

*Westminster By-The-Sea
Presbyterian Church*

1955-2015

*3221 South Peninsula Drive
Daytona Beach Shores, Florida*

*The History
of
Westminster By-The-Sea
Presbyterian Church*

60th Anniversary Edition

Ministers:

The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Sumner

The Rev. Cara Milne

The Rev. Richard L. Hills

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*3221 South Peninsula Drive
Daytona Beach Shores, Florida*

Phone: 386-767-8342

Fax: 386-767-8341

Email: wbtchurch@gmail.com

Web: www.wbts.org

Westminster By-The-Sea Presbyterian Church

In October 1946, a small Sunday School was started in the unincorporated area of Wilbur By-The-Sea, south of Daytona Beach. This was the humble beginning of Westminster By-The-Sea Presbyterian Church and was the dream of The Reverend Paul M. Edris, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Daytona Beach. Rev. Edris, with Miss Elizabeth McNeil, Director of Christian Education at First Church, conducted this outpost Sunday School for one year; then it was decided that more people could be reached through weekly prayer meetings.

In February 1955, forty-two people gathered for the first Sunday worship service. In May of that year, with sixty-two charter members present, a committee from the Presbytery of St. Johns installed The Reverend Richard W. SauerBrun as the first pastor of Westminster By-The-Sea Presbyterian Church.

Soon the congregation outgrew its temporary quarters in the Wilbur Clubhouse. Plans were made. Mrs. Laura Fair Ferran donated land at the corner of South Peninsula Drive and El Portal Ave (now called Westminster Drive, and construction began on the first building of the church complex.

On Christmas Eve, 1956, the first Candlelight Service was held in the recently completed fellowship hall, which was to serve as a temporary sanctuary. An education wing was added in 1958, and by September, 1964, the beautiful colonial sanctuary was a reality.

In 1966, Rev. SauerBrun accepted a call to be pastor of a church in Georgia, and The Rev. F. Clay Doyle became Westminster's second pastor. For the next decade, Rev. Doyle provided leadership and guidance. During those years, adjacent property to the south was acquired, providing the congregation with a small youth house. On May 17 and 18, 1975, a two-day celebration commemorated the 20th anniversary of Westminster. The focal point of that Sunday morning worship was the "Burning of the Mortgage".

In the spring of 1977, Rev. Doyle accepted a call to a church in South Carolina, and in January, 1978, The Rev. Larry G. Parker began his ministry at Westminster. A Children's Time became a part of Sunday worship. During that period, the church grounds were landscaped and Friendship Memorial Garden was started.

Rev. Parker's tenure as pastor was ended in 1984, and three capable and loving Interim Pastors assumed their successive roles: The Rev. Davis Thomas, The Rev. Edwin Albright, and The Rev. Ed Rowley. Finally, in June of 1985, the congregation of Westminster By-The-Sea called The Rev. Jeffrey A. Sumner to become its fourth pastor. He and his family helped Westminster reclaim old traditions and start new ones. A junior choir was started again, this time by Mary Ann Sumner. A children's Message and junior church program were reactivated. A young adult fellowship called the "Baby Boomers" became a vital part of the congregation. The Peninsula House was dedicated for us as the church library, classrooms, and a church parlor. Bible Studies, special worship services, ice cream socials and dinners became a regular part of church life.

In the spring of 1986 a unique Maundy Thursday Service of Communion and Tenebrae was started and continues unchanged to this day. The church library was reorganized under the direction of Harriet Nace and dedicated in October of that year. The church joined seven other Presbyterian Churches in East Volusia County in starting the Presbyterian Counseling Center, which the church continues to support with board members and funding. A covered walkway was added between the sanctuary and the chapel, replacing the existing narrow sidewalk. Under the direction of Mary Ann Sumner, new activity banners were made and hung in fellowship hall, where they remained until 2003.

In 1988, the original steeple, needing increasing maintenance, was replaced by a new aluminum one made by Campbellsville Industries of Campbellsville, Kentucky, and installed by Hall Construction Company. In order to attract more children to the church, an arraignment was made with Wayne and Diane Scotty to begin a preschool that was named Montessori By-the-Sea. A new larger playground was built to accommodate the children, and the rooms were updated and refurbished in the original Christian Education building. Several years later, the preschool outgrew our facilities and moved to a new location on Nova Road, where it became the Montessori School of Port Orange.

A twenty rank pipe organ was dedicated to the glory of God in February 1989 and new ranks have been added over the years. Money for handbells allowed a handbell choir to be formed. Children's musicals in the spring and winter were produced by Chris Endsley and Mary Ann Sumner, and were continued until 1993. A Wednesday Kids Klub program with pick up from area school was started in 1988, to take the place of the Sunday Children's Nights. The Men of Westminster could be seen recycling newspapers and were known for their support of children at Thornwell Home. The Women of the Church continued with four circle

groups including a young women's circle and a sewing circle. Many people benefitted from money raised at the annual Attic Sales, and all the clothes made by sewing circle aided the Rose Marie Bryon Children's Home. Over the years, the church proudly sponsored a number of missionaries and supported Presbyterian causes and institutions including Thornwell Home, Columbia Seminary, and Presbyterian Missionaries. From 1989 until the present day, Westminster has proudly had the CROP walk distinction in Daytona Beach of raising the most money and/or having the most walkers every year!

Then in 1992, Westminster built and funded the very first Habitat for Humanity house in Port Orange and in the following years joined other churches in building two additional houses.

