

**First
Christian Reformed Church of Guelph**

(as of 2018 renamed Water Street Church)


Historical Review

**Volume 1:
1952 to 1960**


*Faithfully archived and documented
by Marianne and William Terpstra*



Water Street Church - A History from 1952 to 1960
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1952–1960



We do well to reflect on the circumstances that brought the first immigrants from the Netherlands to this county after the Germans capitulated in 1945, and World War II was history. Now that the war was over, many people, young and old, sat down to re-evaluate the choices concerning their future, or the future of their children. Immigration was the word on the lips of many people, viewed as an opportunity to make a new beginning.

For many Canada was the land of choice.

Canada, too, needed a new influx of people to take the place of the fifteen thousand German prisoners of war and about thirteen thousand conscientious objectors who had been used as cheap labour on many farms during that time.

As early as 1948 the first immigrants arrived in Canada. Some settled in the vicinity of Guelph.

Many of the new Canadians had a very deep spiritual background. Besides their desire to rub shoulders with fellow immigrants, they had a need to worship God to seek His guidance and direction with other like-minded Christians for this newly started life in Canada.

During those first years, life was not easy for the new immigrants from the Netherlands. Being from various backgrounds and from diverse provinces of the Netherlands, life was not always smooth sailing. Despite all the obstacles that they needed to overcome, it was also their desire to witness and worship God our Father and become a blessing for others in the new land. We do well to pay tribute to these first determined Christians, who strove to make a difference and to let their voice be heard.

In the late forties and early fifties, Guelph was a growing city with a population of 35,000. Guelph was well represented by the various denominations of our land, but lacked a Christian Reformed Church that could provide a church home for the growing number of new immigrants from the Netherlands who were settling in the area. These people usually travelled either to Kitchener or Brampton to attend a church where they could be among fellow countrymen

Water Street Church — A History

and women and hear a sermon spoken in the Dutch language.

These first immigrants who settled around Guelph were mindful of their heritage in Christ.

The First Christian Reformed Church of Guelph had its very modest and fragile beginnings in the Christian hearts of a handful of people.

1952–1953

These few families—Oosterveld, Sloot, Top, Zwaagstra—and some others, began to meet as a group with the express purpose of having fellowship and discussing God’s Word. They often met in each other’s homes: soon the young people, numbering about seven, also held meetings.

The 25th anniversary book of our church includes a letter written by Mr. John Sloot Sr., who arrived during the late forties and lived in Rockwood at the time. He was of the opinion that it would be possible to establish a church in the area.

In March of 1953 John Sloot Sr. took up contact with Mr. Melle Zwaagstra of Guelph and Mr. Ed Top of Elora, among others.

“After a lot of talking and visiting with more people, we decided to try to get all of them together for a meeting. We had to rent something and were able to get a room in the old YMCA building on the corner of Yarmouth and Quebec Street for \$4.00 a night.”

The need for fellowship with each other, as well as the growing sense of community, became directed towards one clear purpose, to become an organized church.

At the end of the March meeting, 11 families expressed an interest in pursuing this matter further.

All those attending were members in one of the churches that were within reasonable traveling distance, although those journeys could be quite lengthy. Hopefully, they could shorten their *“Zondags Reize”* (Sabbath journey).

The group wasted no time beginning their new church and began the search for a place where they could worship. The group elected interim elders and deacons to lead the worship services, all this even before obtaining official status as a church and the approval of Classis Hamilton.

As was told in Mr. John Sloot’s letter:

“Now we had to find a place where we could meet on Sundays. Mr. Mayes, president of the Orange Hall on Waterloo Ave., was willing to rent us the Hall at \$8.00 per [Sunday] morning.”



Group meetings in the old YMCA

The first Sunday morning worship service in the Orange Hall was held on April 5, 1953.

The rooms were bare, devoid of any adornments. The sanctuary consisted of a pulpit—a simple lectern at the front of the hall—and rows of chairs for the congregation.

1953–1955

Mr. John Slood, Mr. Melle Zwaagstra (members at Kitchener Christian Reformed Church) and Mr. Ed Top (member at Drayton CRC) arranged for a visit with the Kitchener CRC, held at the home of Home Missionary Rev. Charles Spoelhof, to seek advice. If they expected their initiative to be applauded, they had a surprise. The Kitchener consistory was of the opinion that the newly formed church should have members only from the immediate geographical Guelph area and not from a greater area that included Kitchener. After all, this would lead to a loss in numbers for the Kitchener church. Nevertheless, the Guelph group persisted. Ultimately, the Kitchener council acquiesced and agreed to bring the matter before the next meeting of Classis.

Our 25th anniversary book includes the text of a letter written by Rev. Spoelhof:

“I glean the following from my reports as Home Missionary to the Home Missionary board:

At a Kitchener CRC consistory meeting held April 16, 1953 at my home, three visitors appeared: two of them were members of the Kitchener CRC who resided in Guelph; the third a member of the Drayton CRC who resided in Elora.

