

**History**  
**1885 - 1958**  
**Berwyn United Presbyterian Church**

In 1885, a small mission church organization called "The Golden Chain" erected out of rough lumber a structure in which to hold meetings, near Branchville Station, now a part of College Park. Prior to this date, meetings were held in a private home. The work grew so rapidly, Fourth Presbyterian Church of Washington, D.C. was requested to take this mission under its care. The Pastors from Fourth Church and Hyattsville Presbyterian Church were the first to preach at the Mission.

Fourth Church called a student at Princeton to work in the Mission during the summer of 1887. The first Sunday School was started during this year.

During the winter of 1889 and 1890, plans were made for a larger building since the Golden Chain Building was inadequate. The records of Fourth Presbyterian Church show that on April 29, 1890, it was ordered that the annual offering for Church erection be devoted to the Mission at Branchville for the building of a house of worship. The ground, located in what was then known as Charlton Heights Station, then changed to Berwyn and now College Park, was donated by a local real-estate agent, the same man who donated the ground for the first Golden Chain Building. A frame building was erected at the corner of Quebec Street and Potomac Avenue, and was occupied until the present structure was built. The corner stone was laid May 18, 1890.

A Communion Set was presented to the Mission by Fourth Church in July 1890.

On July 13, 1890, the Session of Fourth Church ordered that the Golden Chain building be sold. The proceeds, \$200, were applied against the indebtedness on the new building. The church was completed, furnished, and dedicated on April 1, 1891. At this time, the name of the Church was changed to Berwyn Chapel. Several years later, the B&O Railroad was asked to change the name of their station to Berwyn. B&O granted that request. As the Church grew and prospered, several additions were added.

About 1902, the first Ladies Aid Society was organized. Later a Woman's Mission was formed. In 1943, the two groups were combined and became the Women's Association.

Until 1913, the work of the Church was volunteer and done by laymen. Mr. F.L. Middleton, whose great desire to serve the Lord, prompted him to request help to start the Golden Chain, did most of the preaching. During this year, The Presbytery was requested to send a young man to take over the work of the Church. A full time minister was chosen and came on May 18, 1913 to begin his work.

A petition to the Fourth church to become an organized Church was granted and concurred by The Presbytery. In 1914, the Berwyn Presbyterian Church came into being. The first Communion Service was held on May 29, 1914.

In 1919, the first Manse was purchased.

On February 15, 1931, the Sunday School Building was partially destroyed by fire. Another fire occurred on May 11, 1935, which destroyed most of the Sunday School rooms and a large part of the Church. This last fire was just one week prior to the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Church. Even though it seemed impossible to continue with the celebration plans, the Session decided to clean up as much of the debris as possible and continue with the original plans. On Sunday, May 19, 1935, the program was carried out in the charred and windowless Sunday School room. There were two services and a big reception for members and friends. Many of the Sunday School classes were held outdoors during the summer months. The buildings were restored and ready for occupancy by October 1, 1935.

On March 21, 1948, a new pipe organ was installed in the Church to replace the old memorial reed organ installed in 1908. This is the organ we are now using in our sanctuary.

Due to the fires and the age of the church buildings, it was imperative that a new church be built. At this time, it was decided that a new site be chosen and a church built. In 1954, our present location was procured and the present Education Building, temporarily being used as a Sanctuary, was dedicated in 1958.

Many plans are now afoot to expand the Church facilities by the addition of a Sanctuary providing much needed space for the development of Christian Education.