Dr. John Robertson Macartney, founder and pastor, was called from retirement to minister to the needs of this community. He had just finished his 11th year as pastor of the Palm Springs Community Church, and was looking forward to a quiet retirement after having spent 58 years in the pulpit. At the conclusion of a Sunrise Service of his church, some visiting residents of the Palm Desert area, among them Cliff Henderson, Edgar Bergen, and Dick Powell, approached him and said, “Doctor, come down and start a church for us in Palm Desert. We can’t sell our real estate without a church. No one will move where there is no Sunday school.” Dr. Macartney caught the fire of its promoters and agreed to leave his status of “pastor emeritus.” He vowed he would build one more church before making good his retirement plans, and this one was to be in Palm Desert.

An engraved cornerstone was put in place at the N/W corner of the native-stone bell tower on Thanksgiving Day, November 23, 1950, following the Thursday service, two years after the very first service. The whole community was invited. A metal container held early photographs, the Holy Bible, copies of legal documents, a roster of charter and present members and officers, and current issues of the Desert Sun. The soloist this day had also been the soloist at the laying of the cornerstone of the Palm Springs Community Church in 1935.

On April 26, 1953, The Reverend Dr. John Robertson Macartney truly retired from active ministry. In six years this man who had looked forward to his retirement with such keen anticipation had, without compensation, organized a church, erected a building, installed an organ, and built a manse. It was an enviable record few can equal.