They informed the consistory that the week previous on April 5th the families at Guelph had begun to hold worship services on the Lord’s Day at the Orange Hall in Guelph. The Kitchener Consistory had some misgivings about the matter, since another new group was meeting in Acton. So the matter was referred to Classis Hamilton, scheduled to meet a week later, on April 22nd.”

APRIL 22, 1963

Classis Hamilton, after due deliberation (Guelph had not followed proper procedure), gave approval that services be continued at Guelph, especially when informed that some fifty people were attending. The Classis also decided to send to the Guelph group a minister every second week for the morning service from June 1953 till September’s Classis meeting.

After two months, the group in Guelph rented the Orange Hall for \$10.00 in order to meet twice a Sunday.

SEPT. 1953

At the next meeting of Classis Hamilton, the group of Guelph requested organization as a Church. The same objections were made regarding the establishment of the Guelph congregation; they were subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. Rev. Spoelhof warned the Guelph group prior to the Classis meeting that they could expect some opposition because of their unorthodox approach. And so it transpired. They had not followed proper procedure: when progressive initiative and ecclesiastic procedure do not dovetail, opposition can be expected. Finally, Rev. E. Kooistra from Fruitland spoke some wise words to break the deadlock. He commented:

“If there is a woman who gives birth to a healthy baby, but there is no father, would you then say—there is no father, so there is no child? I propose that the request from the Guelph delegation be accepted”

And so, the request was granted and the fledgling group of Guelph worshippers was accepted into the fold of the Christian Reformed denomination. The consistory of the Kitchener CRC was instructed to carry out the mandate of Classis, with Rev. Charles Spoelhof as the official Home Missionary for Guelph. Pulpit supplies were granted. The decision of Classis brought joy and thankfulness to many.



Rev. Charles Spoelhof, Home
Missionary

OCTOBER 4, 1953

October 4, 1953 The institution of the new congregation took place during the Sunday morning service. This historic occasion took place in the Orange Hall on Waterloo Avenue under the leadership of Home Missionary, Rev. Charles Spoelhof. He read the 4th chapter of Ephesians, and led us in prayer. The text for the sermon was Ephesians 4:11, 12.

To the delight of 23 families and 3 single persons, membership transfers/applications were accepted—a total of 110 souls, 52 of whom were communicant members and 58 members by baptism.

The charter members of the newly established Guelph congregation were:

- Mr. and Mrs. A. Alberts and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. M. Boonstra and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. M. Bijlsma and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. Braaksma and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. W. Braam and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. M. Bremer

- Mr. and Mrs. C. Duiker
- Mr. and Mrs. Eising
- Mr. and Mrs. Fokkens and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. M. R. Haan and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. T. Haan and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. W. Haan and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. G. Koorneef
- Mr. and Mrs. R. Mulder
- Mr. and Mrs. H. Oosterveld and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. S. Reitsma and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. J. Sloot and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. J. Smit and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. E. Top and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. G. Van der Meer
- Mr. and Mrs. R. van Kooi and Family
- Mr. and Mrs. R. van Veen and Family
- Jelle Vander Zwaag
- Melle Zwaagstra and
- one additional unknown individual

Since the morning service was very lengthy, installation of the newly elected office bearers took place during the evening service that same Sunday, conducted by Home Missionary Rev. Spoelhof. The message for the evening was based on Psalm 122:6-9: "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." With these words Rev. Spoelhof expressed his prayer and wishes for the newly formed Christian Reformed Church of Guelph.

First elders: Rijk Van Kooi for a two-year term, John Sloot for one year, Ed Top for three years.

First Deacons: Siebe Reitsma for a two-year term, Markus Boonstra for three years, Tjeerd Bylsma for one year.



OCT. 8, 1953

At the first consistory meeting held at the Van Kooy residence, Rev. Spoelhof presented an English Bible to the church.

Here follow the minutes taken on Oct. 4, 1953 by Kitchener clerk H. C. Van de Loo:

Translation of the organization service.⁷

4. Oct. 1953

The coming into being of the Guelph group as congregation of the Chr. Ref. Church.

At the last meeting of Classis Hamilton of the Chr. Ref. Church, a letter was brought to the table from the Guelph group with the request to establish their own congregation.

This request was dealt with, discussed and approved, at that meeting. Since a large number of the members were from the neighbouring congregation of Kitchener, this congregation presented this request for establishing.

The consistory of Kitchener decided at their meeting on the 18th of September, to implement the organization on the next forthcoming Sunday the 4th of October with Rev. Spoelhof being the representative of the congregation of Kitchener as well as brother H. C. Van den Loo the clerk who was also requested to record the minutes of this event.⁸

Sunday morning was a joyous morning for the Guelph group because this was the last time that they as group would meet and the transition to become a congregation would become a reality.

The leading of the service rested with Rev. Spoelhof.

