Robert L. (1916-2014) and Hildur Blake (1919-), Trinity Avenue Presbyterian 1942 –

Bob and Hildur Blake moved to Durham in 1942. Bob came to Duke University as part of an alternative military service program, Civilian Public Service Unit #61. At Duke University, he worked as an orderly in the hospital operating rooms. With his interest in art and with job experience in fashion drawing and photography, Bob soon made acquaintance with the Director of the Department of Medical Art and was hired as a medical illustrator. Hours spent in operating rooms, making facial prostheses, and studying anatomy honed his gift for detail, and Bob had a long and impressive professional career at Duke. He retired in 1983, having illustrated approximately 500 scientific articles for medical journals and having created drawings for over 50 textbooks. Along with his professional responsibilities, each year he produced water colors. His paintings mostly included scenes from rural and coastal North Carolina and were widely exhibited at the university, art fairs, the state fair, Morehead Planetarium, the America Tobacco Campus, and other venues. Many of his paintings adorn the halls and rooms at The Forest at Duke, where Hildur and Bob lived since 1992. In his 70+ years as an artist, he created approximately 5,000 paintings.

Hildur Blake was trained as a Registered Nurse and worked at Duke University Hospital. The couple had three children: Robin, Janis, and Kennard, baptized and nurtured here at Trinity Avenue. Hildur created a warm and caring home for her family and helped juggle a busy professional and home life. Shortly after moving to Durham, the couple became active at Trinity Avenue Presbyterian. Sunday, July 11, 1993, they were honored with a reception to celebrate fifty years of service to the church. Christian Education has always been of special importance to the Blakes. For many years, Bob taught the fifth and sixth grade Sunday School classes in which he illustrated the lessons with his "chalk talks" as he taught. Both were excellent teachers, in word and deed.

Bob generously shared his talent with the church. For many years, he provided the art for our bulletins, directories, stationery, certificates, and newsletters, responding to requests, simple and complex. His beautiful watercolors are found throughout our Education Building, especially in the office area and in the hallways. He did research, writing, calligraphy and illustrations for the “Book of Memory,” located at the back of the Sanctuary. In 1954, Bob helped organize Boy Scout Troup 412 and served as a Scout leader for over twenty years, Bob was also a camera enthusiast who photographed members of the TAPC community in a variety of places and outings.

Hildur has been recognized by the Women of the Church with an Honorary Life Membership award. She has served as Moderator of the Presbyterian Women and has chaired our Women’s Circles. She was also a Bible Moderator for most of her fifty years at TAPC. She has taught Sunday School classes of all ages, has served on the Pastor’s Nominating Committee, and has been a ready helper in the kitchen.

Bob and Hildur were both ordained as Elders, have served as Deacons, and have provided leadership of several important committees. At the time of the 50-Year Celebration (1993) the Bob and Hildur Blake Family Life Endowment was established to support special Christian Education events at Trinity Avenue Presbyterian.

Compiled by: Sally Adkin, October 3, 2015
Sources: Duke Medical Archives, Forest at Duke Charity Auction pamphlet, TAPC Scrapbooks and program materials for July 11, 1993 Blake Reception, interview (9/11/2015) with Hildur Blake