

From the Archives

The Senior Minister Finds a Home

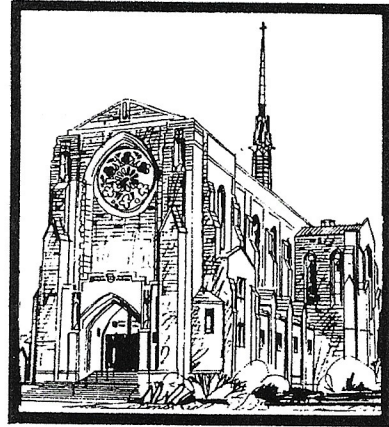
The story of Dr. Chalmers Coe's search for a suitable dwelling for his wife, Pamela, and himself, is such an interesting and rare story that it seems best that it be told by two source documents that are a part of the church archives collection. For context, we start with an article that appeared in *First Church News* on January 28, 1979. To continue the story as it is told by Dr. and Mrs. Coe themselves, we turn to an article that appeared in the *Columbus Citizen-Journal* on August 10, 1979. Continue to scroll down for the two documents.

First Church News

The First Congregational Church, 444 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215

JANUARY 28, 1979

This Church welcomes into its company all those who seek to worship God as He has given Himself to the world in His Son Jesus Christ. We respect the honest convictions of all, seeking to draw into a body of love, of worship and of service those who wish to live to the glory of God and the good of men.



THE COES' DWELLING

At its January meeting, the Church Council approved in principle a request by Mrs. Coe and me that we be permitted to live in an apartment at the church. A committee of the Council was appointed by the moderator, Amos White, to arrange the details of the plan and to bring them before the Council for final approval. The committee is being chaired by Dr. White, and consists also of Lucile Sitterley, Miriam Walz, Edwin Koetz and Dale Wade.

Briefly, it is proposed that we occupy the two large rooms now used as the ministers' studies, together with the present dressing room and bath across a private corridor from them. These rooms constitute a self-enclosed unit on the second floor, above the church offices. The inside stairway, that leads to them would, according to one plan now under consideration, be carpeted. We would use the kitchen across the corridor next to the choir room. Some thought, however, is being given to the installation of a new kitchen in the area now occupied by the inside stairway.

All legal, code and insurance requirements have been met, detailed investigation of them having been completed.

The question remains: why are we making this request? It will be recalled that we are under the necessity of finding new accommodations. With the able assistance of Rupert Starr, we have found several suitable houses. But the costs involved seem to us excessive, especially given the fact that the trustees, from whose assets parsonage funds come, have recently acquired property at Cleveland Avenue and Gay Street and have little available money for the purchase of a suitable parsonage. No doubt they would gladly do whatever might be necessary to alter their commitments and

provide us with a parsonage. But why should they? Our children are grown. And to borrow the necessary money with the interest rate above 11% seems wasteful.

Our vast building sits here so much of the time unused. In a day of mounting inflation and conspicuous waste, we both have the feeling that this is a sensible proposal. The church has an excellent security system; safety is not a problem. And we shall take every available measure to guarantee our own privacy. Nothing need be done by way of alteration of the structure that could not be undone in a day. The rooms themselves are elegant beyond description. We feel that an expenditure of, roughly, \$3,500 is better than one of \$100,000.

Without my going into detail, it should at least be said that a fine office will be found for Gerald Bertsch.

And, if anyone wants to know how Pamela feels about it---she thought of it!
C.C.

WOMEN'S GUILD

The Women's Guild will meet Friday, February 2. Registration and Hospitality will begin at 11:30 a.m. Babysitting is available. Please register your children when you make your reservation by Wednesday noon, January 31. The cost of the luncheon is \$2.00.

The speaker for the 12:00 o'clock luncheon meeting will be Mrs. Vern Reynolds, Executive Director of the Columbus Area Leadership Program. Her topic, "Columbus in a Changing Society" promises to open many new avenues of interest to our members. As always, all members of First Church are welcome, and urged to bring guests.

Committee members are: Program, Mrs. John C. Elam; Devotions, Mrs. John B.

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Church becomes new home of minister, wife

By SHARON ABERCROMBIE
Citizen-Journal Staff Writer

Pam Coe is probably the only woman in Columbus who lives in the middle of a theology library.

That's because the library is in a church.

Mrs. Coe's husband, Chalmers, is pastor of First Congregational Church, 444 E. Broad St.

They've been living upstairs in staff offices since last March.

They love it.

The unusual arrangement resulted when their former rental property in Lithopolis became unavailable. "We looked and looked, and just couldn't find anything we wanted," Mrs. Coe said.

Finally one day, while visiting her husband in his offices, inspiration hit. Wouldn't the library make a great living room?

"It only took me 10 seconds to see she was absolutely right," Coe said.

