

DR. ROY A. BURKHART: PASTOR 1935 – 1958

The ministry of Roy Abram Burkhart began on January 13, 1935, and continued until the end of his earthly life on December 9, 1962. First Community was the only church he ever served as pastor. He retired as Senior Minister on May 1, 1958, becoming Minister Emeritus. Under this arrangement he continued on a full time basis for two more years and then part-time for the rest of his life.

His influence on First Community Church and on the thousands of lives he touched was profound, yet he had not entered the ministry to pastor a church, but rather as an aid to his youth work and counseling. According to an article in the August 11, 1947, issue of *Time* magazine, his father wanted Roy to be a fertilizer salesman, while his mother prayed that he would go into the ministry.

Roy Burkhart was born on August 28, 1895, near Newville, Pennsylvania. His parents were Pennsylvania Dutch farmers and devout Mennonites. Usually education for Mennonite children ended after the eighth grade, but Roy was encouraged by one of his teachers to go on to high school, and he became a teacher there immediately following graduation. Two years later he started classes at Shipensburg Normal School, graduating in 1917. He was then appointed principal of Blouserveville High School, his alma mater.

Religious problems for both families arose because the girl Roy wished to marry, Hazel Shover, belonged to the United Brethren Church. They proceeded with their wedding, however, on August 24, 1917, but he was immediately expelled from the Mennonite Church. Shortly before the wedding, he had enlisted in the army, which was another cause for expulsion. He served as an ambulance driver in France, and was discharged as a sergeant in July 1919.

Following his war service, he accepted a position as a high school principal. Two years later he became superintendent of South Middleton Vocational High School and took courses at Dickinson College. His daughter, Jeanne Selby, recalls that he organized the high school's first football team and frequently came home with grass stains on his only suit, which Hazel would then have to work all night to clean. In 1924 he joined the staff of the Pennsylvania State Sabbath School.

In his doctoral dissertation Rev. Gabe Campbell wrote of the next phase in Roy Burkhart's career. "Through this period of his life, he also had been active in the local Sunday School of the United Brethren Church which he and his family attended. His success in attracting students in the church school program and his popularity as a youth leader and speaker led to an offer to become national director of young people's work for the United Brethren Church. In 1925 he moved to Dayton, Ohio, to begin this new job. He was able to arrange to take courses from Otterbein College, while working full time, and received his A.B. degree in 1927. His work with the denomination brought him into contact with many national leaders and with members of the staff of the International Council of Religious Education. After finishing his academic program at Otterbein, Burkhart accepted an invitation to join the International Council as Associate Director of Youth Work."

During this time he also was taking courses at the University of Chicago leading to his Ph.D. in psychology. He did not attend seminary as a pastoral candidate, although he studied at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. He was ordained by the Congregational Christian Church to aid his youth work.

Five young people from First Community Church had attended a meeting where Roy Burkhart shared his belief that the shades of doctrine among Protestant churches were not important to spiritual growth. With the imminent departure of Rufus Wicker, they recommended Roy to the pulpit committee. They knew that members of the church had agreed that they wanted to pursue the community church ideal, as it had been fostered by Oliver Weist, and they believed that Roy Burkhart was the right man to do just that. Thirty candidates had been considered and twenty had been contacted, but the committee recommended calling Burkhart. At a congregational meeting held on January 6, 1935, a formal vote invited Dr. Roy Burkhart, along with his wife Hazel and children Bill and Jeanne, to come to First Community Church. "And so," stated Gabe Campbell, "Burkhart, who had decided to dedicate his life to working with youth, became the minister of First Community Church because of those very youth he sought to serve."

The installation service took place at a 4:00 p.m. vesper service on Sunday, January 13, 1935. It was an ecumenical occasion with the pastors of

First Congregational, Boulevard Presbyterian, and Grandview (now Trinity) Methodist Churches participating. The president of Otterbein College delivered the meditation and prayer.

When the Burkhart ministry began, the church was near bankruptcy with a debt of \$146,000. He later recounted that his success in revitalizing the congregation and increasing attendance came about through his efforts to attract a core of leaders among the youth of the community. If he could attract the leaders, other students would follow. Their enthusiasm, in turn, would draw their families to the church. In retrospect, this tactic worked exceptionally well. As we annually honor church members of forty or more years, it is obvious that the parents often joined the church a year or two later than their offspring.

Rosemary Weimer first met Roy Burkhart when he visited Columbus as a candidate for the pulpit. Three years later he asked her to leave college and work as his secretary. As she reminisced about the quarter of a century she spent in that capacity, Rosemary wrote about those early days. "Burkie, as we knew him, was pal as much as pastor. The church was small and seemed like a big family. He had spent twenty years working with young people and it was with young people that he started to rebuild the foundation of this, his first and only church. I saw him enlist the leaders in my high school senior class by deliberately seeking them out, spending time with them – at school, in bull sessions, in work projects, at camp, in creating dramatic worship services, in the first Bar None dances. As the young people were attracted by his ideas and idealism, their families began to return to the church. Tragedy served to draw us to him. On the first weekend camp at Indianola, near where Camp Akita would some day be built, a group left and went to Old Man's Cave. Later that Sunday afternoon word came that one of the boys had been killed in a fall from a high ledge. Out of the grief-stricken days that followed came the resolve that Buddy Evans' death should not have been in vain, and so was born the kind of dedication that was to continue to mark the youth groups of the future."

Camping was very important to the young people of the church and everyone worked to raise money to send representatives to Protestant leadership training camps. Most attended the Ohio Council of Religious Education camp at Indianola while others went to the International Council camps out

of state. A very special treat was in store for those who were invited to Burkie's cabin at Blackstone Lake in Canada. Joan Neese Jackson recalled the wild bus ride and good times there, but her cherished memories are the mood and atmosphere of Burkie's Bible sessions by the lake. He and Hazel also hosted planning sessions for the church staff and their families during summers at their Canadian home.

The impact that Burkie had upon the youth of First Community Church can be illustrated in the service of tribute they held to celebrate his fifth anniversary. Articles in the January 11, and January 25, 1940, editions of their newspaper, *Youth-Edit*, described "the feast of appreciation, a service of love for an advocate of God, the beloved leader of this church. A man who has given to all of us a magnificent friendship – the man we call Burkie. No one could have known that in five years this blue-eyed minister would more than double the membership of his church; that he would be the instrument through which two fine young men were inspired to enter the ministry; that he would help innumerable people, young and old, to find a more abundant way of life; that he would make of his church one of the most vital and progressive institutions in this city. As the young people of Burkie's church it is up to us to see that his good work has not been in vain. As testimony to his faith and inspiring labor, may we do all in our power to aid him in his struggle to help his people find the best way of life through the church."

