at hand.

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### Fifty Years' History

THE parable of the mustard seed has been exemplified in the case of Presbyterianism in Forest. Starting in very small beginnings she has been steadily growing for over fifty years, her umbrageous branches forming a shady relief for many a weary soul along the highway of life. Who can measure the mighty influences, the hallowed associations, the sacred, tender memories that have swept from Presbyterianism in Forest during the last fifty years, into the souls of men and women, boys and girls, who are here, there, everywhere, on Earth and in Heaven? This calculation belongs to the mathematics of Heaven.

As far back as 1866 Presbyterianism in Forest was occasionally ministered to, by students from our colleges. The first meeting place was in a large frame building, used by all denominations of the time, situated on what is now the John Marshall property. There these sturdy Scotch Presbyterians poured forth their souls in worship, and praise to God, for his great loving kindness and tender mercies to them and loving care

over them in these early wilderness days. They were ministered to by such men as W. T. Murdock, Winters, Bruce, McLennan, James Cameron and McKay of Formosa.

In January 1868 the Rev. Robert Scott, of Camlachie, and the Rev. Peter Goodfellow, of Widder, now Thesford, met with the people and in accordance with the instructions of the Presbytery of London, organized the congregation of Forest, and in connection with it, and on the same date, the Congregation of MacKay settlement. The congregation began its career with a membership of twenty-four and of that first band there still remains residing in the town and vicinity, Mr. and Mrs. William Lochead, Mr. William Scott, and Mrs. Neil McColl.

Other worthies, who, for the most part have departed from our midst, are to be found constituting the Presbyterianism of early days in Forest, such as:—

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Wielmann  
Mr. and Mrs. James Conklin  
Mr. and Mrs. James Ferguson  
Mr. and Mrs. Tho. Martin  
Mr. and Mrs. James McLaren  
Mr. and Mrs. John Sharpe  
Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Bradley  
Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Buchanan

Dr. and Mrs. Hutton  
 Mr. and Mrs. Duncan McBean  
 Mr. and Mrs. John Sommerville  
 Mr. and Mrs. John Miles  
 Mr. and Mrs. McMillan  
 Mr. and Mrs. Thos Stephenson  
 Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Rae  
 Mrs. J. Shaw  
 Capt. Hugh Stephenson  
 Malcolm Brodie  
 Mrs. Wm. Scott  
 Mr. Neil McCall  
 Mrs. Jas. Maidment

No wonder with this band of noble workers, Presbyterianism got off to a good start.

The Presbytery of London, at a meeting held in St. Andrew's church, London, on February 2nd, 1868, sanctioned the organization of the Congregation and appointed Rev. Peter Goodfellow Interim Moderator, and Rev. Robert Scott and James Moffat as assessors, until such time as a session should be elected.

The first meeting of the newly organized congregation was held on Aug. 12th, 1868, Rev. Mr. Goodfellow presiding, when William Scott and Archibald Jamieson were elected Elders. On the 4th day of September and within the Anglican Church they were ordained to the Eldership. The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Rev. Robert Scott. On the following Sunday, Sept. 6th, the newly elected Session met and dispensed the first Communion.

After worshipping in the Union Church for a brief period, the Presbyterians worshipped for a longer period in the Anglican Church the proper spirit of Christian unity being exhibited by both denominations.

But the plucky little band yearned for a Mount Zion of their own and in the fall of 1869, 50 years ago, they built and moved into their new Church Home, the church on main street now used by the Brethren.

The opening day was a glad day for the little band of worshippers. With deep gratitude to God for past mercies, and full of hope for the future, they joined together

in the Splendid Psalm of Praise:—

All people that on earth do dwell  
 Sing to the Lord with cheerfull  
 voice.

Him serve with mirth, His  
 praise forth tell,  
 Come ye before Him and rejoice.

The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Rev. Dr. John Thompson, of Sarnia, and was a beautiful and stimulating exposition of Psalm 81-11. "The Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

The church cost about \$1,800 and its erection in those days when money was a scarce commodity was a serious matter, and involved no small degree of self-denial.

