

## ***The Sunday School Building***

Part 1 of a 2 part story

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On a Lenten Sunday in March 1958, (nearly 60 years ago) St. Margaret's Church announced bold plans to erect *The Sunday School Building*. The goal: raise \$60,000 through pledges over 150 weeks for a 10 room Sunday School addition and increased capacity in the church, with the promise that *The gain and increase in the spiritual life of each of us and to St. Margaret's Church will far exceed any amount of money which is raised.*



Despite public statements of support and his appeal for *prayerful thought and sacrificial giving*, the **Rev. G. Albert Cooper** (left), rector (1946-1963), had reservations about constructing a building for the Sunday School. Ten years earlier in 1948, two years after arriving at St. Margaret's Church as rector, Mr. Cooper had achieved some necessary repairs and updates to the church building with little money and a number of gifts. In 1958, however, the church was cluttered, the building basically unchanged since it was rebuilt 1895-1896 — except for the addition of stained glass windows. (Mr. Cooper would survive five more difficult years before he was removed as rector in 1963.)

In 1958 the church building required even more work (that would wait 18 years), the parish hall needed to be replaced (12 years later), and the rectory was barely standing (two years later the rectory was replaced). Not surprising Mr. Cooper had other priorities — he was willing to put up with the noise and the confusion and the Sunday crush of small bodies jammed into every space as he attempted to deal with what he felt were more urgent, more important needs of the parish.

And it was more than coincidence that events leading up to construction of The Sunday School Building began when Sunday School superintendent Folger McKinsey (Mack) Ridout, Sr., (1925-2011) was first elected to the (still all male) vestry in 1957. More about the people and the process in the second part of this two-part story. The story of the building and fund raising process and the people making the decisions has not previously been written.

A compromise produced a campus plan whereby the Sunday School Building would precede a new church and a new parish hall. The Sunday School Building would be two stories, with the first floor —

allowing for natural light — sunk into the ground so that the second story could be on the same level as the new church and the new parish hall. A new rectory would be constructed near the old rectory and the old rectory razed when the new was completed. All this from a parish with just a few dollars in the checking account and no savings.

The so-called *broad brush plan* was expected to cover **all** (emphasis added) *future needs*. However, the broad brush plan conceded *the present church structure having been found to be unsound it may be desirable to replace this building sooner*.

### **Making the Case for a Sunday School Building**

In 1957, Sunday School enrollment had reached nearly 200 children; average Sunday attendance was 145. Supporters of the Sunday School Building projected that by 1977 — 20 years out — enrollment would increase to 305 with average Sunday attendance of 220. Church attendance, averaging 100 persons per Sunday in 1957, was projected to average 180 persons each Sunday by 1977.

Typical Sunday School conditions (classes met for an hour before Sunday worship in the church) were described as



- seven different classes meeting in the then parish hall, without partitions
- other classes met in the kitchen
- some were held in the church (disturbing the men's bible study held at the same time)
- one class met in the furnace room and at least one other in the rectory



The appeal for The Sunday School Building heralded *Such facilities are not only inadequate for the teaching of the young whose distraction level is low, they are also the despair of the teacher who must contend with such distractions - - quite unsuccessfully. It is imperative therefore that we move expeditiously if our children are to receive the spiritual guidance they need, if a sufficient number of trained teachers are to be retained, if we are ever to offer family services - - to the whole family.*

The Sunday School Building was built though not as planned. Fundraising fell short. Since 1959 four classrooms (eight classrooms when separated with dividers) and not 10 as planned served Sunday's church school classes, a variety of proprietary pre-schools during the week (they oftentimes cleaned not only the school but the church when the parish could not afford to clean), and most recently St. Margaret's Day School. Church school and day school move across campus into St. Margaret's Church new formation building this year. The Sunday School Building has also held its share of Girl

Scout meetings, vacation bible schools, and other events. Acolytes long vested for service at the altar in some of the most dismal space available anywhere.

Newcomers are often surprised to learn that parish offices were long located in this building: clergy upstairs in what is now the first classroom at the top of the stairs and administrative staff and volunteers in what is now St. Margaret's Day School offices. In 1984 the rector installed a divider in his office to create space for the newly-hired associate. Donated soft, plush, bedroom-type carpeting was placed on the floors to dampen noise in clergy offices. The rector chose to work from home whenever he could — the rectory built in 1960. That rectory became the administration building in the mid-1990s. The office of the Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool, rector 1992-2001, was in this building for more than five years — divider and carpeting removed — before moving into the newly established administration building.

Our research shows only one official name — The Sunday School Building. In 2015, when *The Sunday School Building* is repurposed for uses that meet pressing parish needs, the opportunity exists to rename the building — honoring the legacy of those from our past, who cared about our future, leaving St. Margaret's Church in our care today.

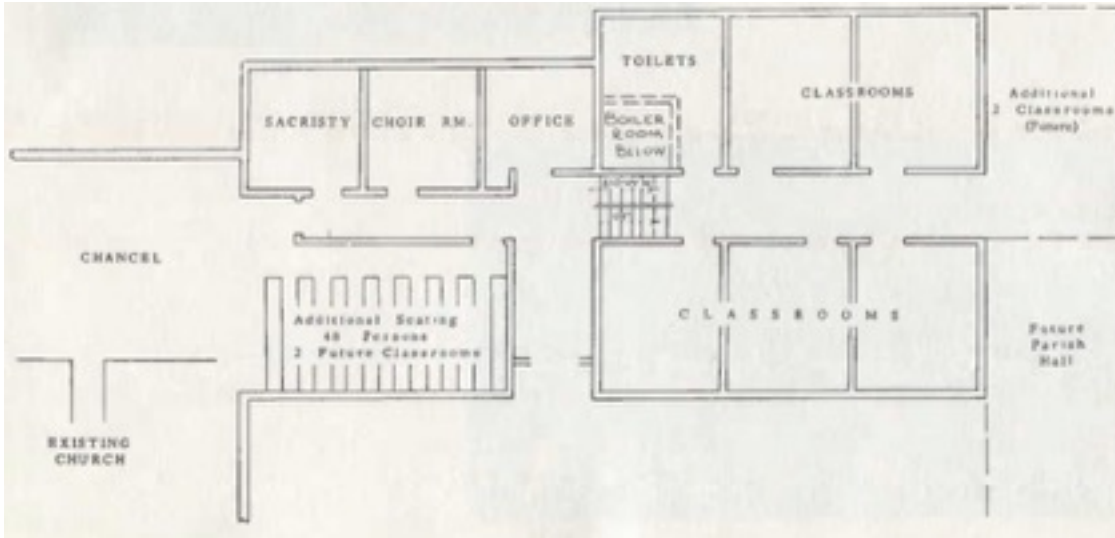
### **The Sunday School Building location, 1958**



### **St. Margaret's Church, 1958**



## Building Plans 1958



## Broad Brush (Master) Plans 1958