From the congregation many expressed what he and the church had meant to them and each mentioned a fervent desire to pass on to others what they had gained. "Burkie and Mrs. Burkie came forward and the young people of the congregation gathered in the form of a cross around them. A chalice of silver, inscribed with the words, 'To Burkie, From the Young People, January 20, 1940' was placed in his hand, 'in grateful appreciation and as a token of our future loyalty and devotion to the work of this church.' The service of tribute was over, but the reality of Burkie's teaching and inspiration will never end for us." And so it has not; for many of those present that day went on to skillfully and faithfully nurture and serve their church, their communities and the world in positions of leadership and trust.

Roy Burkhart was already recognized as a prominent youth leader when he came to First Com-

munity Church and was much sought after as a speaker. Within a short time of his arrival he had addressed the Federated Churches of Franklin County, the Baptist men's retreat, county and regional state conventions of the Ohio Council of Religious Education, adult educational programs sponsored by the YWCA, and the League of Women Voters. He was one of the speakers for the noon Lenten series at Trinity Episcopal Church and was one of four pastors to occupy that pulpit during Holy Week services. He preached the sermon for Arlington's baccalaureate service and delivered the invocation and benediction for Grandview's commencement exercises.

By fall his involvement with radio had begun. He was the first speaker in a series of broadcasts over WBNS sponsored by the State Youth Council of the Ohio Council of Religious Education that featured youth leaders and young people. During the last week of December, he was in charge of a morning devotions program on WBNS.

Dr. Burkhart was a major contributor to an interdenominational Christian Youth Day on June 6, 1936. Sponsored by Methodist youth organizations in connection with the General Methodist Conference, it attracted young people from all over the state. More than 1,000 youth marched in a parade from Central High School to Memorial Hall after attending sessions of the conference. There the day's events were climaxed by presentation of a pageant written by Burkie, entitled "Christian Youth Building a New World" with over 100 participants.

"You've got to have a little showmanship if you would be a successful minister," commented Dr. Burkhart in a newspaper interview in 1936. The writer of the article noted that Burkie not only believed that theory, but also put it into practice. The interviewer also attributed that as the reason why nearly 500 new members had joined the church in such a short period of time and why First Community's youth groups were among the most active in the city of Columbus. He went on to observe that Dr. Burkhart's training in psychology was put to use in his ministerial work as he conducted interviews with 30 to 40 persons of all ages each week. "Conferences with young folks who seek his advice of their own accord are daily occurrences." Burkie believed that psychology provided an excellent medium for working among church members. By talking with them in their natural setting and then

working with them, he could help them without their knowing what he was doing.

He was able to accomplish much with his innovative methods. The Young People's Forum for post college age youth was established early in his ministry here. Its three-fold program was to act as a clearing committee to assist Burkie in all activities of church work, to launch an extensive social service program, and to meet each Sunday night to discuss subjects of vital interest and hear speakers of authority. One of the first ways in which they served was to telephone or personally visit church members to encourage them to attend church on Loyalty Sunday. They also helped with a project that led to the founding of Central Community House. Tri-Village merchants had agreed to donate \$2,000 for the establishment of a recreation center in the south central section of Columbus if some outside agency raised \$500 for the same purpose. The forum sponsored a revised version of Beggar's Night and took charge of nearly 100 children who donned their Halloween costumes and "begged" at area homes for contributions to the settlement house fund instead of candy or cookies for themselves. He also encouraged the young people to stage dramatic presentations to finance their camping fund.

An added insight into the character of this man can be gleaned from the newspaper quoted earlier as he recounted one of the reasons for his entry into the ministry. Throughout his young manhood he was torn between a desire to enter the business world and a yearning to go into the work of the church. It was an incident that occurred during World War I that decided his course. While serving in the Argonne drive, he became ill. A fellow soldier who was studying for the Methodist ministry obtained permission to replace him and was killed a short time later. "I've always felt an obligation to carry on in his place." Dr. Burkhart said. "I like to think that I've been living both of our lives.

THE BLOCK OF WOOD: A SPECIAL SYMBOL

"After Jesus was crucified, those who loved Him most and were closest to Him, came to ask about the place where the wood was secured for the cross. One among them who intimately knew wood as perhaps Jesus and his father knew it, searched far and wide and by some strange miracle found the stump of the tree from which the wood of the cross

was taken and it became a place of sacred meditation. The meaning of it was intensified by the fact that a new shoot was discovered to be growing up from the root of the tree . . . a little tree was coming up from the root of the old one. All were inspired by it because they said, as the spirit of Jesus lives on, so the tree has its own immortality. The place became increasingly sacred for worship and for those who knew Jesus intimately to meet to think of Him and remember Him, and to find the strength to bear the crosses that the troubled times had laid upon them. At 100 A.D., they did an unusual thing. They agreed to cut down that tree and made the wood into little crosses which were distributed among the churches, and the wood that could not be made into crosses was formed into blocks of wood which were to be given to young Christians. The meaning was shared with them with the understanding that they promised never to convey it to any other person by spoken or written word, but to live so that in due time others would know the meaning."

So goes the Legend of the Block of Wood, the symbol that has been the cornerstone of First Community Church's youth program since the early days of Dr. Burkhardt's ministry. Sally Dawson shared the story of how it all began. Because she had a background in psychology, Burkie would often discuss his ideas with her. "He felt that the junior high level was the best age for making kids understand reality. He wanted something permanent that they could earn, and so adopted the block of wood as the symbol. Each side of the block has a special meaning and personal message." Because of the part she played in listening and helping him to crystallize his thoughts, Burkie gave the very first block of wood to Sally. She was a member of the church's prayer chain and said that she used her block of wood as an adjunct to her prayers for others.

The block of wood was offered at the conclusion of a young person's period of study and preparation for church membership. When they joined the church they had the privilege of accepting or rejecting the block of wood. They accepted it only if they were willing to live so that others would come to know its meaning.

When he was asked what was so special about the block of wood, Burkie responded, "The wood itself has no mysterious meaning. It is not a jinx or a good luck piece. But it stands for some wonderful

ideas that help any boy or girl if they are used in ordinary life."

The wood itself has a story. Tom Jones, a senior member of a Columbus lumber company, brought back walnut from Wales which was cut into hundreds of half-inch cubes for the first blocks. Later one of the ministerial interns on the church staff took a parish in California and he sent back redwood to be made into blocks. In recent years the walnut has come from the Hocking Hills. Before his recent retirement from the church staff, former Akita Director Joel Hawley completed his last batch of 800 blocks. Over the years since he first took on the task of making them after he came to Camp Akita in 1964, Joel has made literally thousands of blocks from walnut trees at camp, which makes them even more special.

Some people have chosen to wear their blocks of wood on a chain, others to carry them, but always it serves as a reminder. Often if someone felt unfit to wear the emblem, it was given back to Burkie to keep until that person was ready to accept it again. During World War II many of the young men from our church believed that the block of wood they carried with them gave an extra measure of protection.