In Dec., 1869, the congregation petitioned the Presbytery to authorize Rev. Mr. Goodfellow to moderate in a call, promising to raise the sum of \$390, as their share of the stipend. About a year later a call was extended to Rev. J. B. Duncan, and was sustained by the Presbytery. Mr. Duncan accepted the call and was inducted into the pastoral charge of Forest, and MacKay settlement, by the Presbytery of London. Mr. Duncan was a man of strong personality and of intense vigor and an able preacher. He was a successful pastor and served the young congregation faithfully for a period of thirteen years, and is now gone to his reward.

The increasing prosperity of the congregation created the need of a larger Session. Accordingly on January 21th, 1872, William Harris, and Benjamin Scoular were elected and ordained to the Eldership. A further addition to the Session was made on February 8th, 1878, when Angus McPherson, Donald Fraser and Peter McGill were elected by a vote of the congregation, and again on April 28, 1881, when James Laird was elected. Mr. Laird was elected Session

Clerk in October 1883, a position which he filled with great satisfaction.

During these years Presbyterianism in this western part of the Province made such rapid progress that it was found necessary to form a new Presbytery. By order of the General Assembly the Presbytery of London was divided and the western part formed into the Presbytery of Sarnia. The new Presbytery met for the first time, on the second Tuesday in August, 1881, and the Rev. Mr. Duncan of Forest, was honored in being called its first Moderator.

On Nov. 6th, 1884, Mr. Duncan received and accepted a call to St. Andrew's Church, Paisley. The pulpit was declared vacant on Nov. 18th, by the Rev. Hector Currie, B. A., of Thedford, who acted as Moderator during the vacancy.

It was during this vacancy that MacKay Settlement at the request of the Sarnia Presbytery, was separated from Forest and joined to Camlachie, Forest to stand alone and receive help from the Augmentation Fund. This separation went into effect on the first day of May 1885.

On the 20th of May 1885 after a vacancy of six months, the congregation extended a call to the Rev. Robert Scrimgeour. The call was accepted and the induction took place on the 15th of July. Shortly after the induction Mr. Scrimgeour became unable thru illness to attend to his duties, and he resigned the charge on Sept. 8th, 1885, and on Nov. 16th, passed home to his reward. The funeral at Beechwood cemetery was largely attended by a sorrowing congregation. Mr. Scrimgeour was succeeded by Rev. James Pritchard of Manchester, Huron Presbytery, who was inducted on Nov. 25th, 1886. The stipend promised was \$500. Mr. Pritchard was a man of great ability, untiring zeal, and kindly manner and

won a high place in the esteem and confidence of the congregation which he served for twelve years. During these years remarkable progress was made. The membership was doubled, a debt of nearly \$1,000 on the Manse was paid and the congregation became self-sustaining, which status it has since enjoyed. To meet the growing needs of the congregation a further addition to the Session was deemed necessary, and on April 21th, 1887, after being duly elected Neil McColl and John Somerville were ordained to the Eldership. In the following year 1888 the congregation by vote decided to introduce into the service of praise, the use of the organ. As a number were opposed to the innovation, it was decided to use it at the morning service only. On Feb. 9th, 1889, a further addition to the Session was made when John Fisher and Andrew Rae were ordained Elders. A year after the introduction of the organ, a petition signed by a majority of the Congregation was presented, praying for the use in connection with the Psalms of the Hymnal issued by the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The old church home became too small and the congregation set to work to build a larger and more modern place of worship. The lot on which the present building stands was donated to the church by John Shaw, a liberal and true friend of the church for many years. The corner stone was well and truly laid by Charles MacKenzie, M. P. P., on Monday, 29th day of September, 1890, under auspicious circumstances and on the 18th day of October 1891, the beautiful and substantial edifice at present occupied was opened. The Rev. W. A. MacKay, D. D., of Woodstock, preached morning and evening and the Rev. Wm. Hayhurst of the Methodist church, Forest, preached in the afternoon. The pastor conducted

overflow services in the basement of the church. The offering taken at the opening services amounted to \$867.

Mr. Pritchard continued as pastor until June 10th, 1898, when he tendered his resignation to the Presbytery of Sarnia, thus bringing to a close a very fruitful ministry. At that time, Angus McPherson was appointed Session Clerk, a position which he filled for many years. In this connection it is interesting to note that this year, 1919, Mr. McPherson enters upon his 42nd year as Elder of this congregation, an honored servant of God. Our prayer is that he may be spared long to serve among us.

