

# The History of the First United Methodist Church of Dunnellon



## Dunnellon, Florida 1885-2004

Our church is rich with history. All of us who come to worship here at First United Methodist Church should be eternally grateful to all those persons who have given unconditionally of their time and talents. Our church exists because of good and faithful parishioners and pastors who had a great desire of spreading the "Good News" of Jesus Christ to others in our community.

The task of mentioning every person who contributed to this church and its growth over the years would be monumental. However, you can read about many of these commendable Christians in the following pages. On behalf of First United Methodist Church, we wish to thank a few people who, without their insight and knowledge, this historical manuscript would not have been printed. Their contribution to their Lord and their Church should not go unnoticed or unrecognized. We wish to extend a warm and special thanks to:

Winne Lowe

Montine King

Maxie B. Lowe

Ruth Riley

Patricia J. Schaffer

As you read through these pages, you have the opportunity to look into the past. But, as you come to church, you have the honor and privilege to plan for the future. We celebrate the vision that many people had in this book, and we rejoice with you who continue to keep the vision, mission and ministry of our church alive.

Always Following Him,

Harold R. Hendren  
Minister

## **Oldest Congregation In Dunnellon**

In 1885, a small number of people met under the trees near where Rockwell Cemetery now is and organized a Methodist Church. Services were held once a month with Rev. Southerland as the first pastor. The Rev. Allay and Rev. Reynolds were also pastors for a while.

The charter members were Mrs. Candace Turner, Mrs. Caroline Robinson, G.P. Southerland and family, the Herndon family, Mr. Tyler. Mr. and Mrs. Renfro and Alford Renfro. There are probably a few others whose names have escaped our memory.

Mr. Hendon donated land for a church building and cemetery and a church was built in 1886 at Rockwell, where the cemetery now is, and we continued to worship in it until about 1889. Mr. Albertus Vogt bought this church and moved it to his place, then one of the show places of Dunnellon, and made it a stable to house his fine horse.

About 1900 we built a church in Dunnellon. This was used as a church and schoolhouse, and all denominations worshipped with us. The Rev. Sam Scott was the first pastor of this church. The Rev. George J. Kennelly succeeded him. About 1901 we sold this church building to the black Baptists. It is known as Beulah Baptist Church, later replaced by a block building.

By this time the Presbyterians had built their church, and we worshipped with them for a few years. About 1903 we began to work towards our own church on the corner of Ohio and Chestnut. The Rev. B.T. Rape was the pastor at the time, and our parsonage was at Cotton Plant.

Morris Straus was the only Jew in Dunnellon at the time, and he was always ready and eager to help all church organizations. It was through his help and cooperation that the first one hundred dollars was raised for our church building. We had only a small membership, and the raising of money to carry on was done mostly by the ladies with their ice cream suppers, oyster stews and old maids' conventions.

The first organist was Miss Bessie Evasion, daughter of a Methodist Preacher. The first Sunday School superintendent was Mr. Seldon. Mrs. Wells was first president of the Home Missionary Society. Mrs. Austin, wife of our next preacher, was second president of the Missionary Society. She died the second year of his pastorate here. Mr. Lion Leitner and Mr. Weiche were two of the first trustees. The church was dedicated by the Rev. J.P. Hilburn, then president of Southern College located at Southland.

During this period, and for a number of years thereafter, Dunnellon was on a circuit. During 1904 to 1908 services were held only on Sunday mornings and one night during the month. The Rev. W.A. Weir and Rev. M.H. Outland were the pastors those years.

Just about this time a church and parsonage were built at Martel. This church was added to our circuit and the preacher lived there. The Rev. W.J. Nease, Rev. M.M. Lord, Rev. J.B. Rooney, Rev. J.W. Bridges, and Rev. A.M. Mann were pastors who served the charge which was composed of St. John's, Martel, Cedar Grove and Dunnellon.

Early in 1914 we decided to remodel the church, re-cover and re-paper it. This we did at considerable expense, the ladies shouldering the responsibility as usual. They gave a bazaar each year before Christmas, proceeds of which were applied to the repair fund.

At the 1914 Annual Conference, Rev. J.D. Major was sent to this charge, and on accounts of his wife's frail condition, he thought it best for them to live in Dunnellon. We rented a house for use as our parsonage. So, the Rev. Major was the first pastor to live in Dunnellon.

The Rev. C.A. Saunders and Rev. S.F. Stephens were pastors in 1915 and 1916. In 1917 Rev. L.D. Haynes served the charge but lived in Rodman. In 1918 and 1919 the Rev. A.L. Hope and Rev. K.H. Koestline served us, and it was during his pastorate that a parsonage was built. We had a number of men who were very active at this time and it was through their untiring efforts the Rev. Koestline was able to complete the building. The ladies furnished the house, and each year some furnishing, painting or other improvements were done.

In 1925 young Rev. Jesse Jones came as a bachelor and raised much speculation among the ladies as to whom they would marry him to. He conducted a teenage boys Sunday School Class which met in the parsonage until he brought his bride—Verona Ponder (not a local girl!).