A youth program based on this symbol has been a part of First Community Church for nearly three-quarters of a century. Former Youth Minister Rev. Rick Sebastian described it beautifully in October 1979. "It weighs less than an ounce . . . a little piece of walnut from the Hocking Hills. Legend has it that the tree from which the cross of Christ was hewn was cut into small blocks and distributed to His followers. It is therefore a heavy symbol and is not to be taken lightly. Monetarily it is virtually worthless. Put on a chain and worn around the neck it makes an interesting pendant, though it sometimes gets in the way. Its significance depends upon the wearer, for it is a symbol. Like all true symbols, it points to a reality beyond itself . . . otherwise it becomes an idol or a charm. To pick up the Block is to accept God's freely given love and to commit oneself to a life of sharing that love with others. The Block of Wood is a symbol of one's identification with Jesus Christ and His particular way of life."

... AND THE CHURCH GROWS

During the Burkhart era, the church grew tremendously in both membership and the scope of its ministry. Upon his arrival, membership stood at 1,410 with an annual budget of \$19,000. At his retirement in 1958, the budget was \$365,000 and there were 5,915 members. He shared the dream of Oliver Weist that one larger church with a bigger staff could do a better job of meeting the needs of the community than several small churches. Beginning in December 1939 two Sunday morning worship services were scheduled. Richard Fuller, one of the church's outstanding young men, became the associate pastor in June 1940. He assisted with the youth work, preaching, visiting, and during the summer had complete charge of the church. Also in 1940 Helen Osborn became Youth Director. Lowell Riley was hired in May 1941 to form a youth choir and a men's glee club. Within a short time he was named as choir director and organist. With the outbreak of World War II and the departure of many young men to the service, the youth choir became the Cloister Choir of high school girls. Lowell's talent and charisma attracted many new members to the choirs and membership in the Cloisters, who sang every Sunday at the early service, reached 150. In 1942 Rev. Richard Norberg became associate pastor and soon was joined by Richard H. Bell as director of Christian education and minister to children. Richard Henry Bell was named as director of religious press and radio in 1945. Edward Rydman joined the staff as an assistant to Dr. Burkhart in 1946 and later became minister of youth. By 1954 the position of chairman of the department of ministry was created. And so the staff grew to meet the needs of a growing membership.

Surely one of the red letter days in the life of our church was the mortgage burning ceremony on April 17, 1944. When Burkhart came to First Community Church in 1935, the debt stood at \$146,000, but by 1940 was shrinking at the rate of \$15,000 a year and was completely retired just nine years after his arrival. In a dramatic evening service lay leaders John Ryder, early Grandview mayor; Dr. Link Murphy, and John Galbreath detailed the church's early history and financial struggle. Then after a hymn of thanksgiving, Ray Fenner, Jerry Montgomery and J. T. Edwards spoke of the future.

During the war, the church developed a program to maintain close contact with more than six hundred military and Red Cross personnel. Burkie

met with each one before they left town. Church bulletins and sermons were mailed to them each week along with a newsletter entitled "Beyond the Gates." The newsletter always included a note from Burkie and passed along news of where friends were stationed, what was going on at the church, and generally helped to keep them in touch with the church and with one another. There was a time when the church was sending out so much mail that it was using two tons of paper per month. The church also worked with parents and wives while their loved ones were gone. Whenever a serviceman came home, Burkie arranged a luncheon date or office appointment with them. The 1943 Annual Report noted that four weeks of his vacation plus four other weeks scattered throughout the year were devoted to traveling to visit our servicemen at their stations. One of our precious archives is a scrapbook of letters from our military personnel saying how much this correspondence and personal contact had meant to them.

Burkie's daughter, Jeanne Selby, provided a glimpse of the Burkhart's family life. When Roy's father died, his mother came to live with them and remained for the rest of her life. She died while Jeanne was in high school. This was one part of the Mennonite tradition that had deep roots, so there was probably never a thought of doing otherwise. During her childhood, and especially during the years when her dad was in graduate school, Jeanne recalls that her mother worked, so Grandmother Burkhart was there to care for Jeanne and her brother, Bill. She remembers her as a loving, but rather strong-willed woman, so sometimes it was not easy for Hazel with two women trying to run the same household. Being a farmer's wife, Grandmother had a green thumb and always had a garden. She loved flowers, and that love was memorialized in the two brass flower urns that adorn our altar each Sunday morning. They were a gift to the church from Mother Burkhart's friends after her death. In looking back, Jeanne thinks that perhaps her mother did not receive enough appreciation for all that she did in support of her husband's total dedication to the church. She was always there in the background, attending Guild meetings, helping in the kitchen, standing beside Roy as he greeted parishioners after church, doing whatever needed to be done. She believes that he could not have accomplished all that he did without Hazel's loving support. His family was important to him and he knew that he had their support, and they knew he was happy working and helping others.

His children were involved in work at the church as well. During the early years of Jeanne's marriage to Paul Selby, she worked at the church as membership secretary from 1946 to 1950. She and Paul also frequently served as leaders for the Brownlee youth groups. Jeanne contracted polio in the fall of 1952 while pregnant with her youngest son. In later years Burkie said that one of the factors that led to his discovery of the Key of Acceptance, was watching Jeanne learn to crawl as a step in her recovery from polio.

According to his widow, Cathy Burkhart Nichols, Bill Burkhart was a member of the Army Service Training Program during the war, where he received his medical education. Bill graduated from medical school in 1945 and following discharge from military service, completed his medical internship in Cleveland. Cathy was the daughter of missionaries and had grown up in China where she graduated from high school in 1941. The Japanese occupied the area where her family lived, but she and her sister were able to make their way to a summer home near Hong Kong to await passage home. After being stranded in Shanghai and enduring a harrowing voyage back to the States, she lived with relatives in Washington while attending Swarthmore College. However, when her father died in China, while her parents were interned by the Japanese, her scholarship to Swarthmore was terminated, so Cathy then moved on to Columbus to live with another uncle and attend Ohio State. In Columbus, she met Jeanne Burkhart and soon became involved in activities at First Community Church where she worked part time on the staff, served as a camp counselor, and eventually met and married Bill Burkhart. The Burkhart legacy of service to First Community Church continued into the mid-1970's when their son, David, served as a counselor on the Akita staff.

COUNSELING MINISTRY

Pastoral counseling was practiced at First Community Church from the time Roy Burkhart began his ministry here. After focusing on religious education for his master's degree at the University of Chicago, he specialized in sociology, psychology and religion for his doctoral studies and earned his doctorate in Clinical Psychology. Excerpts from an interview in the June 1952 issue of *Pastoral Psychology* are indicative of his strong belief in the relationship between religion and pastoral psychology.