After a vacancy of four months the congregation extended a call to James Barber, B. A., of Knox College. The call was accepted and Mr. Barber was ordained and inducted on Nov. 1st, 1898. He was a man of an evangelistic spirit and sympathetic manner and gave good service to the congregation. On January 26th, 1902, James Campbell was elected and ordained an Elder of the congregation, and in December of the same year, Mr. Barber received and accepted a call to Arthur, in the Presbytery of Saugeen, and the pulpit was declared vacant on Dec. 28th.

Mr. Barber was succeeded by Rev. K. J. Macdonald, B. D., who was inducted on Nov. 10th, 1903. In March, 1906, R. A. Barron, B. A., and John Jardine were elected and ordained Elders. In April of the same year Mr. Macdonald received and accepted a call to St. Matthews' church, Montreal, thus terminating a very brief but happy pastorate.

On Oct. 23rd, 1906, a call was extended to the Rev. L. H. Currie, B. A., Knox College, Toronto. The call was accepted and the ordination and induction took place on Nov. 9th. After a fruitful ministry of over six years in

which many members were added and indebtedness reduced, Mr. Currie left his many friends to labor in the Lord's vineyard at Grimsby, and once more the congregation cast around for a leader in Israel and their happy choice lay in the Rev. J. R. Laverie, B. A., of Kilsyth, Owen Sound Presbytery, who was inducted in the spring of 1913. It was during his time that the greatly reduced mortgage indebtedness was entirely cancelled, and in November, 1913, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Lohead, members of the church from its inception, burnt the mortgage before a rejoicing people. Shortly after this the progressive congregation sold the old manse property on Prince St., for \$1500 and purchased the present handsome manse adjoining the church for \$3900. Now the congregation has a church property of which it need not be ashamed.

Early in the summer of 1918 the Rev. J. R. Laverie received and accepted a call from the Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church, London, Ont., and once more the congregation was bereft of a popular pastor, who had done good work in his growing congregation. Early in the fall however, the present pastor, the Rev. H. D. Cameron, B. A., of West Hill, Scarboro was inducted and settled in their midst under most happy circumstances.

The Manse was renovated at an expense of over \$700.00. The sum of \$807.00 was put on the plate in connection with the anniversary services held in October of the same year and thanks to the determined enthusiasm of the Ladies' Aid and the Board of Management, with the substantial co-operation of the entire congregation, the mortgage on the manse property was burnt at the following Annual Congregational meeting held in January 1919. Mrs. Wm. Lohead again befittingly officiated.



Thus does the congregation after fifty years and more find herself practically out of debt, with fine church property and a united and enthusiastic people. With trust in the God of the mustard seed and of the flowering plant she looks forward to the future with hopefulness. And what of the future? That depends on the human. "He shall not fail," shall powerful influences from old St. James' continue to grip the community for the building up of Christian character? shall sacred memories and hallowed associations be fondly recalled in the far off days to come? That depends on us now. May God give us grace to fittingly "Carry On". Let us take courage and go forward, up the uplands of faith, flinging out the challenge to the great unchurched "Come thou with us and we will do thee good" Numbers 10: 29.

The following are the office

bearers at the present time, 1919.

Session—Rev. H. D. Cameron, B. A., moderator; Wm. Middleton, clerk; A. McPherson, John Fisher, W. Lawrie, W. Anderson and D. Whyte.

Board of Management—H. Patterson, chairman; P. McKellar, C. Douglas, L. P. McKindsey, J. H. MacKenzie, Robt. McLaren, J. Walker, F. Jenkins, Howard Fraleigh, A. F. Steele, John McPherson and W. J. F. Ross,

Sec'y—L. D. Scott.

Treas—L. P. McKindsey.

Trustees—W. Lochead, W. J. English, J. M. MacKenzie.

Ladies Aid—Hon.-Pres.—Mrs. W. Lochead. Pres.—Mrs. L. P. McKindsey.

And now to the Great and Good God the King and Head of the Church, by whose unflinching grace we have been brought to this hour, be the glory and the praise both now and forever—Amen.