He opened the assembly with singing of Ps. 84:1

O God of host, O God of grace,
How lovely is Thy holy place.
How good and pleasant is thy dwelling
My thirsty soul longs earnestly
Yea faints Thy holy courts to see
Mid festal songs and music swelling
My heart and flesh cry out to God
To Him I spread my hands abroad.

After this, he read Ephesians 4 and led in prayer.

In reference to the above-mentioned chapter, he presented a short meditation. After this, he read the attestations of a total of 23 families and 3 single persons. It is a gratifying number, and a

⁷ This is not a free translation, we tried to be as literal as possible

⁸ Record this for the minutes, mainly on behalf of the Kitchener Council

good beginning for which we must give thanks to the Lord our God for this blessing. The service continues to proceed with voting for office-bearers. From the free vote needed, a 2/3 majority and the second vote required a half +1 majority. Proposed to vote for three elders and three deacons.

For elders: Brother E. Top for a three year term, Brother van Kooi for a two year term and brother J. Slood for one year term.

For deacon: for 3 years, M. Boonstra, for 2 S. Reitsma, for 1 T. Bijlsma.

Rev Spoelhof observed that meanwhile it would be too late to conduct a regular church service, so it was decided to hold the first service in the evening service. He would be willing to lead that service. Everyone was pleased with the results of the votes and that they could bring this to completion. The evening service would be at 7.30. The office-bearers will be installed during that service. Rev. Spoelhof closed the assembly with the singing of Ps. 84 : 4

Blest is the man whose strength Thou art,
Thy ways are hidden in his heart
He treads the highway to Thy dwelling
Though passing through a veil of tears,
Thy grace o God, to him appears
With winged hope and power impelling
The wilderness by showers blest
Is now a pilgrims vale of rest.

and prayer of thanksgiving

P. S. this congregation counts 110 persons of whom there are 52 confessing members and 58 baptized members.

The evening service was as thus:

Silent prayer, Votum and the singing of Ps. 122 : 1

My soul was glad when unto me they said,
We will now repair unto Jehovah's house of prayer
There to adore His majesty, Jerusalem where blessing waits,
Our feet are standing in thy gates,
Here shall we bring our supplications
Jerusalem is builded well, it is the pride of Israel
Securely knit are its foundation.

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*Reading the Law of God
Singing Ps 101 : 1, 2 and 3.*

Lord I will sing with rapturous rejoicing
Thy justice and Thy kindness voicing;
A joyful psalm, Jehovah,
I will raise unto Thy praise

2) I wisely tread the path of perfection
When wilt Thou come o Lord, for my direction
I'll walk within my house with perfect heart
From sin apart

3) No wicked thing or slanderous accusation
Shall stand before mine eye with approbation
No hateful doings of apostasy
Shall cleave to me

After this, the regular forms were read and the office-bearers were installed.

During the singing of Ps. 119 : 17 and 18⁹,

17) O teach me Lord the way that I should go
Then shall Thy servant walk therein forever
Give understanding all Thy paths to know
Then shall I keep Thy law with zealous fervour
Instruct me in Thy perfect will and lo
I shall observe it with my whole endeavour

the collection was held. After this Ps. 122 was read and the chosen text were the verses 5 - 9 which were the basis for the sermon.

After the blessing, we sang from the Psalter Hymnal No 468. ("Praise God from whom all blessings flow")

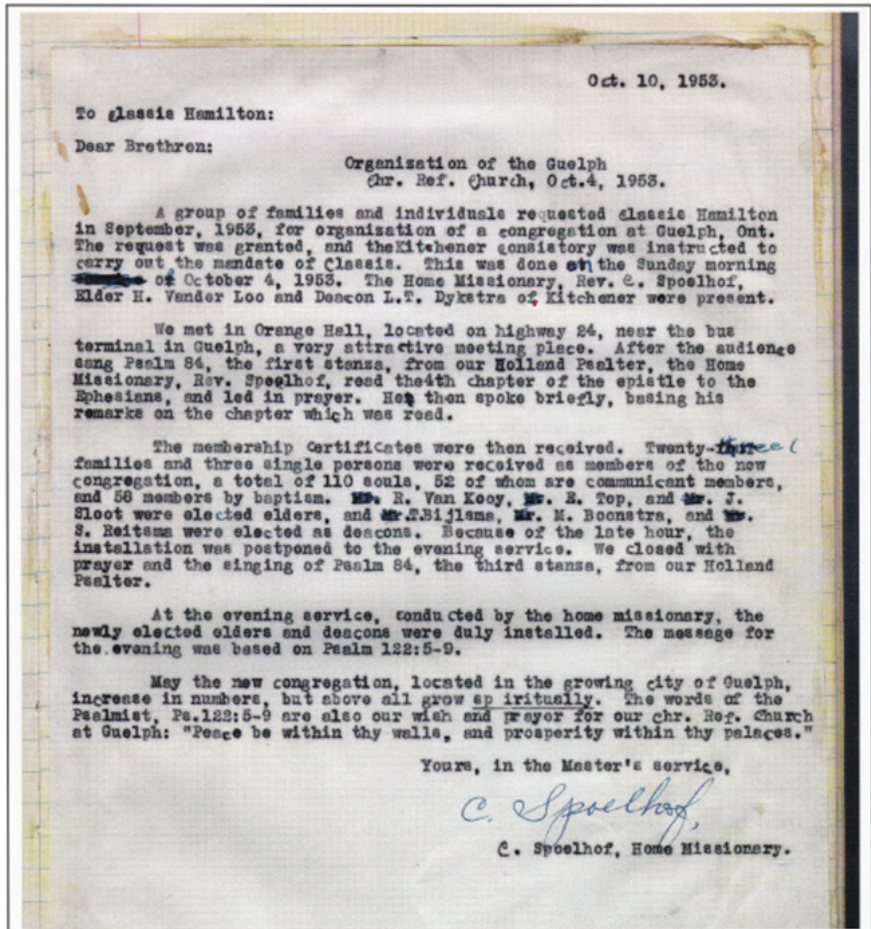
To have this covetous dream fulfilled was a moment every one had looked forward to for a long time. The sincere desire of the congregation of Kitchener is that the Guelph congregation may grow in numbers, in truth and knowledge of the scriptures.