The Rev. C.C. Tyler was our next pastor, but he was unable to finish his pastorate because of ill health. He died in a rented house in Dunnellon in late 1927.

The Rev. R.F. Kersey was next in the 1927–1928 year. Church leaders elected to the Board of Stewards were: T.K. North, C.A. Dinkins, J.J. Turner, S.W. Petteway, and 20 year old M.B. Lowe.

In June 1928, Rev. C.R. Mingledorff came with his young wife, Nell, and a little son, Glenn (who became President of the Methodist College of Emory and Henry in the Virginia Mountains). Rev. Mingledorff said M.B. Lowe was too young to serve a voting position on the Board, so the older gentleman promptly elected him Treasurer of the church. Under Rev. Mingledorff much happened.

He was active in civic affairs, and in those days all small towns had amateur baseball teams that played on Thursday afternoons. He was a respected umpire!

Also, those years District Conferences were big events and when one was to be held in Dunnellon, there was much preparation activity getting places for ministers and representatives to stay for the three-day – two-night meetings. The last night was a fish fry in the park on the river which held a grandstand among the beautiful magnolia and oak trees (at this writing it is a mobile home park that the city is trying to close and return as a park). No one wanted the job of coordinating the fish fry, so the young treasurer was appointed, and since his bride of a few months had taught school in Crystal River the year before and had lived with the family of one of the fish house operators, it was a natural. After work they went to Crystal River and picked up a barrel of fresh caught mullet. The fish barrel was loading in the trunk of the Ford and money changed hands then the dealer said, "I'm doing this for you as a favor, but by all means tell no one from whom you bought the fish because the mullet season is closed and these fish for the preachers are bootlegged!"

At this time the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad had a Division Headquarters in Dunnellon and the

Superintendent, G.E. Rollins, and a very active business man, E.O. Wyman, organized a mens Bible Class that was effective for several years. Easter Sunday morning in 1929, there were seventy-five men in the morning class. In the last months of Rev. Mingledorff's ministry, his treasurer suffered severe spinal injuries and he was able to get the young man into Emory University Hospital through the Gold Cross Program of the Methodist Church.

The next pastor, Rev. F.L. Crowson, a more mature man who greatly opposed the Methodist systems of presiding Elders, and his son, were trying to oust Dr. Ludd Spivey from the presidency of Florida Southern College. At Conference they were both "located", received no appointments and started a small independent church in South Florida. His salary for one year here was only \$600.00.

Next was Rev. J.D. Murry for one year and leadership in the church went to Mr. E.P. Brown who played a major part over the next several years.

The Rev. W.H. Herndon was next with a large family and still small income from the church. The current Treasurer was an unmarried semi-retired carpenter who had mental problems. It was seen that after church services he put the envelopes and some bills in his coat pocket, some and all change in his pants pocket. When confronted, he thought nothing of it since he "wanted some change". Mr. E.P. Brown, then Chairman of the Board, had the saving solution—he resigned, and the Treasurer was promoted to Chairman and Mrs. M.B. Lowe was named treasurer (with husband to do the work). Shortly thereafter the disturbed man was institutionalized and Mr. E.P. Brown again assumed Chairman of the Board.

In June the Rev. Jesse Jones again came for one year. The women of the Susanna Class and the Wesleyan Class redid the parsonage.

The Rev. T.R. Adam, a most exceptional man, came from 1936 to 1940. His first sermon was memorable in that during his morning prayer a bee stung him on the nose. The congregation was not aware until his nose started getting red and swelling. Bees had set up residence in the North wall through a crack at the edge of the chimney. In the next week, they were removed. New cement walks and steps were built at the parsonage/ Mrs. Ida Niblock collected funds for material for screening the front porch, with Rev. Adams doing the work. He also did some repair jobs for members of the church. The Women Society then got new living room furnishings, a new kitchen stove, a new refrigerator and lace curtains. A new rug and carpet was purchased for the church. To get a picture of this church...it was at the corner of Ohio and Chestnut with the belfry just inside the sidewalk at that corner. The pulpit was on a raised area on the west side and the pews were curving facing the pulpit.

The Board and Trustees (mostly the same) after much debating of financing, agreed to purchase the Bargaineer property (Mrs. Bargaineer had died and her sister and only heir, Mrs. Dot Roberts, wanted to sell). These men asked for and got help from the Methodist Board in Nashville: E.P. Brown, P.D. Nichols, E.M. Nickerson, D.F. Koonce, M.D. Lowe and L.A. Bridges. Mr. Bridges was office manager for Henry Chalker Chevrolet dealer, and head of the Baptist Deacons. When we signed the mortgage for the Nashville Board, he had Mr. Chalker and four more Baptist Deacons sign as witnesses. When all was complete and we got the money, we discovered the Methodists had signed on the witness side and the Baptist Deacons had assumed responsibility for the debt!

