

# Special Anniversary Edition



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## The First 40 Years: Margaret Smith Remembers by Mary Bowman

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First, it might be easy for a newcomer to think that "God just clapped His hands and there was our church" partnership, with all sweetness and light. In fact, she says, the congregations that comprised the MCC did a lot of "wandering in the wilderness." And she doesn't mean the Boundary Waters (although Community of Hope Pastor Dan Schmiechen introduced BW trips early on).

Second, despite the size differential between Advent and Hope, neither congregation could have survived without the other, financially or emotionally.

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That dream didn't materialize easily. The first Advent congregational meeting that Margaret and Lanny attended, in January, 1967, involved a "room full of members, with lots of anger and hollering." It convened early on a Sunday evening and adjourned – incomplete -- around midnight. The couple wondered if this was a "normal" Lutheran meeting, but Margaret said the 1968 annual meeting was "pretty much the same, too. *In fact, for several years, Advent's church council presidents and their families left Advent after their terms had finished.*"

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The ecumenical dream persisted. In summer of 1967, seven members of Advent joined almost three dozen representatives of other congregations and denominations, from Catholics to Baptists to the Madison Area Council of Churches, in the "Cooperative Christian Church Study Group." The Group met throughout that summer to determine what kinds of cooperation might be possible for churches planning to locate near Memorial High. Its preliminary report recommended continuation of those discussions with, among others, Advent Lutheran, the Catholic Diocese of Madison, and members of the Madison Area Council of Churches who might be interested in expanding on Madison's far west side.

Ultimately, the discussions produced one taker for Advent's ecumenical marriage proposal: the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ decided to authorize and fund a mission church on Madison's far west side. In the summer of 1968, the Conference called Pastor Dan Schmiechen, of Tomah, to the new congregation and peopled it with about a dozen volunteer families from existing UCC congregations.

After their incorporation in September 1968, the congregations used Advent's Sheboygan Avenue church until that sale was completed, then rented space from Covenant Presbyterian Church (Segoe and Mineral Point Roads) as work began on the Old Sauk Road church. Their year at Covenant gave Advent and Hope practice with ecumenical education, as all three congregations combined their religious education programs.

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