*In the name of consistory,
Chairman,
Clerk,*

C. Spoelhoff
H. C. Vander horst
scribe.

⁹ We were unable to find a proper matching verse in the English translation

Here follows a true copy of the letter sent to Classis Hamilton: (next page):



MAKE DO WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

The saying "Make do with what you have" would characterize the beginning years of the Guelph church. Services were held in the Orange Hall with the aid of a small portable organ played primarily by Andy Sloot. In those early years, due to a lack of ministers, elders Rijk Van Kooij, John Sloot and Ed Top led many—if not most—worship services. These Sunday worship services were conducted in the Dutch Language, accompanied by singing of the old familiar Dutch psalms. Most brought their Dutch Genevan psalm books; as the hesitant tones of the harmonium drifted through the confines of the hall, the newborn congregation sang their praises to God.

Sunday school and catechism were started immediately. Catechetical instruction was given directly after the church services by the visiting ministers or

by a consistory member. Sunday School, held on Saturday afternoon, was well attended with many parents enthusiastically participating as organizers and teachers. In addition to attending consistory meetings and instructing catechism classes, the consistory members even took on the janitorial responsibilities for the first year.

In 1953 all minutes were written in Dutch because no one knew to write in English well enough, but Home Missions were already mentioned, only it was spelled HOOM MISSIONS.

DEC. 20, 1953

The Guelph congregation celebrated *Heilig Avondmaal* (Lord's Supper) for the first time as congregation. This celebration of Communion was observed four times per year, served on long tables set in the front of the sanctuary, using a communal cup for the wine.

1954

The first three elders and three deacons of the *Kerkeraad* (Council) struggled to protect the sanctity of the church. They dealt with all aspects of the spiritual life of the church. Family visiting and even the purchase of items needed for the church were all discussed at council meetings. They met often. Council minutes tell us that meetings often adjourned at an extremely late hour, often past midnight. If it was not possible to complete the agenda an extra meeting was scheduled in addition to the regular meetings that were usually held once a week.

Taken from some memories: Early consistory meetings were held in the homes [of council members] where the wives were asked to turn a deaf ear and make themselves scarce.

Records of the first annual Membership meeting show that after existing for less than one year, as of Jan. 1, 1954 the total number of members was the same as of Oct. 4, 1953—a total of 110 souls. It was also reported that the amount of funds contributed to this fledgling church amounted to \$1,367.22. The expense for that same period was \$616.91, which left the church with a surplus of \$750.37. At that meeting it was decided that the weekly committed contribution for the year 1954 would be \$1.50 per family per week in order to meet the budget of \$2,400.00. The membership supported the decision of council to apply to the Hoom [Home was misspelled] Mission Board for the services of a seminarian for the summer months.

Seminarian Mr. John Groen became the first student minister for this congregation. The congregation contributed \$40.00 towards his weekly remuneration

while the Home Mission Board paid an additional \$20.00.

1954–1955

- Seminarian Summer Student John G. Groen was with us for two summers, 1954 and 1955.
- Gleaned from our 25th anniversary book as written by John Groen; *John, as a young man [seminarian student], felt that he was accepted even though he still wore his outgrown Dutch suit and his sermons were the first he had ever made. As he looked back on those days, he recalled the Orange Hall with its wooden floors and the chairs that made so much noise when moved, and the hot summer which made it a challenge for the younger crowd to sit still. (The chair where the preacher would sit down during a break in the service was the ornated Lodge seat, but since it was an Orange Hall and somehow connected to King William of the House of Orange, we “Dutchmen” felt at home!)*
- The congregation did not stay small for long; new immigrants arrived in Guelph and the congregation grew by leaps and bounds. During the first year the original membership of 110 persons increased from 110 to 173 souls (58 families).