Rev. Sumner started weekly confirmation classes in 1993, which were and are still held through the entire school year. Younger families began to balance out the ages represented in the congregation. The church's mission support continued to expand with support of Jack and Moneta Prince, and other Presbyterian mission. Halifax Urban Ministries received our growing local support as the church provided gleaners and servers for hot meals.

In July of 1994, The Rev. George Painter served as a pulpit supply minister while Rev. Sumner was on vacation. In September, the Session unanimously voted to hire Rev. Painter as our Parish Associate Minister. As a former Baptist and a man gifted with good humor, the ministry team of Sumner and Painter became an enthusiastic pair of leaders.

The church celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 1995. The Rev. Richard and Suanne SauerBrun were welcomed back for the weekend. Festivities included a congregational dinner and a special Sunday service.

That summer, the Session agreed to let Dr. Wagid Guirgis and others form the Arabic Evangelical Ministries of Daytona Beach, and allowed the new church to use the Rose Chapel for its meeting place. The Arabic Church continues with an important ministry to this day.

The growing education department needed more classroom space. A building committee was formed to propose a wing which would follow the original architectural drawings of the church. The new wing, with its handicapped, climate controlled restrooms, was dedicated in 1996. By that year, the church's mission fervor had grown to the point that annual youth mission trips were held each summer and continue to this day. Also, the church began participating in a health ministry called "Project Reach", which later evolved into Westminster's creation of the present "Body, Mind, and Soul" health ministry that continues to be held.

In 1998 and again in 2001, Rev. and Mrs. Sumner took church members to visit the Holy Land. About that time, a meeting with Pete Zahn instituted the Disciple Bible Study Programs.

In September 2001, A mothers of Preschoolers program was initiated, ministering to 30 mothers and 50 children twice a month. The program continued with the enthusiastic support of the congregation. Also, in 2001, Carol DeGroat began organizing annual church cruises for fellowship that continue to this day.

By 2002, the need for a larger sanctuary led to the removal of the permanent stage in fellowship hall and the sanctuary was enlarged by moving the adjacent wall. This added seating for 75 (or more) people, increasing the sanctuary capacity to 500. A steeple carillon system was given in memory of Jack Kushigian, and Westminster chimes began ringing each quarter hour during the week. A removable stage was designed and built for the sanctuary by Ray Ammon, and is used several times each year.

At the request of congregation members, a new office complex, enlarged courtyard, and new session room was added in 2003. The "old" playground and youth house were removed to make space for additional parking. The "new" playground was set up in the courtyard and was designed to resemble Noah's Ark. It was installed in May 2005 by church members and designer, Drew Marshall of Winter Park.

Also in 2003, the north parking lot was paved and lighted. Two new parcels of land on Cascade Terrace (northeast of the church) were purchased for overflow parking and future use. The Christian Education Division started a successful Rotation Model for Sunday School and a computer lab. Matthew and Jenny Sumner were hired as Youth Leaders, and the Youth Group grew from 5 to 30. In 2007 Jenny entered Columbia Seminary to be trained for the ordained ministry. She graduated in 2010.

In the fall of 2004, future building plans were postponed indefinitely due to significant damage by three successive hurricanes. The steeple held without damage, but shingles blew off all over the major roof areas causing leakage and damage to over half of the ceiling. All of the computers, musical instruments, including the Schumacher pipe organ and the Steinway grand piano, were covered for protection during the storms. Services were not held due to hurricane winds on two Sundays for the first time in the history of the church. Even with full windstorm coverage, the church had significant repair and expenses, forcing the suspension of the expansion plans. In May 2005, the roofs were replaced.

In the summer of 2005 George Painter retired. His wife Peggie Painter, who had held the position of Director of Christian Education for a number of years, retired when George did. In 2006 Mary Ann Sumner was hired as the new Director of Christian Education.

Also in 2006, the church hired the Rev. Richard Hills to be its new Parish Associate. Richard serves to this day. But in a growing church, an Associate Pastor became necessary. After a year of planning and interviewing, the church called its first Associate Pastor, The Rev. Cara Gee. Her work in worship, mission, pastoral care, and with youth has been an invaluable addition

to the church's ministry. In 2009 with the encouragement and prayers of family and church members, Rev. Sumner became Dr. Sumner as he enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry degree at Columbia Theological Seminary, earning the degree in 2013!

In 2014, after having the building plans on hold for a decade, funding and plans for the new Peninsula Hall took shape. The Peninsula House was removed, and the new large building on the south end of the campus will be a wonderful resource for larger church gatherings, youth gatherings, and health ministries. It will contain a new library, much needed storage space, and additional "breakout" rooms that can be used to meet a variety of needs.

As we celebrate 60 years of serving Jesus Christ on the South Peninsula, nationally, and internationally, we continue to hear that our church, with its welcoming community and prominent steeple, is a lighthouse of faith and hope! God had a redemption plan for those coming to the little congregation that started as a mission outpost of the First Presbyterian Church of Daytona Beach that has grown to the vibrant congregation it is today. Happy Anniversary, Westminster By-The-Sea! May you continue to grow and serve the Lord with gladness, always remembering the words inscribed found on the northwest corner of our sanctuary. It is from Ephesians: "With Jesus Christ being our chief cornerstone." And so he is.

Here we grow again!

Peninsula Hall open in October 2015!

