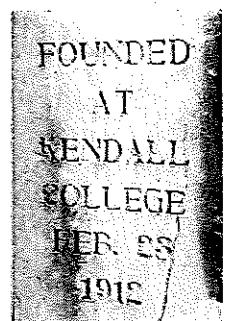


## A Brief History of College Hill Presbyterian Church

College Hill Presbyterian Church was organized as a mission church by the Rev. Ralph J. Lamb on February 23, 1912 in the Kendall Hall Bible Study Room on the campus of Henry Kendall College (now the University of Tulsa). There were 34 charter members, most of whom were connected with the college. The Rev. Grant Stroh, a Bible professor at the college, was appointed as the first Stated Supply pastor. Part of the inspiration in forming a second Presbyterian congregation in Tulsa was the unreliable street trolley line (that ran down what is now 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue) connecting the school to downtown. Later, the congregation met in the Kendall Public (Elementary) School Auditorium (located across the street from the current church location).



In 1915, the lots at 6<sup>th</sup> and Gordon (now 7<sup>th</sup> and Columbia) were purchased. The first wood-frame sanctuary building was constructed (at a cost of \$10,000) and dedicated in 1917. A manse was built in 1918. A building and lot next to the church (now the church parking lot) was donated and became The Community House. College Hill was a mission church until 1919 when it withdrew from the Board of Missions and became a self-supporting church. The Rev. Robert Clarke was the first called pastor.

Controversy erupted in late 1928 when the second called pastor, the Rev. George Nichols (served 1924-1930), declared that the theory of evolution would not be discussed at the church and that those who believed in it were no longer welcome as members. Perhaps up to 60 members of the church were dismissed in and around February of 1929.

Construction on the current 3-story brick Education Building began in 1950. Soon thereafter, the original wooden building was demolished and worship services were held in the Fellowship Hall. The current brick sanctuary, where the old building stood, was dedicated in December 1961.

College Hill has a long and rich history of social justice ministry. The church provided sanctuary to Japanese students attending the university during World War II; worked for racial equality and understanding throughout the 1960s; housed a Vietnamese family in a church-owned home on 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. after the Vietnam War; co-founded the neighborhood Kendall Whittier Ministry; harbored Central American refugees during what was called the Sanctuary Movement in the 1980s; affiliated itself with "More Light Presbyterians" in 2000 to reach out to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender community (LGBT) for ordination equality within the denomination; and is currently a leader in the education and promotion of progressive Christianity.



We had a remarkable 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on February 25-26, 2012, including a banquet at the nearby renovated Campbell Hotel. By the time of our 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the church continued to discern God's mission of inclusion, compassion, and justice in many ways. After his passing in 2013, the Harold L. Hill Lecture Series was formed "to foster and promote a deeper understanding of the issues of our day found at the intersection of science, culture, and progressive Christianity". Areas of ministry also focused on Interfaith work in Tulsa, support of international as well as many local ministries/non-profits, and a concerted effort to understand and face ongoing issues of racial inequality and inequity. Many building upgrades were undertaken, including a new sound system in the sanctuary, projection system in the Fellowship Hall, and live streaming capabilities.

Navigating and adjusting to the constantly fluid health situations brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 was a challenge, especially during the long periods of time we were unable to meet in person. Yet, it allowed us to expand into virtual meetings and live streaming worship. We learned how to stay connected and relevant in new ways.

College Hill has been richly blessed in so many ways, including our consistently strong leadership from members of the congregation, as well as the stability and dedication of the church staff.