APRIL 17, 1955

Rev. Spoelhof's last Sunday with the Guelph congregation.

- Rev. Charles Spoelhof: *“I continued serving our Guelph Christian Reformed Church, together with Stratford, Listowel and Lucknow Christian Reformed Churches until April 17, 1955. The previous Lord's Day, April 10th, I conducted the services at Guelph. The Lord's Supper was celebrated at both services. This was the desire of the consistory, since it was my last Sunday with you, before my leaving for the West. For the first time, the Congregation made use of the individual communion cups. The communion set was a gift of one of our Churches in Holland, Michigan. At the morning service four young people made public profession of their faith. It was an impressive service. At the close of the afternoon service, one of the elders, on behalf of the Consistory and the Congregation, expressed appreciation for the work performed in their midst, and wished us the Lord's blessing on the work in the West, on Vancouver Island, B.C. “*

1955–1957

Rev. John Ehlers of Mount Hamilton took Rev. Spoelhof's place as counselor of our church. He reflected on his two years in service to the Guelph Church:



“At first when I was asked to serve as counselor, I was hesitant to accept. Hamilton was quite a distance from Guelph, especially in the winter. However, now I could truthfully state that I enjoyed serving as your counselor during those early years of our existence. When the snow was falling on my travelling days, I sometimes wondered will the young people be present for catechism classes, and every time I was happily surprised because they were present practically 100% every time. It was also a privilege to preach in your meeting place several Sundays. And again, I was glad to notice that you all listened attentively. I was privileged to bring you the Word of God and that I could be guidance at the consistory meetings.”

Rev. John Ehlers drove a total of more than 5,000 miles back and forth from Hamilton to Guelph to help the as yet vacant congregation.

Council conscientiously guarded the purity of the church when certain sinful actions or thoughts touched the spirituality of this young congregation. The first councils dealt not only with the spiritual life of the church and family visitations, but also with the purchase of needed items for the church. Council minutes of May 1955 tell us that it was decided to purchase *tafellakens* (tablecloths) for the Lord's Supper tables at the cost of no greater than \$35.00 – \$40.00. Brother Van Kooi was instructed to purchase these. Two meetings later, June 1955, Council was informed that Brother Van Kooi had purchased the tablecloths for \$20.00. Slowly the congregation became more established, and began to form roots.

THOSE EARLY YEARS:

- The afternoon service at 2:00 p.m. had its beginning with the Roelof Mulder family who stayed in church after the morning service and brought soup to warm up. Mrs. Mulder, being very kind, gave some to other people, who then also chose to stay for lunch between services. This became a trend of sharing luncheons and time to socialize.
- On one occasion Mr. R Spikman was still napping on the stage behind

the pulpit when the second service was about to begin.

- Recalled: Rev. Van Harmelen's search for the *krentebrood* (raisin bread) from the luncheons.
- (At the baptism of the Boonstra baby, in the absence of a baptismal font, a bowl was used.)

EARLY BAPTISM



YOUNG PEOPLES



Members of the Gospel Christian Reformed Church Young People's group posed for their picture Wednesday morning before leaving by a G. T. C. bus for Pinehurst Lake where they spent the day.

1955

- The church received permission from Classis to call a minister.

Blessings abounded. By this time, the congregation had occupied the Orange Hall for two years, and its approximately 250 members desired to have their own building. Council made the decision to purchase an empty building on Albert Street.

JUNE 30, 1955

- A building was purchased on Albert Street for \$3,500.00
- The following details were itemized in the Dec. 1955 financial statement:
- The building was made ready after an extensive renovation which included: materials, painting, plumbing, heating etc. at a cost of \$3,559.55 plus \$2,214.75 for labor. The expense of buying chairs, was \$900, pews \$87.00, curtains \$195.00
- The total cost including the building and taxes came to \$11,058.95



AUGUST 1955

The congregation moved into their first owned building. As a building, it did not resemble a church; however, worshipping the Lord was more important for them than where they worshipped. The Lord had blessed them when they met in the individual homes, and again in the Orange Hall, so in faith the congregation moved forward.

- In 1955 church council made the decision to introduce the English language in the worship services with two English services per month. Courageously, Mr. John Bosman read the first English sermon. He is recorded as being a “brave man.”
- With the change of language, it also became acceptable to sing many hymns in addition to the old psalms.

In those early days, going to church was a formal occasion. People dressed their best. The men and teenage boys wore their Sunday suits (As the boys grew, the suits could often not keep pace with their growth and many mothers had to lengthen the pants legs and the jacket sleeves). The women, young and old, all wore dresses, preferably mid-calf length. Hats of all shapes and sizes were part of Sunday



attire. After all, they reasoned, the apostle Paul teaches that all women should be dressed moderately and cover their heads when going to a worship service!

Taken from some memories: Announcement made from the pulpit: the “old folks” were asked to please keep the noise down. It was common to hear the buzz of many voices before the church service while people caught up on the latest news from their out-of-town friends.

OCTOBER 21, 1954

The first mention of establishing a church-related society. We read the following from the minutes: *“It was an evening that we will remember with thankfulness. A number of brothers and sisters, members of the Christian Reformed Church of Guelph, met in the basement of the Orange Hall, for the purpose of establishing a men’s and a ladies’ society, or Bible club. It was decided to have two societies, one for the ladies and one for the men. The minutes from that first meeting state that the ladies ‘with a smile on their countenance separated themselves from the men and continued their meeting in another part of the basement.’”*

The Young People (single young adults) had similar aspirations to meet. About seven of them joined to establish the Young People’s Society. Even though the beginning was small, the rapid growth of the congregation soon added many more young people to its number. It did not take long before the Y.P.’s society split and formed two groups: young men and young women. During the early years of their existence, the meetings were very formal. Each society member took a turn preparing an essay, with the focus of the society on discussing Biblical subjects, or occasionally something of more general interest. After an intermission, there was time for something of a lighter nature.

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It seems that the “ruling elders” were not always impressed with the level of depth reached by the discussions. A number of times, the church council minutes make mention that the discussions were too superficial.

Taken from some memories: In the early days at Guelph CRC, the bride and groom were presented with a gift and flowers from the whole congregation.

OCTOBER 1, 1955

- Planning Ahead: A house on Dublin Street was purchased for \$13,500.00. It was intended to serve as parsonage for a minister in the near future.
- So, in October of 1955 the congregation had a building and a parsonage. Now they needed a shepherd. Many hours were spent debating the needs of the Guelph church, including this question: would a Dutch minister or an American minister benefit this congregation? Many calls were extended to potential candidates for the shepherding of the growing congregation, with preference for a minister from the Netherlands, young and fluent in the English language.



AUGUST 12, 1956

- Many meetings and debates followed. God answered their prayers when *Dominee* Reverend John. C. Derksen of Middelstum, the Netherlands, accepted the call to Guelph.
- Rev. Derksen, his wife Corrie and their children Rob & Lucy, began the process of emigrating to Canada.



- The total cost of the moving and emigration came to \$1,004.00, in those days a sizeable expense, but the congregation looked forward to finally having their own dominee (preacher).
- The congregation Rev. Dirksen was to serve was growing and active. By 1956 numbers had increased by 50% to 301 souls. Men's and ladies' societies were studying God's Word and worked as groups for the benefit of the church and a future school. Young people societies were at this time separated—one for boys and one for girls—but that did not stop their

attendance and enthusiasm.

1957–1976



Rev. Derksen and his family arrived in Guelph in March 1957 and moved into the Dublin street parsonage. He was installed March 8 and the Inauguration was held on March 10. These were all happy occasions. Rev. Ehlers' service as counselor for the Guelph church could be ended.



1957

In 1957 a committee for evangelism was started with its aim to start a Christian School. As well, a choir was formed under the directorship of Mr. Schenk of Georgetown.

Gleaned from memories in a letter by Mr. John Sloot:

"The first choir, directed by Mr. Schenk from Georgetown, also started at our house. We had an old organ which we took out on the porch, and outside we were singing away. Often cars on the highway stopped to listen... The first hymn we learned to sing was #94, "God Be Merciful to Me." How true it is. After a great deal of singing, we had coffee and a good time."

1959

The church membership kept growing! There were now 430 members—83 families. The Albert street building became too small. In addition to Sunday school and Bible school, there was now also a boys and girls club, a men's society, a women's society, young couples club, young men's society, and young women's society. The church was blooming. The committee for evangelism was also in the process of finding new emigrants to join God's flock.

More memories gleaned from Mr. John Sloot's letter:

"We had outgrown the Albert street building in a couple of years and had to look for a bigger accommodation. A building committee was called by consis-

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tory. The first thing we had to do was to look for a building lot with—if possible, three or four acres to accommodate all our cars.

After much work and prayer as committee and three months of looking, we came back to the consistory with empty hands. Often in circumstances like these, we pray harder to the Lord, knowing that He is the only source that will provide. Do we practise that always in our daily life?

On a Saturday afternoon, after we had decided to leave the matter for a while, I walked over what is now our church property. There was a wooden house on the property, but the lady who owned the property did not live there anymore, because the city had condemned the house.

When I passed by, an older lady stood in the back door. She invited me in for a cup of coffee.

It had already gone through my mind “I will ask her if she has this property for sale.”

So over a cup of coffee, she told me she was a widow and lived in Toronto with her sister. She came over sometimes and stayed in her old house for a couple of days. I took ... courage and I asked her if she would sell the property to us. At the same time I told her we were looking for a lot of land to build a church on to worship our Lord. She said without hesitation: “That would be the best thing that could happen to my property.”

I asked her what the price would be and she told me “the church can have it for \$6,000. It is the only possession I have and I need the money to live on.”

Brothers and sisters, that was a gift, even at that time. We have to ask ourselves: Do we believe that the Lord provides? We confess it, but do we always depend on the Lord’s providence?”

JANUARY 31, 1959

The parcel of land of 3 1/2 acres was bought on Water Street for \$5,750.00. The property was located in a quiet neighbourhood and sloped to the river.



DECEMBER 1959

- Women in the congregation were allowed to vote; it took some time to have this approved by the Guelph CRC Council, for Synod had already approved women's right to vote in 1957.

JANUARY 1960

- The building on Albert Street was sold for \$16,000.00. After expenses, the net proceeds amounted to \$15,442.36.

MAY–OCTOBER 1960

The newly "homeless" congregation met for services in the John F. Ross High School on Meyer Drive. Evening activities for the various groups and meetings were held in the Reformed Church.



JULY 1960

On the recommendation of the Organ Committee, the consistory decided to buy a second-hand pipe organ, to be rebuilt and installed by M.R. Willits & Associates from Woodstock, Ont. This organ had come originally from a United Church in Acton and was bought for \$4,850.00. It was in

perfect condition and had even been approved as exam organ for the Conservatory of organists. The organ would be ready at the opening of the new church.

Soon, architects were consulted about building the new church on the parcel of land on Water Street. The next months were going to be busy and exciting; many decisions had to be made.

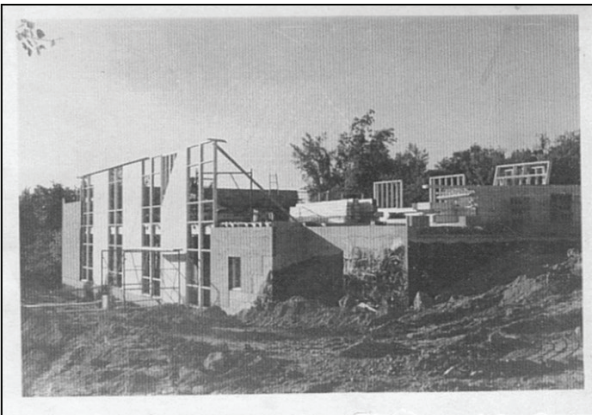
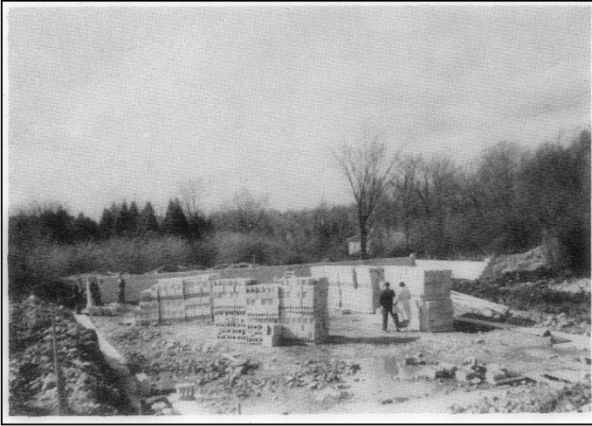
The following entries found in the financial statement of Dec. 1960:

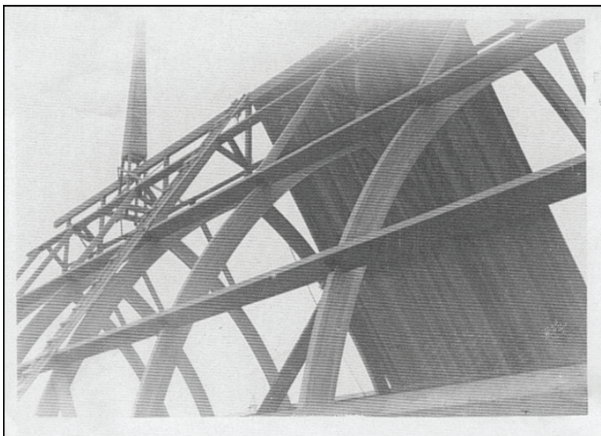
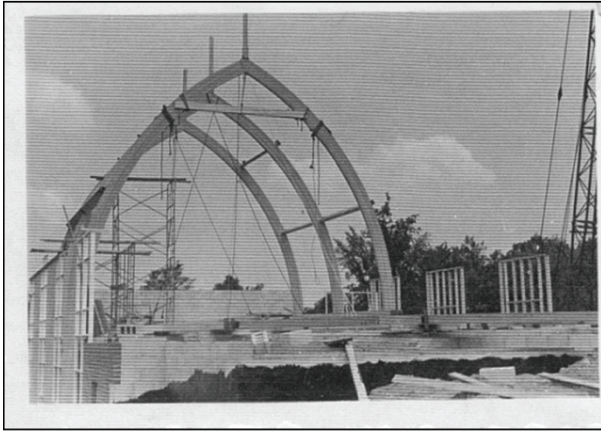
Cost, New Church Building

<i>Builder</i>	<i>\$85,112.00</i>
<i>Architect</i>	<i>5,263.50</i>
<i>Pews, etc</i>	<i>7,652.50</i>
<i>Building Site</i>	<i>5,787.26</i>
<i>Landscaping</i>	<i><u>1,629.15</u></i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$105,444.41</i>

Water Street Church — A History

The building was designed by K. H. Kruschen of Kruschen & Daily Architects and Engineers of Oakville, and built by Vroom's Construction Company of Weston.