At first, the congregation was a bit upset, Coe said. "We've got a wonderful group of people here. They really wanted to find us... a nice parsonage."

"And they were afraid for us to live in the middle of the downtown," Mrs. Coe added.

The congregation finally agreed. And worried a lot despite a super-hyped alarm system.

"We have open house every Sunday so people can see how it's working," she said. "When they leave, they're totally sold on the experiment."

The worst part of the move was carrying 60 boxes of books from a truck to the second floor, Coe said.

Only a medium amount of refurbishing was needed to convert a corner of the second floor into an apartment. There already was a full bath just around the corner. The old Gladden Library next door to Coe's office became a spacious, airy bedroom. A

small nook easily was turned into a kitchenette.

One of the parishioners gave the Coes a butler's table. "I just put our food on it and carry it into the bedroom. There is a large table right by some windows," she said.

Some beige and bittersweet coats of

paint replaced the "usual institutional colors," said Coe.

They had the floors sanded and took away the draperies.

The large, slim leaded-glass windows really don't need extra frills. Mrs. Coe said.

They haven't needed an air condi-

tioner because breezes have helped keep the living quarters comfortable.

They stayed cozily warm this past cold spring. "The fireplace really works," Coe noted.

The Coes brought some of their favorite furniture to Columbus — namely, a dining room table made

from old timbers "from our New Hampshire barn" and paintings and artifacts from their many European trips.

A portrait of Coe's "collateral ancestor," the Rev. Thomas Chalmers, hangs in the bedroom. Chalmers was a founder of the Free Church of Scotland. A rebel, he led 2,000 people in a "walkaway" from the established church.

The couple can't say enough about the benefits of living where he works. "I can walk downstairs to a wedding rehearsal," he said. "We've never been to so many concerts and art shows, and plays," she added.

They can look right out their living room window and see the Art Gallery's

Sculpture. "Pam watches that moving sculpture 'til she's hypnotized," Coe teased.

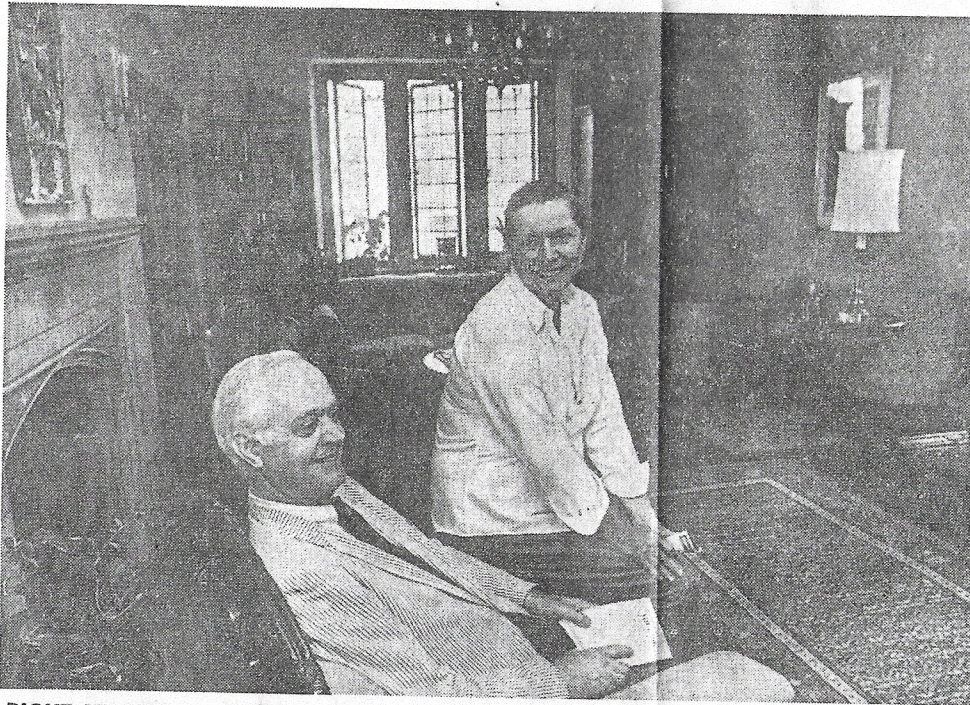
They discovered still another advantage to living downtown last week. "We can get carryout from the art gallery restaurant," said Mrs. Coe.

Coe was quick to point out he wasn't recommending that all pastors try to live in their churches. It might not be practical for everybody, he admitted. But it happens to work for the Coes.

"It's like living in a baronial estate," he said.

And it's without the hassle of baronial upkeep, she said.

"We can clean up this place in 30 minutes."



RIGHT AT HOME — The Rev. Chalmers Coe and his wife Pamela find living enjoyable in converted offices of the First Congregational Church. The Coes, who were unable to find an apartment to their liking, have lived in the second-floor quarters since March.