

## HISTORY SPEAKER NO. 4 / 1943 – 1968 / MATT KAYSER

Our fourth quarter century takes us from 1943 to 1968. We saw the end of WWII, with the United States standing as the only major industrial nation on earth with its means of production still intact. All of Europe and Asia would have to rebuild, using items made in America. This meant that by the 1950s the United States would be the wealthiest and most powerful nation in human history.

This was the early stages of the Space Race, and medical advances would literally be life-changing. One of our greatest health threats was a five-letter word: Polio. Those who are old enough remember the summer days spent at home. There were no trips to the store, no movies, no swimming at the local pool. You did not play with your friends, especially during August. The discovery of Jonas Salk changed all that, and now polio vaccine is simply part of “baby shots.”

The 1950’s also gave us the baby boom, as the veterans from WWII returned home to start families. Our current church was built in 1956 and experienced unprecedented membership growth. Pastor David knew Rev. Ralph Steele, who was appointed to Grace Church in 1957 and served here until 1964. He asked Rev. Steele what he did to cause such unprecedented growth during his tenure. Ralph said, “I put a sign out front with the worship times on it, and 1,200 people walked in!” That’s how things worked in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with two out of every three Americans in worship on Sunday mornings.

But this was also a time of great social change. The 1960s brought us the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Civil Rights Movement, the beginning of the Women’s Liberation movement, the protests against the Vietnam War, the riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and the assassinations of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr.

America would be changed forever, and the church’s message of hope and trust in Christ Jesus helped our members navigate the challenges and changes.

Just as America changed, so too did its music. People were listening to something new—Rock and Roll—led by Elvis Presley!

SONG: *Hound Dog*

Church music changed as well, as we put new tunes to the old gospel message that there lives a King of Peace, our Savior Jesus.

SONG: *Let There be Peace on Earth*

As was mentioned in an earlier presentation, our name was changed to Grace United Methodist Church in 1968. This was the result of the unification of several Methodist related denominations to form the largest mainline

Protestant church in the country. It was also the 100th anniversary of our church. Methodists were on the move during this quarter century. With all that was going on, they had to be! Grace Church was on the move as well.

Junior Church, which had just started became, during this period, an essential part of the church and its growth and mission. Some of you may remember Margaret Fitch who ran this program for 45 years. Can you imagine?

The Junior Church program was designed to give children an introduction to church services, while allowing their parents the opportunity to worship without having to worry whether their children were disrupting the service. The children would go downstairs, where they would have their own worship time which was much shorter and more active than the one upstairs. On the screen you can see Junior Church for a class at the Tutt Street Church.



When we moved to this building, the children would come to church for a short time, and then all of them would go to their classrooms. If you look at some of the rooms, you will see that they were originally built in the shape of a letter “U” with a wall separating the two legs. Sunday School would start with a time of worship, singing, and prayers in what I would describe as the bottom of the “U” for the two grades that met there. They would then split into their respective grade level groups for their lesson.

Now, as in most churches, they gather at the front for a time of sharing during the service prior to leaving for their classes. While the format has changed, the essence of the program continues.

In the early 1950’s, youth groups were begun. United Methodist Women began a program for high school girls called Junior Misses. Ann Schroeder, whom most of you know, was one of the presidents of this organization.

In 1956, the Coffee Hour was started. John Walz (he is the gentleman holding the can of paint) went to the Dainty Maid Bake Shop and bought large boxes of doughnuts and sweet rolls. These boxes were about 2 ft by 3 ft, and he bought about 6-8 every week. Each Sunday, he would greet people and offer them a cup of coffee and a sweet roll. When someone new came to the church, he didn't just say "Good Morning."

He recognized that they were new, and he would ask them about themselves. Maybe the answer would be that the father was an engineer and had just started work at Bendix. Immediately, John would ask the visitor if he knew Sam Smith or Joe Jones, or whomever. He then came out of the kitchen, leaving the oversight of the kitchen in the hands of his boys—you have probably seen Tom and Jim here.

Anyway, he would take the visitors over and introduce them. They were offered seats, and friendships began. Just imagine--the next day, there were familiar faces at work, and another family was on track to membership, the first step to fellowship and faith. There are many people who said they joined the church because of that initial welcome by John Walz and the people of this congregation.

We have, today, remembered two people who were instrumental in the growth of this church. Think about the times we recognize all the volunteers we have now. There are so many of us who are willing to give of our time and talents to help others, and in the process we find our own faith strengthened.

