



HOUSE OF HOPE HISTORY

When the Territory of Minnesota was organized in 1849, a young Presbyterian missionary from Philadelphia, the Reverend Edward Duffield Neill, arrived. He soon gathered a congregation and they built the first Protestant place of worship in the Twin Cities. On Christmas Eve, 1855, Neill organized a second Presbyterian congregation and named it House of Hope.

Sixty years later, under the leadership of Dr. Henry Swearingen, Neill's two congregations joined to build a single new church and parish house at the present site, dedicated on October 17, 1914. The name of the second congregation of the two joining bodies was selected. Its origin is interesting.

In the wilderness of Connecticut in 1633, near what is now the city of Hartford, Dutch settlers built a fortified trading post. Its official name was Fort Good Hope, but it was called the "Huis de Hoop" or the "House of Hope."

As our church was forming, the spirit of the young missionary founder was suffering, he confessed later, from discouragement and despondency. Reading the "Voyages of DeVries," the diary of a Dutch sea captain, Neill was deeply impressed and challenged by the following passage:

"On the 4th of June (1639) I started north in a yacht to the Fresh River (Connecticut). On the 9th, arrived at the House of Hope, where one Gysbert Van Dyck commanded with fourteen or fifteen soldiers. This redoubt stands on a plain on the margin of the river where the English, in spite of us, have begun to build up a small town and have already a fine church."

So it came about that in St. Paul, Dr. Neill and his "feeble band" of four persons chose the name House of Hope, "desiring that it might be the place of refuge for weary and heavy-laden souls; and that they might obtain under its influence that hope that maketh not ashamed."

The House of Hope Church, a Gothic structure designed by Ralph Adams Cram, is rich in the traditional symbolism of the Christian church. The architecture, stained glass windows, carvings and adornments join to make an inspired setting for worship in a reverent spirit. The carvings, both stone and wood, were done by the noted artisan, Kirchmayer of Boston. The church was built of Bedford limestone. Woodwork in both pews and furnishings is fumed oak. Most of the stained glass windows were made by C.J. Connick of Boston; however, the beautiful and impressive passion window was the work of W.E. Roberts of England, and is the only window he executed in America. The Mary and Martha window, the Apocalypse window and the Ministry of Healing window were made by Young and Bonawit. The new windows of the Chancel and West Transept are the work of Rowan LeCompte, famed artist and principal window designer of the Washington Cathedral. The 63-stop organ in the rear gallery was built by C. B. Fisk, Inc., in 1979. The 1878 French organ built by Josef Merklin was beautifully restored by the Fisk company and installed in the House of Hope Chancel in 1987.

The Neill Wing, dedicated in 1959, includes 20 classrooms plus assembly rooms, choir rehearsal and robing rooms, the Great Hall, the Cloisters, the Kirk Parlour, the Bridal Room, and the Sacristy.

The Elizabeth Chapel was moved and enlarged in 1958. The Noyes Memorial Carillon, located in the tower, consists of 49 bells cast by four North American and European bell foundries. A new 17-stop organ built by Jaekel, Inc., was installed in 2001.

The "Spirit of Hope" sculpture on Summit Avenue was created by Daryl Smith of Seattle, Washington, and installed in September, 2000, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of The House of Hope.

GOVERNMENT

The Session is a group of 33 women and men elected to make policy, receive members, assign benevolence gifts, direct worship and the sacraments and oversee day-to-day church business.

The Board of Trustees consists of 12 women and men elected to oversee church properties, assist in raising funds during the annual canvass, supervise the operating budget and investment portfolio and review church secular management.

The Board of Deacons is a group of 60 women and men elected to serve the needs of the congregation and community. Church service, ushering, new member classes and community programs to help our neighbors are overseen by Deacons.