

A Brief History of the First Presbyterian Church Portland, Indiana, 2009

Although statistics since 1898 are available as well as church yearbooks from 1922 until the present, this history will be based mainly on information found in our 100th Year and 125th Year History Books. Should anyone read these Presbyterian History Books, he would find similarities in each concerning the membership.

In general, the people of this congregation can be described as well-educated and interested in the arts. They are hard-workers. They have often been business leaders and teachers. But their most enduring quality has involved their love of children and community. As early as the 1900's, this was said: This church has "developed a remarkable interest in the benevolent causes of the church at large." To prove this we have only to look at the following list (now updated) found in the archives:

What God Has Done and Is Doing Here 1872 – 2009

1872 – Rev. Fred Stovenour felt God call him to organize a Presbyterian witness in Portland. Thus, First Presbyterian Church was started.

1903 – We brought James Whitcomb Riley to Portland in order to give our community an opportunity to hear the poetry of this great poet.

1913 – We worked with the city council to pave Arch Street, contributing to the overall improvement of our community.

1929 – We sent 70 needy young boys from Portland to Camp Crosley at Tippecanoe Lake, Indiana. We also organized Boy Scout troops that would meet in our church.

1930's – We raised the funds necessary to help to hire a Visiting Nurse, the first that Jay County ever had.

1945 – Church members began and ran a Community Clothing Store.

1950 through 1960 – We were instrumental in starting the Jay County Council of Churches.

We began what was first called the "Retarded School" and eventually became the Jay Randolph Development Services, Corporation.

We formed the Pastoral Care and Counseling Center that provided counseling services to people of Jay County.

1970's – We started the Early Childhood Education Program for pre-Kindergarten children. This ministry continues to this day.

We helped establish shelter care for Youth.

1980's – We assisted the Rimpakone family in resettling in the U.S.A. from Laos.

1982 – We were instrumental in starting the Helping Hand Food Bank, in co-operation with the Ministerial Association.

1990 – We helped start the Wee Care Child Care Inc., a non-profit child care corporation serving Portland and Jay County.

1991 – We started the Stephen Ministry program, a lay ministry that helps people in times of crisis.