"I don't see how anyone could study the life of Jesus and not be interested in psychology and counseling. The great changes that came over people through his ministry took place in his personal and small group contacts. He spoke to the multitudes but those who caught his spirit and were changed by him had either a personal or a very intimate relationship with him. For many people, insight only grows when they begin to talk and someone returns their feelings and thoughts. They only come to understand themselves as their feelings and thoughts are returned to them objectively by another person. When I came to First Community Church, I committed the church to a program of counseling and to a ministry of counseling, and the longer I am in the ministry, the more I am sure that real lives are changed in counseling situations and in small groups."

As knowledge of this aspect of his religious philosophy spread, many people in the community who felt a need to talk out their problems came to Dr. Burkhart. In the later years of his ministry, the reputation of the church as a place where anyone could go for help grew to the extent that he had to assign several staff members to this pastoral function. Finally in June 1957, he hired a counseling specialist, Robert Brees, who worked on a part-time basis. Within three months he became a full time member of the staff with the title Minister of Counseling and Group Therapy. His background included seven years as a clinical psychologist at Columbus State Hospital where he specialized in group therapy and research. Bob had previously conducted a class in role-playing for our staff. "Let's Communicate!" became the motto of the three role playing groups which formed that fall to provide training in interpersonal relationships. Bob specialized in the group approach to counseling, a guidance method that aims at helping people toward self-understanding and developing the ability to communicate more freely with others.

One of the concepts at the heart of Roy Burkhart's ministry was his philosophy that became known as the "full guidance ministry." In his doctoral dissertation Dr. Gabe Campbell wrote, "The full guidance ministry represented Burkhart's attempt to define a new ministry which incorporated his belief that a church should accept people 'where they are' and provide programs for every age and interest. He considered himself an educator and envisioned the church as a university for life. Religious education was one of the major emphases of his ministry. He

believed that all knowledge contributed to one's personal growth and awareness. In a sense, he viewed all of life as a process of religious education for he could not separate religion from life. This view permeates the entire full guidance ministry which remains his heritage to First Community Church. Burkhart sought for meaning in each event of life and attempted to teach others that lessons learned from living led to union with God." In his *Account of the History and Heritage of First Community Church*, Rev. T. William Taylor wrote, "The full guidance philosophy believes that a church has a responsibility to each person from birth across all seasons of life, for the church is the only institution that serves an individual throughout his lifetime. Moreover, it is the only institution that works with all the members of the family."

Roy Burkhart was dedicated to a person-centered ministry. He averaged thirty home calls weekly, scheduled four hours for counseling interviews every day, and made daily rounds of the hospitals. Often he would invite a young person to drive him on these visits, thus creating another opportunity for a personal contact. He knew the name of every adult and youth member of the church and most of the children as well. His success as a counselor was largely due to the fact that he was so well acquainted with the people of his parish. He went to great lengths not to neglect anyone and attempted to minister to all those who needed comfort. He accomplished this by writing notes, making phone calls, or by personal home or hospital visits. So many people have told stories of how at a time of illness or crisis in their own or a family member's life, they would look out the window to see Burkie approaching their house. Somehow, he always knew when he was needed. Such a ministry required a great expenditure of time and energy, yet he also found time to write eighteen books and numerous articles, and to lecture extensively across the country.

The program of the church sought to serve children and adults of all ages, the married and the single. The daily pre-school was begun in 1945 to provide creative play for young children and classes for their parents. Weekday classes supplemented Sunday School for elementary children. The junior high students took over Lincoln Road Chapel and ran their own Church of the Block of Wood. There were separate Brownlee Groups for each grade from eight through twelve, plus a very large and active college group. Cambridge Club for those be-

yond college age was the first singles group in the country. A chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous was formed, as well as the Village Little Theater. There were pre-marital classes and pre-natal classes, study groups and prayer groups. Dr. Burkhart believed that it was important in such a large church for each person to belong to a small group within the church. In 1952 he initiated the idea of Couples' Circles where ten couples could meet in homes and become part of a small, closely-knit unit. A birthday party for his mother was the beginning of the Sweetheart Luncheon for women in the church who were past 65. The Women's Guild and Men's Brotherhood offered other opportunities for fellowship. When a man in the congregation remarked that he would find it helpful to meet with a few other men for breakfast and a few words of prayer, Burkie started the Men's Breakfast in 1952 and 57 years later men are still gathering on Wednesday mornings for a light breakfast, prayer, singing, support and fellowship. There was indeed, something for everyone of every age.

When people are asked to describe Burkie, they nearly always mention his eyes, blue eyes that seemed to penetrate into your very soul. Physically, he was a commanding figure - over six feet tall, with broad shoulders and erect posture. His presence conveyed self-assurance, strength and security, yet he exuded an aura of quiet gentleness. He had a strong bond with young people that enabled him to draw them out so they expressed thoughts that were usually locked away from other adults. They felt comfortable with Burkie and instinctively knew that he understood them. They also knew that he accepted them as he sought to call out the very best in each person with whom he came in contact. He seemed to see the potential of what each person he encountered might become and he gradually drew that potential into being. As Otis Maxfield wrote after Burkie's death, "It was his genius to be powerful and able, and yet to let another person find his own uniqueness. I believe in so much that he believed in....because his beliefs became mine. Much of what he stood for has flowed into all of us."

An article by Hartzell Spence in the February 5, 1949 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* reported that First Community Church included 5,000 of the 15,000 residents of the Tri-Villages and 96 per cent of the high school students. "The church is beyond doubt the center of community life. Five Sunday morning services, three for adults and two

for youth, are required to accommodate the worshippers. Most preachers preach to congregations, but Roy Burkhart ministers to individuals. This is the core of First Community Church's success. Every member is a beloved individual whose physical, psychological and spiritual needs are looked out for. Care is taken that in a congregation so large, no one is forgotten 'We rub elbows with many people, but hearts with very few,' Burkhart says. He supercharges his ministry with friendship, surrounding his members with group associations at birth and following every step of their development." The article also noted that the schools, courts, police and social agencies worked hand in hand with Dr. Burkhart. All juvenile cases in the Tri-Villages were automatically paroled to him by the Franklin County Juvenile Court. Church members worked with the Court of Domestic Relations in guiding unmarried mothers and patching up broken homes. Through his efforts many troubled individuals received assistance until welfare agencies could be mobilized. His counseling ministry operated citywide with organizations and physicians. He encouraged lay workers to establish a church labor forum and a church management council that were credited with mitigating labor-management frictions throughout the city.

Such publicity, along with Burkhart's travels, lectures and pulpit exchanges with other churches, led to national recognition and prominence for First Community Church as well as for its philosophy and senior minister. In *The Christian Century's* 1950 poll of 100,000 ministers, First Community Church was selected as one of the twelve great churches in America. The special publication describing each of these churches stated: "First Community Church cannot be understood unless its central principle is made explicit. Its secret of success is this: Everything that is done here is designed to lead the person to an experience of God, in all His love, mercy and power, through Jesus Christ. It is in the personal life of prayer, in family devotions, in all sorts of group fellowships. Training in the life of prayer is the heart of this church. It is this conviction that has cemented former members of 36 denominations into the fellowship of First Community Church. Youngsters develop spiritual confidence and are encouraged to grow to their highest capacities and to develop the kind of life Jesus would approve and to build the kind of church Jesus wants it to be. Roy A. Burkhart is one of the most successful practitioners of the art of Christian counseling as a means of salvation in the American

ministry. It is his conception of the ministry that is being carried out in First Community Church. The church is doing a remarkable job of pioneering. Several of its methods are unorthodox today, although they may be commonly accepted tomorrow. A major reason for the success of this church is its sense of mission. Neither its ministers nor its people think of it as just another church. Instead they think of it as having a high Christian mission to its own people, to its community and city, and to American religious life."

With the increase in church membership and programs, the confines of 1320 Cambridge Boulevard were being outgrown just as we had outgrown the original church on Lincoln Road. When the building committee started planning for a new church in 1922, some thought that it would serve our needs for all time, while others doubted that the congregation would ever require so much space. However, the faith of the visionaries was verified. By the late 1940's membership had grown to 3,700, church school enrollment from 150 to 1,200, and young people's enrollment from 100 to 800. The congregation voted in 1945 to make a cash purchase of the house on First Avenue (where parking for the Trading Post now exists) and the corner property south of the church. The primary department was moved into the house, freeing the basement of Lincoln Road Chapel for an expanded nursery program. Later the house was used to accommodate the weekday nursery school and overflow activities throughout the week. Even the garage was utilized to provide extra classroom space.

The church was trying to provide ministry for 2,000 families with facilities built for 400 families. A new area for the choir that included rehearsal space was a must. There were five choirs, including more than 120 high school girls in the Cloister Choir, yet the choir room was barely large enough to hold their robes. The Guild Room was the only meeting room spacious enough to accommodate small wedding receptions, committee and board meetings, informal gatherings, and the Brownlee and college groups. On Sundays there was not adequate space for children or youth to meet for joint worship. The need for expansion was evident.

In 1947 a campaign to raise \$550,000 was launched to build an addition on the south end of the church building and to develop a camp on the Hocking Hills farm that had been given to Dr. Burkhart by John Galbreath. The proposed addi-

tion would include a social hall, kitchen, chapel, offices and classrooms. The plans that were unveiled also provided for remodeling Lincoln Road Chapel as well as some changes in the existing building at 1320. The gymnasium was to become two large rooms with an interesting configuration. The northern half was to be a parlor to be used for wedding receptions and meetings and as overflow seating for the sanctuary. The southern portion of the gym was to be raised so that it could serve as a stage to be viewed from the social hall in the new addition or from the parlor area that was later named the Weist Room. It could also provide more overflow seating. One plan that was not carried out included enlarging the balcony in the sanctuary and constructing a new balcony in the north transept. The old kitchen was to be transformed into a parlor and choir robing room. The room that had served as a stage when not partitioned off from the gym was also to become a parlor, what we now know as the Wicker Room.

Not all of the necessary funding was pledged, but Camp Akita was built and three rooms for children's work were created in the church. Extensive remodeling in the basement turned the area originally intended as a bowling alley into two church schoolrooms known as Youth Center North and South. At the Annual Meeting held in May 1950, the congregation voted to finish the plan that had been started two years before. This time a music room was to be included. The estimated costs were \$25,000 for the music room, \$40,000 for remodeling Lincoln Road Chapel, \$350,000 for new construction and \$45,000 for remodeling the present church building.

A worship service held at the Palace Theatre on October 1, 1950, kicked off an ambitious campaign to raise an additional \$300,000. This was the first time in Burkhardt's ministry that the entire congregation had the opportunity to worship together. Three choirs, all of the ushers, the 75 deacons, members of all boards and committees, and everyone who looked to First Community as their church were invited to be present on World Communion Day to face the challenge and opportunity of participating in this new venture in the life of the church. The first group to accept the challenge was the Women's Guild Board. They assumed the task of completely furnishing the new kitchen and set a four-year goal to reach their pledge of \$20,000. Howard Dwight Smith, William Welker and Kiehner Johnson served on the building committee. As

chairman, Mr. Johnson acted as liaison between the Board of Trustees, the architectural firm of Benham, Richards and Armstrong, and the contractor, H. W. Boyajohn & Associates. Ground was broken and construction was begun in mid-November. The cornerstone for the new wing was laid during the Annual Meeting on May 14, 1951. By early October the keystone over the chapel entrance was placed in position.

Features of the new building included five classrooms and the senior minister's study on the second floor. The new kitchen and Brownlee Hall were equipped to feed up to 400 persons. Pre-kindergarten and nursery rooms were designed to accommodate pre-school classes during the week and church school classes on Sunday. The Walter Whissen Memorial Library was established by a gift from his widow, Orpha, and the income from this memorial gift provided library books for many years. The Children's Chapel was designed as the place where children through the first six grades could come together for corporate worship. The 3/4 size pews could accommodate 150 children.

The symbolism of the stained glass windows in the chapel is described by Mary Miller in the booklet she compiled in 1979 on the symbols of First Community Church. "The windows depict the full-guidance philosophy of First Community Church from birth until death as follows: the Child; the Baptismal Font and the Rose; the Bible which has two bookmarks representing the Old and New Testaments; the Cross; the Block of Wood; the Keys to the Kingdom; the Bread and the Cup, elements of communion; the Tools of Work; the Open Doors; the Community and our ministry there; the World and our kinship with it; the Sunset of our days on earth. Several discrepancies exist between the symbols on the chancel cross and the symbols in the windows of the chapel. There are only five keys shown in the chapel instead of the seven on the cross. At the time the Children's Chapel was built, we only had four keys. Instinctively, we knew there would be more. The builder said, 'We'd better put in an extra key; you may think of another one.' And so you see five keys, four of them named - Prayer, Faith, Love, Acceptance, and one without a name. The open doors in the chapel window remind us that once we were called the Church of the Open Door. They symbolize openness toward all and the seven day search for a more abundant life. The concept of a Sunset, at a later date (when the chancel cross was designed) seemed inappro-

priate to our Christian Faith. For that reason, the end of the span of life as it is carved on the chancel cross reveals doors opening on the sunrise of a new day, eternal life. "

The service of dedication for the new building was held during the 11:00 service on December 7, 1952. Throughout the open house and reception, the children's choirs provided music in the chapel and the Cloister Choir sang from the new stage in Brownlee Hall.

ANOTHER SPECIAL SYMBOL: THE SEVEN KEYS

Prayer – Faith – Love – Acceptance –
Commitment – Forgiveness – Healing

How did these seven keys to eternal life within become a unique and beloved symbol for First Community Church? Why are they carved on the wooden cross in our sanctuary? How did the study of these keys become an integral part of our youth program?

It is recorded in Matthew 16:19 that Jesus said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Roy Burkhart was intrigued by the mystery of these keys. On June 4, 1944, he preached the first of many sermons on this text. Jesus never revealed what the keys were, but in that sermon Burkie issued a challenge. "Let a central purpose of your life be to find them."

He later recounted that suddenly during a service of ordination, as he was pondering the question of the keys, the answer seemed to come to him that surely the master key was prayer. Jesus himself possessed this key and the disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray." It also seemed clearer to him at the same time that the second key was faith. In Burkie's words, "God is ever trying to reveal Himself to us and prayer is our response to Him in faith. As we come to God in faith, we are aware of His love. When we respond to that love, it overflows to other people. So love is the third key." As we use the master key of prayer, we grow to a more vital faith and we grow in love.

During the next few years, the meanings of more keys became evident. He described the fourth key of acceptance in these words, "As we come to God in love, we can accept ourselves as we are, others as they are, life as it is, and move on from there." It

means surrendering our will to God and seeking His will. It is taking things as they are and making the most of them. It is changing what can be changed and accepting with grace what cannot be changed. A central theme of his ministry had been that God accepts people where they are. This philosophy was rooted in his own childhood experience when his fifth grade teacher, Silas Orris, had intercepted a note Roy had written that contained "bad words." Expecting to be punished, he fearfully waited after school, but nothing happened. Near the end of eighth grade, when Silas Orris asked him to remain after school, he was sure that punishment would finally come. Instead, his teacher encouraged him to further his education by attending high school. As we have noted, that changed the course of his life. In later years he asked his former teacher about the note, but he had no memory of it whatsoever. Burkie often recounted this experience as an illustration of compassion and understanding - that he had been accepted where he was, with no conditions and no recollections of the "bad" things he felt he had done.

After completion of the Children's Chapel, someone at a retreat asked Burkie about the unnamed fifth key in the stained glass window. He replied that it must be commitment, giving ourselves to the will of the Lord saying, "Here is my life; take it and use it fully." Commitment means giving your daily work to God and dedicating it to glorify His holy name. It is giving your love and relationships to God and letting them bear witness of His love and grace.

The sixth key of forgiveness is the grace to forgive and be forgiven. It is the quiet determination to hold nothing against another, but to put others in God's care, refusing to hold spite, forgiving and loving all persons. Dr. Burkhart determined that the seventh key must surely be healing. "If we have searched and found the other keys, we can become instruments of God's peace and healing. We can become witnesses of the saving power of our Lord. We can become a channel of healing by which the power of God can flow to others." It is the key to the wholeness of life.

And finally, according to Roy Burkhart, there is the key ring symbolizing eternal life within. "These, then, are the seven keys to a creative and dedicated life. As we seek to possess and use, through the gift of our Lord, the seven keys, we know life that is eternal."

A very significant event in the Seven Keys story unfolded on Christmas Eve 1954. Dr. Burkhart had spent the day delivering Christmas roses, but had saved until last his visit to Marjorie Willock. Marge had been a first grade teacher when she was stricken with polio in September 1952. Now, at age 27, she was almost totally paralyzed and was confined to a respirator. She had wondered just what special gift she might give to Burkie and so her nurse had helped to make arrangements with a locksmith for a key ring with seven ordinary house keys, each engraved with a single word. As Burkie gave her the rose, Marge said, "I have a present for you, too." When he opened the small box she said, "You gave those keys to me because the Master had given them to you. No one will ever know what they have meant to me. Now I want to give a symbol of them back to you."

For once Roy Burkhart was nearly speechless. Then he said, "There is no gift you could have given me that I would treasure more. Tonight there will be four thousand people at the Christmas Eve service and I haven't been able to decide what I should say to them. You have settled that for me. I will offer them this key ring." And he took it into the pulpit and told about Marge and how she had found the strength to live, through the message of the keys. Then he described all seven of the keys and how the ideas for them had come to be formulated. On that night the keys became a tangible symbol for much of the faith of this church. The meaning of the various keys had come from experiences within our church family and also from study and searching with others. Dr. Burkhart described how groups all over the state with whom he had shared the keys met together on retreats and tried to figure out the meaning of a ring to hold the keys. Finally every group had reached the same conclusion, eternal life now.

The Biblical foundation for each of the seven keys can be found in these scriptural passages:

Prayer – "Men ought always to pray. . ." (Luke 18:1)

Faith – "And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matthew 21:22)

Love – "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God . . ." (1 John 4:7)

Acceptance – ". . . for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (Philippians 4:11)

Commitment – "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

Forgiveness – "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6:14)

Healing – "Thy faith hath made thee whole." (Luke 8:48)

A church member, Louise Freeland, designed the keys as a piece of jewelry. She explained, "I had heard Dr. Burkhart preach on the separate keys and then on them collectively. I felt a personal need for something tangible that I could hold on to – that exemplified the Christian way of life as described by the meaning and use of the seven keys." One Sunday while listening to the sermon, she drew a design on the back of an offering envelope and in the center of the ring added the words, "Eternal Life Within." A newspaper article quoted Louise, "I was motivated or inspired to design a piece of jewelry for my own personal need. Those who have seen mine have expressed a desire to have that something tangible – 'The Reminder.' It has filled a need for me, and I hope in sharing it with others, they, too, may know and experience the same significance and power to the secret of life the seven keys hold for me."

The jewelry design was patented and a corporation, 7 Keys, Inc. was formed to manufacture and distribute it. Marjorie, Mr. and Mrs. Freeland, and Roy Burkhart were the officers. The reminder pieces also went on sale at Lazarus and Argo & Lehne Jewelers in March 1956. The visible reminders of the keys were available as cuff links, necklaces, bracelets, key chains, tie clasps and pocket pieces. Marge and Louise consulted with each other several times a week on the project. A part of Marge's work was to send 500 letters to organizations that were interested in the keys, and she personally signed each one. Her letter stated, "During the months which have been spent in a respirator, I have had many great experiences. I have found that the seven keys have opened for me the door to a richer and fuller life. Since the symbol of the seven keys has had such great meaning to me and to many others, I hope that it will be helpful to you and your friends." Thus, the visible symbol of the seven keys to eternal life within came into being. The original keys given to Burkie by Marge are mounted on the wall at the south end of Heritage Hall at the church on Cambridge Boulevard.

The keys did not belong to First Community Church alone. They were discussed in groups all over the country. The ministers of a Chicago church preached on them for two years. Among those who had expressed the need for some kind of tangible reminder that would help to visualize the keys, were groups of industrialists in Pittsburg and Chagrin Falls.

For individuals and groups within the church, the keys became a guide in seeking spiritual awareness and personal growth. There had been both high school and college prayer cells for a number of years. Young people in these groups came to the sanctuary for a half hour of silence, meditation and prayer, then met for a simple supper before discussions with Burkie or one of the other ministers. The college prayer cell became known as "The Keys" in September 1956. It was a fellowship where young people sought to perfect their philosophy and to develop a working faith. Research groups for men, women, high school and college students concentrated on the master key of prayer in a quest to find the remaining keys.

A letter from Rev. Terry Smith states, "To give some content and local significance, we designed the Traveling Freshmen program which used the Seven Keys as their symbol of content and achievement." Dr. Gabe Campbell's doctoral dissertation notes that participants in the ninth grade confirmation class were awarded Seven Keys medallions when they joined the church. In a letter he further indicated that the Seven Keys Club, based on the symbol of the keys, met at Old First Avenue House and was started in 1964 during his tenure as Youth Minister. Later the study of the keys became a two-year program for ninth and tenth graders and at present it forms the basis for the sophomore youth program.

To honor Lowell Riley's 25 years of service as music director of the church, the Governing Board in 1967 commissioned him to write a major composition, but left the choice of subject matter up to him. It was not until the following year that he decided to write about the Seven Keys and to dedicate his effort to the memory of Dr. Burkhart. Before leaving on their vacation that summer, Lowell asked his wife, Beth, to provide some of her poems for each of the keys which might be suitable for setting to music. Then amidst the scenic splendor of the West, he wrote most of the music for *The Seven Keys Cantata*. Because there was no piano

available, Lowell never heard his composition until they stopped to visit a relative in Colorado who was a professional violinist. She was so impressed that she volunteered to come and play when the cantata was performed. The date chosen for the performance was December 8, 1968, with Rev. Richard Conrad leading the morning worship service. Since then, the choral setting of Dr. Burkhart's benediction has been heard in our sanctuary many times.

In a series of radio meditations broadcast on WTVN in 1972, Beth Riley described the keys and how they could be used in our daily lives. "It is a way to make our religion practical, usable, livable. The concept throws new light upon the great spiritual truths and makes them clear to us, perhaps as never before. Life has a way of forcing us to face up to the great spiritual values which we prefer to avoid, and against our wills sometimes, we learn to exercise faith, to use the key of acceptance, to practice forgiveness. But no one can do this for us. We must do it, each one for himself or herself. We must practice over and over again. We must do research to find our own answers, the old answers and new ones, too. We might want to add another key or two of our own, the result of our own exploring and discovering and growing. For life, and the eternal life within, is ever fluid, ever growing, ever expanding. As long as change has its roots deep in Truth, and is not merely change for the sake of change, it can only enlarge our spiritual understanding, and the joy of the kingdom within us."

Dr. Otis Maxfield preached a series of sermons on the keys in the fall of 1960. During the entire Epiphany season of 1976, Dr. Harold Englund preached on the keys. Dr. Richard Wing has also used them as sermon topics. The Lenten study series in 1994 were based on the seven keys. Various rooms at the North Campus building on Dublin Road are named after the keys, and the reminder medallions are once again available for purchase at the church through the Women's Guild.

THE LEGACY OF DR. ROY A. BURKHART

The ministries of Oliver Weist and Roy Burkhart have been particularly significant to the history of this church for two primary reasons. First, they were of long duration, 16 and 23 years respectively. Secondly, each initiated bold new directions

and programs for First Community Church, some of which were highly controversial when they were instigated.

The innovative methods that characterized Burkhart's ministry were first evidenced at the age of sixteen when he introduced new approaches to children's work as Sunday School superintendent in the Mennonite Church. His ideas were considered revolutionary by the staid congregation. Later as a high school principal, he organized the football team and school paper, formed a Hi-Y Club and wrote the ritual that is used nationwide. He also introduced student government which was not common practice at that time.

To meet the needs of First Community's rapidly growing congregation, it became necessary to enlarge the staff beyond an associate minister. Burkhart did not use traditional methods of recruiting church workers. He believed that it was more important to choose specialists from outside the seminaries for their professional skills, provided they were centered in a liberal Christian philosophy. Edward Rydman, who was YMCA Director in Florida at the time he joined the staff in 1946 wrote, "Staff members were chosen because of their training and experience in their professional fields outside the church. They were then encouraged to translate skills in their respective fields within the framework of the church. Their own theological positions could be enriched and enhanced by study and participation in the larger religious community." Thus, his own experience with young people was tapped when he became youth minister, as was Richard Bell's as an educator when he became director of Christian education and minister to children. Both were later ordained at First Community in 1952.

Rev. James Ray's doctoral dissertation noted ways in which Dr. Burkhart continued his experimental approach at First Community Church. "Examples include the Research Groups for men and women, his program of marriage counseling, the resourceful design in working with youth, including the Block of Wood and Bar None Dance. The organization of the International Council of Community Churches is a manifestation of that spirit. In the spring of 1952 another instance of this pioneering spirit was to be made manifest. Asked by U. S. Representative Walter Judd and others, he became the leader of a movement to channel non-government help to underdeveloped peoples at the village lev-

el. World Neighbors was organized and became a vital organization for world peace and welfare."

Burkie seemed to have an innate feeling for the talents hidden within people and he often inspired them to do things they hadn't even considered. It was as if he had no doubts that one could achieve his expectations. If he believed something was possible, then surely it was. Gabe Campbell wrote, "His faith in youth was inspiring to those young people whose lives he touched, and his confidence in their ability often encouraged them to take risks and accept challenges which they might otherwise have passed by. Burkhart was not an ivory tower theorist. He practiced his ideas ... to accept young people where they were and to encourage them to grow from that point." Burkie played a major role in Gabe's own entry into the ministry and Gabe was later a beloved youth minister on the church staff. Countless others from this church were nudged into God's service through Burkie's influence. He believed in the divine in everyone and could convince many persons to excel in ways they did not think possible. He brought out the best in people. *The Christian Herald* stated in its March 1945 issue, "He works on the theory that there is a great person inside you if you will only give him or her a chance."

In a paper presented at the Pacific School of Religion, Roy Burkhart shared his philosophy that a minister's work had two directions. The first was preaching, group guidance and personal ministry. The second was directing the growth of persons so that they might carry on a reciprocal ministry with each other, growing as they shared and finding freedom in creative relationships with one another and with God. He further described how his counseling ministry was carried out in sermons. He used preaching as a form of large group experience in which his listeners were led through a process of thinking, giving them a chance to share in the situation and set up alternatives to deal with it. Often individuals received the stimulus to face their own problems because they became caught up in the fellowship created by the sermon scenario. If a problem listeners viewed as very personal was so important that it was discussed in a sermon, they could then feel comfortable in seeking individual counseling if sufficient help was not provided in the sermon itself.

Dr. Burkhart relied on a committee who read his sermons in advance. They advised him as to whether or not a particular message touched them where they lived and whether the language was meaningful. This committee also kept him aware of various points of view in the congregation, which was particularly helpful when controversial subjects were discussed. His sermons also reflected a personal view that the church was a place where people could grow in faith, where teaching was done and leadership developed, and where the presence of God was practiced. Many sermons emphasized a "how to" approach: How to learn to pray – How to grow in creative human relations – How to grow into happy marriage – How to read the Bible. James Ray noted that his theological ideas were expressed in practical terms of daily life.

One of Roy Burkhart's strongest convictions was the importance of providing small group experiences for each member. These provided a loving, caring fellowship in times of crisis and joy, and a relationship that he characterized as the "true church." He believed that religion involved much more than Sunday worship or even the many programs that were offered by the church. Consequently, his ministry took him throughout the city and across the country. He met with downtown businessmen and worked with social agencies, courts, schools and all the healing professions. He played a role in founding Central Community House, organizing the Near Northside Neighborhood Council and building a black Methodist church. He was also a frequent visitor at OSU where he held discussions with students. Dr. George Norris has related how he was drawn to First Community Church through such campus contacts with Burkie. He worked diligently with other churches and played an important role in the community church movement, helping to found the National Council of Community Churches and then serving as its first president. He lectured at leading seminaries and committed a portion of his time to what he termed "outside work."

In his travels, Burkhart encountered some ministers who expressed a need for counseling and others who sought relevant ideas for leading their own congregations. Consequently, in 1952 First Community Church extended its ministry to aid other clergymen by starting an annual Ministers' Seminar during the week after Easter. Ministers came from across the U.S. and Canada for this dynamic event. The entire church staff was involved in offering

personal counseling or group therapy, and providing an overview of the full guidance program and philosophy of First Community Church. Evening speakers included some of the finest scholars and teachers from leading seminaries, plus outstanding theologians, physicians, psychiatrists and other resource leaders. For weeks before each seminar, members of the Board of Women were busy planning meals and making phone calls to recruit host families who would provide breakfast and lodging for seminar participants. The evening programs were open to everyone, so it was an invigorating and exciting time for the entire congregation.

During his years at First Community Church, probably no one experienced greater spiritual growth than Roy Burkhart himself, especially in the life of prayer. Through the philosophies expressed by Gerald Heard and Paul Brunton, he was introduced to a whole new dimension of prayer. First Community was often described as a church of "pray-ers," for there were research groups and prayer cells that actively sought to study approaches to prayer so that it would become a way of life. In *The Symphony of Prayer* Burkhart wrote that Heard gave him the idea of prayer as a symphony, but the interpretation of four movements was his own. "Prayer is a lifting of the heart to God. Prayer is a voicing of the self to God or listening to Him. It is conversation in words or thoughts, but strictly it is directed to God. The first movement of the symphony of prayer is the outward response to God's revealing; the second movement is silence. The third is the fellowship of worship and the fourth is action."

As Dr. Burkhart began to think of partial retirement, a committee was selected by the Board of Trustees and charged with the responsibility of finding his successor. The Board accepted the committee's recommendation of Dr. Otis A. Maxfield and presented the call to him in December 1957, which he accepted.

April 27, 1958, was designated as Roy Burkhart Day when he preached his last sermon as Senior Minister. All the couples whom he had married were invited to attend one of the services or the reception that evening. The Children's Chapel was renamed for him by the Board of Trustees as a "living and constant reminder of the great love that Dr. Burkhart has for the children of the parish and they for him." A monetary gift from approximately 3,000 individuals in the congregation was presented to Roy and Hazel with the stipulation that the gift was

personal and to be used on their mortgage and not be given away to the church or any of his projects. During his 23 year ministry, Burkie preached nearly 1,000 sermons; conducted 2,200 weddings, 2,550 baptisms, 500 services of memory; and had brought 5,500 new members into the church.

The agreement approved at a congregational meeting in December 1957 outlined his position as Minister Emeritus (Active). He remained as a member of the staff and served in an advisory capacity to Otis Maxfield on a mutually agreeable basis from May 1, 1958, until his 65th birthday on August 28, 1960, when he became Minister Emeritus. A portion of his time was spent in speaking and working beyond the church and he gave all honoraria outside of expenses back to the church.

In January 1960 Dr. Maxfield recognized Burkie's 25th anniversary at First Community. "When I think of the ideas that have been set in motion, the thousands of lives that have been touched, the way in which the face of Protestantism has been moved by the force of Roy Burkhart, I feel that it is a good thing for those of us who so often are concerned with the difficult things in life to pause and acknowledge our healthy respect for something so good. The striving of this one man ought to make us stop and have new appreciation for the worth and significance of the individual."

Many concepts initiated during Roy Burkhart's tenure continue to flourish, including Couples' Circles, Camp Akita, pre-school, Sweetheart Luncheon, Men's Breakfast, and personal counseling. The Block of Wood and Seven Keys are still the foundation of our youth program. Our involvement in public broadcasting has expanded beyond 1320 Cambridge through the magic of our own television broadcasting facilities and the miracle of the worldwide web.

His ministry reached far beyond the walls of First Community church, particularly in retirement. A July 1960 memo to the Board of Trustees outlined his work to date that year. He had organized a conference on growth of personality and a seminar on the full guidance church, lectured at seven seminaries, conducted intensive training seminars with ministers in five cities, met with executives and business leaders across the country, worked with ministers and troubled churches, and wrote several articles for publication. He worked tirelessly for his beloved congregation, the Church at large and the dream of world peace until his final illness. Many of his visions became reality during his lifetime, including First Community Village, which was under construction at the time of his death on December 9, 1962.

According to his long-time secretary, Rosemary Weimer, "In all the years I worked with him I was never able to determine just what it was that accounted for the tremendous influence his life would have on the people in these Tri-Villages and far beyond. The gratitude most often expressed in the hundreds of letters which came to him during the last eight weeks of his encounter with pancreatic cancer was gratitude for the gift of faith in God."

Roy Burkhart looked upon death as "graduation to the next dimension." Beth Riley eloquently wrote of his faith. "When he knew for certain that his own death was not far off, he asked that the Hallelujah Chorus be sung at his memorial service. His asking was an expression of the kind of anticipation with which he approached the spiritual journey ahead. And we who sang it . . . with unsteady voices . . . were celebrating with him his exciting entry into the larger life, the greater joy, the ongoing Eternal Life which was already so strong within him."