

Asbury Board Begins Plans For Rebuilding

By JOHN VALENTINE

Asbury United Methodist Church will be rebuilt and worship services and activities will be continued during reconstruction, church leaders decided last night in a three-hour emergency session.

The restoration has been authorized, pending the soundness of the granite walls left standing after yesterday's devastating blaze, the Rev. Earl C. Carver, pastor, said.

Asbury leaders had insured the church for \$1.1 million. The rebuilding project depends on the insurance adjustment and the shell of the stone church.

Sunday services will be held at 1 p.m. in Christ Lutheran Church at 13th and Hamilton streets, a block west of Asbury at Hamilton and Jefferson streets.

The special musical program, commemorating the church's 50th anniversary, will be held as scheduled but the site has not been picked. The program begins at 8 p.m. and brings to a close the church's month-long golden anniversary celebration.

"We had so many invitations for our worship services from leaders in the Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant faiths," Rev. Carver said. "We're extremely grateful."

Regular church activities, including office operation, will be conducted in the Aldersgate House, next door to the church. The Aldersgate House was not damaged in the blaze.

Church records were saved by firemen and Rev. Carver expressed thanks from the congregation. The records were kept in the Wesley House at the rear of the church. A firewall protected the former parsonage. Rev. Carver also commended Red Cross volunteers who provided firefighters with coffee and doughnuts.

Rev. Carver and his assistant, the Rev. Thomas J. Gallen, were attending the memorial service of a colleague in Easton when the fire broke out.

At the meeting of trustees in the parsonage at 413 N. 28th St., church leaders made no decision on the roof of the edifice, destroyed in the blaze.

A city building inspector said the roof skeleton poses a hazard and must be torn down.

Church officials have appointed a contractor, who is a member of the church, to inspect the remains of the roof today. He will make a recommendation to the trustees.

While in session, church leaders received a call from Bishop James M. Ault, resident bishop of the Philadelphia Area of the United Methodist Church.

Bishop Ault offered his help, the Rev. Carver said.

The bishop had visited the church Monday night. He spoke to laymen and pastors of the Allentown District on the absence of community and the loss of self.

Informal discussions were held in the afternoon with dinner served by the women of Asbury Church preceding his talk at night.

Program Centered On Organ

The \$250,000 Gress-Miles organ, considered a possible cause of yesterday's devastating blaze at Asbury United Methodist Church, was to have undergone a tuning tomorrow for a special musicale Sunday.

Asbury officials planned the fifth and final observance of the church's 50th anniversary celebration around the custom-made instrument.

Ludwig Lenel, composer in residence at Muhlenberg College and Asbury's organist, produced and directed the special musical program. Among those participating in the golden anniversary was television commentator Donald Barnhouse.

The 10-year-old Gress-Miles showpiece replaced a Moeller organ, which had been installed during the construction of the church in 1921 and cost \$25,000.

Members of the congregation decided to build a Gothic-like church at Hamilton and Jefferson streets to handle growing membership. At present, members number 1,500.

Until that time the mem-

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Photo by Dick Mantz

Asbury United Methodist Church takes on the eerie quality of wartime London as firemen fight futilely to save it.