50 years ago…

…. did you know?

 It wasn’t long after the new John Calvin Presbyterian Church was constituted and its first church building erected that an understanding of Christ mission and our church’s role became important.  The new building allowed for the creation of our premier Playschool, which brought in new families from across the area (see the July issue), but also allowed for accommodation of Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) members in the local neighborhood, starting a local chapter.  Both the Playschool and this first AA group are strong community outreach programs still today!

The early John Calvin Church was instrumental in bringing important outreach activities to the community.  Because of the suffering of the Henry and Serou families, stricken with Parkinson’s Disease we formed the first Parkinson’s Family Support group in the state.  We established a strong relationship with Evergreen Ministries, a support organization for people with disabilities.  Our new minister, Rev. Malsbury even joined the board of directors for Evergreen, and stayed with it for almost 20 years!  We were also founding members of the Ulster Project, a project pairing Catholic and Protestant youth from Northern Ireland with their counterparts here in New Orleans to foster tolerance, understanding, and friendship.

That early accommodation of a local AA chapter has transformed through the years.  We now have 6 different AA groups, several Al-Anon, Alateen, and Alaparent groups, 3 Narcotics Anonymous groups, and 5 Gamblers Anonymous groups, as well as other groups such as CODA (Co-Dependency), a Friend’s widow’s support group, and even a couple of Art groups!  The rebuilding of the church building allowed for a wing to be built specifically for this mission, and a wonderful community outreach has grown.  Most of these groups are anonymous, so we don’t see them, but stick around for a while and you hear and feel the quiet, behind the scenes “thanks!”, those saved by these organizations have for John Calvin Presbyterian Church.

The Presbyterian Women (PW), formerly called the Women of the Church, has fostered their own missions through the years and into today.  Collection of School Supplies, and BoxTops for Education for our local Alice Birney Elementary School; support of a local batter women’s shelter, known as Hagar’s House; collection of money and items for Thanksgiving baskets for the poor; collections for Heifer, PW Birthday Offering, and Least Coin Fellowship; and everyone’s favorite Salvation Army Christmas Angels, are all organized by the ladies Circles and the PW Council.

Today, much of our church wide mission focus is on a local Presbyterian program to help the homeless in New Orleans and the surrounding area, known as Program of Hope.  We make and distribute lunches periodically, but also are starting fund-raisers to purchase vouchers for overnight stays at a local shelter.  In addition, we keep emergency food available at the church at Dianne’s Pantry, and old and young have a fun time sorting food at Second Harvest Food Bank!

Not to be forgotten, JCPC currently hosts the local STAIR (Start the Adventure in Learning)     chapter in our Fellowship Hall with several of our members serving as tutors!

Yes, Christ’s mission and our part in fulfilling it was a founding principle of John Calvin Presbyterian Church that has only grown through the years, adapting to the growing and changing needs of our local community.  What a great place to join in!