

Local History: 1. Establishment of the Church

Within a few months after the big [Seattle fire](#) which destroyed most of the business section of town, a commission of the Kansas Presbytery came to Seattle to organize the first Reformed Presbyterian Church on the West Coast. The commission ordained and installed Licentiate S. Dell Johnson as pastor. The organization meeting was held on August 9, 1889 in the Hall of the University of Washington which was located on the 10-acre Metropolitan Tract in current downtown Seattle. The congregation consisted of 21 members, and more were added in the following months. Unfortunately, problems developed in the early congregation and Rev. Johnson resigned as pastor on July 14, 1891. The two original elders resigned shortly thereafter. The young congregation was officially disorganized since it no longer had a Session which was a great disappointment to the small group of believers who remained loyal.

Sensing the need for leadership, and recognizing the possibility that a congregation might be reorganized, Kansas Presbytery arranged for Rev. Alexander Kilpatrick of Pittsburgh Presbytery to come to Seattle in the fall of 1891. On his arrival, he found that in spite of the earlier difficulties, a Sabbath School had been maintained and there existed a growing and enthusiastic group of people who wanted a Reformed Presbyterian Congregation in Seattle. A commission was appointed with Rev. Kilpatrick serving as Moderator. On January 22, 1892, the commission met in the Norwegian Baptist Church at 6th Avenue and Virginia Street for the purpose of reorganizing the congregation and electing elders and deacons. Appropriately, the text of the moderator's sermon on that occasion was Amos 3:3 - "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The congregation has existed continuously from the date of this reorganization.

Local History: 2. Early Years - The 1890's

In 1892, the reorganized congregation had 42 charter members. Four elders and four deacons were elected. Each one accepted the office to which they were elected, and ordination and installation services were held the following day. The Session met for the first time following the installation service on January 23 and chose James G. Love to serve as clerk. Rev. Kilpatrick remained in Seattle for a time to help the young congregation get started, but returned to Pittsburgh in the spring of 1892.

Licentiate P.J McDonald arrived in Seattle as Stated Supply in July 1892, and was ordained some time thereafter. During this time the Seattle congregation was transferred to the Colorado Presbytery. Initially the congregation held services in the basement of the Norwegian Baptist Church. To fill the need for our own church building, the congregation purchased several lots at Olive Way and Terry Avenue in 1893, and a church building was built soon thereafter at a total cost of \$5500. The original building was later raised to add a

basement for Bible School classes and a small kitchen. Except for a few months in early 1937, when repairs were being made following a fire, this building was the home of the congregation until 1947.

On December 31, 1894 Rev. McDonald was called by the congregation to serve as its first pastor. He was installed on June 29, 1895 by a commission of the Colorado Presbytery. Rev. McDonald continued as pastor of the congregation until August 11, 1903. Upon leaving Seattle he moved to Los Angeles where he served as the first pastor of the RP congregation established there.

Local History: 3. Chinese Ministry

During Rev. McDonald's pastorate a special mission effort was initiated with the Chinese community in Seattle. At one time more than 40 Chinese men were involved in a midweek study of the bible and the English language. Members of the congregation served as teachers and each teacher had one pupil. Several of the Chinese men came to know the Lord and joined the church. It was during this same period that a significant part of the mission effort of the Reformed Presbyterian denomination was focused on China.

Local History: 4. Early 1900's

Following the departure of Rev. McDonald, the congregation called Rev. Thomas M. Slater to be installed on Oct. 4, 1904 beginning a pastoral relationship of more than 17 years. Rev. and Mrs. Slater were greatly beloved and held in high esteem by the congregation. A period of significant growth and development occurred during Rev. Slater's pastorate, fueled in part by immigration from congregations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and elsewhere in the United States, and in part by local evangelistic efforts. Communicant membership peaked at 135 and Sabbath School enrollment at 300. [Mrs. Ollie Ryther](#), who operated an orphanage near the church building, brought all of the children in her orphanage to Bible School each Sunday. The [Ryther Child Center](#) continues operation today in Northeast Seattle on 96th Street near Lake City Way.