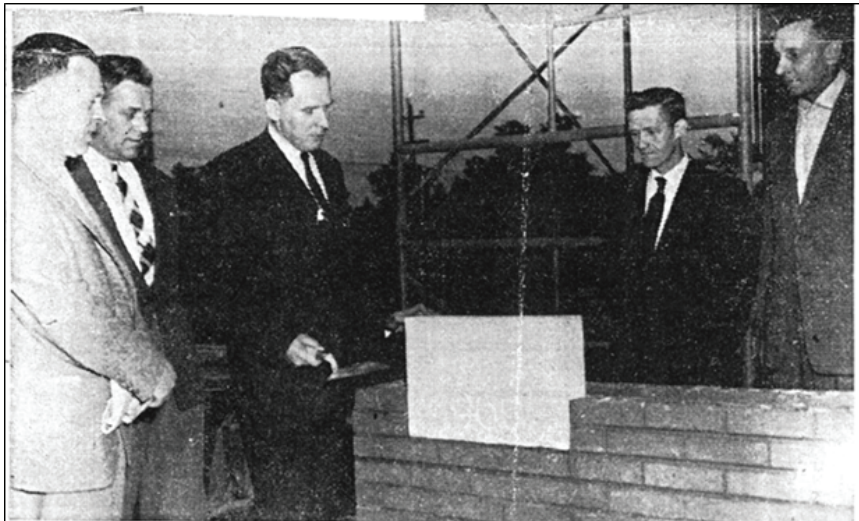




June 22, 1960

After much preparatory work was done, the day came for the memorable laying of the cornerstone. This stone signifies; *The Lord, who is our chief cornerstone and the builder of the church.*

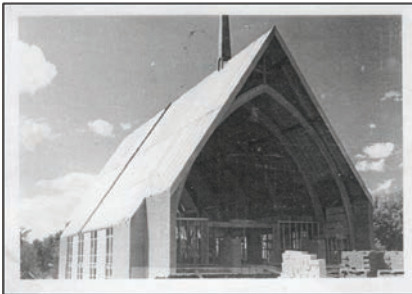
<p>Christian Reformed Church</p> <p>10.00 a.m.—English Service 2.30 p.m.—Dutch Service Minister Both Services REV. J. C. DERKSEN</p> <p>Corner Stone Laying Ceremony of our new church building on Water Street will take place on Wednesday, June 22 at 8 p.m.</p> <p>Both services will be held in the John F. Ross School.</p>	<h2>Lay Cornerstone For New Church</h2> <p>A new era began Wednesday night at the First Christian Reformed Church on Water St. with the official cornerstone laying ceremony conducted by the congregation's pastor, Rev. J. C. Derksen. No longer will the congregation of nearly 100 families be without a church home.</p> <p>Until the present modern edifice, to be valued at close to \$100,000 is completed, the congregation will continue to hold services in the J. F. Ross Collegiate.</p> <p>Mr. Derksen spoke of Jesus Christ as being the chief cornerstone of life. He urged close cooperation with other faiths submitting to the Word of God rather than to human inventions.</p> <p>WITH FAITH "We are bound together by the teachings of the Apostles and Prophets in the Bible and we are one in faith with them."</p> <p>The pastor said the new church was not a sign of the congregation's wealth, but rather a church borne out of necessity to have a place in which to worship God.</p> <p>During the ceremony, members of the congregation heard the strains of a new Lowrey organ donated to the church by G. Rutledge and Son of Guelph. Also taking part in the ceremony were elders, S. Wallinga, J. W. Penning, J. Thalen and clerk of the consistory, N. Homan.</p> <p>The new church expected to be finished by October, will have a seating capacity for approximately 600.</p>
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A PROUD moment for Rev. J. C. Derksen is reflected here as he laid the cornerstone for the new First Christian Reformed Church on Water St. With him from LEFT to RIGHT are: N. Homan, clerk of the consistory, J. Thalen, elder, Mr. Derksen, J. W. Penning, elder and S. Wallinga, elder. The congregation consists of nearly 100 families.



Laying the cornerstone



The new building takes shape.



Inside looking towards Water Street



The pews and organ installed.

Water Street Church — A History



Looking towards the front of the sanctuary



The downstairs fellowship hall.



The kitchen



The nursery

October 19, 1960

The new building was dedicated to the glory of God and for his service.