



## History of East View United Church of Christ

In December 1912, a spiritual torch was ignited. God gave a vision to start a Protestant Church in the Kinsman Heights and East View sections of Cleveland. For several generations, the congregational family of East View United Church of Christ has nurtured people from a variety of religious roots, ethnic backgrounds, races and economic environments. As a church family we celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a renewed commitment to build upon the remarkable record of charitable Christian Service that has made East View an enduring church. The journey from 1912 to 1012 was not an easy one, but it certainly was rewarding! Those rewards and God's promise of eternal life give our congregation inspiration and meaning to continue the journey of "running with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Rev. William Colbert Detling secured the use of the Cermak located at the corner of Kinsman and East 137<sup>th</sup> Street. After holding services for three Sundays in December, the interest gradually increasing, it was voted to organize a Congregational Church. On December 31, 1912, at a Watch Night service, the East View Congregational Church was formally organized. The organization and Watch Night Service closed at twelve o'clock, as the old year was ending and the new year was being ushered in. The 30 members of the newly formed church sang the doxology to the ringing of the bells of the city announcing the New Year.

Now that they were organized, the congregation took the steps necessary to be recognized by the Congregational Union of Cleveland. On January 19, 1913, the members voted to adopt The National Council Commission's Statement of Doctrine. On January 26<sup>th</sup> the newly formed church was formally named East View Congregational Church. The final piece was put into place when an ecclesiastical council was convened. Representatives from seventeen Congregational churches voted to accept East View into the fellowship of the Congregational Churches.

*You must remember so you never forget...*

The new congregation forged ahead despite natural obstacles for a newly formed church. To accommodate the growing membership, a six room home was rented on East 143<sup>rd</sup> Street for services. Within a year, the church purchased a lot for \$3,000 and secured the funds to build a church valued at \$1,500 at the corner of Kinsman and Elm (E. 142<sup>nd</sup> Street). Worship services were held in the new building less than a year after East View was formed. The new church building was formally dedicated on January 11, 1914.

Hebrews 12:1 – Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. (CEV)

## LIVING OUR FAITH YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

The first twenty-five years were full of struggles and successes. Two formal votes were taken, one in 1919 and another in 1920, to disband the church due to financial difficulties. Each time, the congregation voted for the church to continue. Also to save money, East View held joint services with Kinsman Heights M.E. Church and Warrensville M.E. Church during the summer months. The Sunday School Rooms were damaged by fire on January 12, 1922. Sunday School was held in the house until repairs were complete. April 17, 1926 a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the building we now occupy. The new building was dedicated on February 19, 1928 with baptisms and a reception for members.

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The first half of the second twenty-five years brought stabilization. Attendance remained steady and the church was able to burn its Union Trust mortgage in November 1936. As time marched forward, the winds of change blew in. Nationally, the Congregational Christian Churches merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Churches to form the United Church of Christ in 1957. However, it wasn't until April 7, 1961 that the members of East View Congregational Church voted to accept the constitution of the United Church of Christ. Locally, the surrounding neighborhoods were changing racially. Members discussed the segregation question at the January 18, 1957 meeting. It was decided that it was not yet a problem; therefore, the present status quo could be held and nothing further need to be done at that time. Financially, the church was in dire straits. It held its third vote in January 1959 to disband due to money issues. Again, it was voted to continue serving the neighborhood but they decided to have the minister be part-time.

Years fifty-one through seventy-five were ones of changes and challenges. The finances of the church were of a major concern. For three years in the 1960's and almost two years in the 1970's, the church relied on interim ministers to be spiritual leaders. On January 17, 1965, the church took its fourth official vote to keep the doors open for the future. Concurrently, as the Moreland neighborhood of Shaker Heights became more integrated, so did the membership of East View. To solve the problems of finances and integration, in April 1965, the Regional Church Planning Office proposed that East View disaffiliate from the United Church of Christ and become a Community Church. As a Community Church, they would have co-pastors, one Negro and one white. The congregation decided against this proposition. After finally hiring a minister after the three year absence, the congregation made the decision to legally change its name to East View United Church of Christ (Congregational). By the end of the 1960's, East View UCC had become a predominantly African-American congregation. Rev. George R. Castillo became East View's first minister of color in 1970. Financial difficulties continued and membership declined in the 1970's only to slowly turn around in the 1980's as the pulpit leadership stabilized.

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The last quarter of a century has seen East View become known for its community outreach. Through a variety of programs, the congregation attempts to follow Jesus' footsteps by reaching out to the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned, the bereaved, the needy, and strangers. Our longest tenured minister, Rev. Dr. Valentino Lassiter shines as our ambassador in the religious community, the academic community and the community-at-large. East View's Bible Study class has enriched the knowledge of many from other churches as well as those studying theology. Our music ministry is highly requested. Our Martin Luther King, Jr. breakfast and program has become a prominent one in our area. With all our successes, we still face some major trials ahead. Although our membership has grown, it is also aging. Our church building is aging too. We cannot service the disabled as we would like. Finally, our financial struggles haven't ceased, they have just become an accepted part of who we are.

Many dedicated members go beyond the call of duty to spread the word of God through many organizations and ministries. Auxiliaries and ministries include Bereavement Committee, CD Ministry, Christian Education, Deaconate Board, Hunger Ministry, Men's Fellowship, the Ministerium, Music Ministry, Pastoral Relations Committee, Stewardship Committee, Trustee Board, Usher Board, Welcome Committee, Women's Guild, and the Youth Fellowship.

East View UCC continues to carry out the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:19-20), building on a heritage rich in service and dedication to the community. We engage in cooperative efforts to make the community a better place. We have partnered with The First Unitarian Church through our joint Multi-Racial Action Committee. We support our youth through scholarships presented through the Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest, financial support of the IMPACT Youth Enrichment Program and the giving of Christmas gifts to children whose parents are incarcerated through the Angel Tree program. We also remember our college students with care packages.

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We have taken steps of faith, and God has blessed us exceedingly and abundantly. We worshipped and praised God for one hundred one years. During that period of time, we were blessed to have and have had the following ministers with vision and leadership: