

My Life at First Presbyterian Church

Jim “Bimmy” Van Norman

Jacob and Margaret Van Norman, my parents, were married here in 1927. My two sisters, Joyce and Shirley, and I attended the little Dock Street Chapel – a mission of First Church – located on the Flats in West Easton, from the 1930s to the 1950s. Mr Hilton Rahn, Sr. was Superintendent, and a support group of people consisted of Mrs. Rahn, Floyd and Frances Sigman, William O. Hay, Jake and Margaret Van Norman, Mrs. Connine, Miss Mills and Lafayette students. This is why I didn't attend Sunday School at First Church with our noted historian, Nancy Wilson, but I did attend her sweet sixteen birthday party.

At least one Sunday a month, our family would come to the big church, and our treat after the service would be lunch at the Patch Diner, on the corner of 3rd and Spring Garden Streets, where the bank is now located. My sister Joyce was married here in 1949. I joined First Church in 1949. Shirley and I were married in 1955 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Nazareth, and Shirley joined First Church in 1959. Our children, Donna and Jim, were baptized here and enjoyed going through Sunday School, youth group, and Junior Choir. Jim played in the church softball league along with the Riddaughs, Fessler's, Millheims, Purdys, Fords, Bangharts, Schwarzbachs, Wilsons, Evans, Laubs, Folletts, Childs, Clauses, Simmons and the Comptons. Donna is now in the Chancel and Handbell Choirs and is a past Elder.

In 1997, I had the pleasure of seeing my grandchildren, Jacob and Jessica, children to Donna, baptized here at First Church, and they are enjoyed going to Sunday School, singing in the Junior Choir and joining the Youth Group. In 2012, they were confirmed and are now official members of First Church. They too will have their memories from the First Church.

Four men who were an influence to me at First Church – Ralph Troupe and Francis Millheim got me involved with ushering, and I did it for 40 years; Charlie Fessler, a long time friend and co-worker, asked me to be on session; and last but not least is Wendell Smith, who got me involved in the Rummage Sales and going to different houses to remove items to be sold at our sales. The biggest project was selling off the complete household at the home of Vivian Vianco's sister-in-law. The sale lasted a whole week with the help of the Smiths, Comptons, Hills, Wilsons, Piels, myself and others.

So for 64 out of 78 years, my life has been centered at First Presbyterian Church, serving on many committees and helping Shirley and Noralee Manzek in the kitchen, doing dishes, helping with the making of soup and pies and the many dinners they put on.