

I Remember When.... Celebrating Epiphany Church's First Century

By Barbara Stenson Spaeth, Newport Way

Historic Epiphany Church invites its friends and neighbors to a gala open House February 10 from 11:00am to 3:00pm to celebrate its first 100 years. At 1:00, noted local historian Walt Crowley will speak on Madrona-Denny Blaine's heritage, especially the life and times of Seattle during the 1907-11 reform era when Epiphany began. Tours of the historic church buildings will be conducted.

A century ago, spawned by Seattle's profits from the Alaska Gold Rush, the arrival of the railroads, and growing maritime trade, the summer homes and farms of Madrona and Denny Blaine were transformed into booming neighborhoods. Thousands of homes--from mansions to modest bungalows--were built during the first two decades of the 20th century. This area became the home of civic leaders, political and community activists, artists and educators. That prompted the Western Washington Episcopal Church's regional leader Bishop Frederick Keator to invite a group of Capitol Hill churchmen for a summer Sunday yachting trip on Lake Washington. From the sweet blue waters, he pointed to shore and all the development, lamented the lack to a church, and suggested that an Episcopal mission might be successful.

The Capitol Hill fellows took the bait and in 1907 they started a Sunday school in a storefront at 34th Avenue and Union Street, where Personal Fitness is today. Young families in the community joined the effort and, thanks to financial support from real estate promoters Minerva and Elbert Blaine, and the hands-on volunteering of Dr. Chal Bryant and his wife, Epiphany Episcopal church was born.

Soon they purchased land on 38th Avenue and constructed a chapel in 1911. The first buildings were designed by a member of the parish who was also one of Seattle's most admired 20th century architects. Ellsworth Storey's Epiphany buildings were listed as Seattle landmarks in 1978. In 1941 a brick Parish Hall/Sunday school building was added. In 1951, under the leadership of the Rev. Elmer B. Christie, a large brick church featuring significant stained glass art was completed. The

church's historic rectory building, once the home of the parish's minister and family, was named for Dr. Christie when it was converted to offices. A parochial school founded in 1958 is now an independent elementary that shares the Church campus.

In its early decades, Epiphany sponsored missions in "rural" communities then reached only by ferry. Eventually these became Episcopal churches on Mercer Island and in Kirkland. Over the years Epiphany has played an important role in the Episcopal Church's support of social justice and community development. It was a polling place until the 1960s, hosted a teen drop-in center in the 1970s, and ran a thrift shop on Capital Hill until last year. Today Epiphany Parish supports the East Cherry YWCA transitional housing program, Agros International's work in Guatemala and an Anglican congregation in Jordan. Closer to home, our church provides meeting space for Boy Scouts and AA, and rehearsal space for music groups. We support Madrona Community Council events, including home tours and the summer Madrona BBQ. Not bad for 100 years!

For further information on the Epiphany centennial and the schedule of services, call 324-2573 or visit www.epiphanyseattle.org.