Rev. Adams did a great deal of work making the newly acquired property suitable for Sunday School rooms, and the old dining room into a small social hall. Then five dozen plates, cups, saucers, and glasses for the kitchen were purchased. The china was trimmed with a gold band and each piece had the image of our Methodist church in gold. A piano, second hand, was added.

In 1937, under the inspiration of Rev. Adams, the first of the big time homecoming was held. Rev. C.R. Mingledorff delivered the sermon and a great number of former members were present at this memorable occasion. During the last year here their daughter, Glady, was married at the parsonage to Isaac Sheir.

At the evening service of October 11, 1936 saw thirteen teenagers (among them Lela Mae Barksdale-Riley Evers) coming into the membership on profession of faith, and two adults on

transfer from other churches. Many of these grew into active leaders and one became a minister, Buddy Parker (tho not Methodist).

In June 1940, Annual Conference was held in Ocala, Mr. E.P. Brown and another steward sent to see the Presiding Elder and asked for a certain pastor, which was promised. However, when the Bishop read the appointments at noon on Sunday (and every Methodist was at a radio listening) a different name was announced for Dunnellon. The Tampa Tribune always printed all appointments in the Monday morning papers and still, a different name was listed for Dunnellon. On Tuesday morning, the Rev. R.H. Carr showed up– the fourth and final appointee. The Carrs were here just one year, during which time she had a son and he had an appendectomy.

In 1941 came the Rev. W.G. Strickland, a much more mature man who had been “in the mercantile business” as he put it, for many years. His call prompted him to prepare to preach, and he responded in a dedicated manner. During his pastorate, the Annex was remodeled and painted inside and out with a new metal roof added. The church building was painted outside and had a new shingle room. The Friendship Class bought new curtains for the reception room, painted the room and recovered the settee and bench, making this a popular meeting place for all committees, groups, etc.

Mrs. Strickland, serving as chairman of Spiritual Life, organized four prayer groups in different [arts of town that met for fifteen minutes every Tuesday morning. One by one, three of these dropped out over the years but one, The Lillian Turner, continued to meet at Mrs. Paulk’s until 1991, when Mrs. Paulk closed her Senior Citizens Home. In 1943 new flags, the American flag and the Christian flag, were purchased for the sanctuary and an honor roll of our young men in service was kept. At that time, there were twenty–five names on the roll. An interesting sidelight of Rev. Strickland was shown in this manner the PTA sponsored a recreation hall operated by and called “Maxie’s” used for ping–pong, checkers, chess, dancing (to a five–cent juke box). One local church condemned it from the pulpit (tho praised and used by members). Rev. Strickland would come in late afternoon about once a week to plat a game of checkers with someone from that church. No words necessary.

In 1944, John M. Sikes began a short but vigorous ministry. Much interest in a new building was shown. The Quarterly Conference gave permission to proceed and about three thousand dollars had been raised when he was suddenly moved to Tarpon Springs. His job there was to unite a revel Methodist and a yankee Methodist church into one loving congregation. This was accomplished. He later became a District Superintendent of the Gainesville District (during the integration of the black and white churches).

The loss of Jon and Florence Sikes in 1948 was somewhat eased by the arrival of Eldon Simmons and his wife Elizabeth. This couple became an endearing part of the church and community that has lasted over the years. A detailed survey of all contributors to the Building Fund showed a willingness to re–do rather than re–build. The bell tower was sagging, but there was a member, Mr. Hugh Rives, that could and did remedy that. He brought his heavy jacks, other equipment and crew from a phosphate mine to jack up, replace rotted timbers, and firmly level up the tower. This bell tower was still firm when the old building was razed years later. Mr. A.F. Hintze was hired to do the work with members of the congregation helping almost full time. The elevated rostrum was sealed off and that made into two classrooms. The two buildings were joined on the north side and that made into an elevated area for the pulpit and choir door leading into the Annex. The floors were sanded and refinished, walls and ceiling covered with ivory colored “celotex” material, new light fixtures, new pews and pulpit furniture completed the sanctuary. In two short years, Eldon was suddenly moved to another trouble spot area. He, too, later became a District Superintendent...of the Orlando District in its explosive growth years.

The Rev. C.B. Hutchenson was sent to complete the 1950 years. An arrangement was made with St. Johns to hold an early morning service thereby giving Dunnellon two regular services every Sunday. This arrangement was in effect at Conference time when Rev. J.R. Hill came as our regular pastor.

During Brother Hills Ministry, 1950–1952, St. Johns was put on another charge and Dunnellon became a full station. A men's Class was reorganized and an outdoor furnace in the Annex yard and a new blonde mahogany piano was put in the sanctuary completing the matched furnishings (this piano is still in service in 1994 in the choir room).

In 1952 Rev. Claude E. Stanfield began his pastorate in Dunnellon. A lighted cross in honor of H.C. Williams, who served as Sunday School Superintendent for years, was hung behind the pulpit and choir. A red dorsal hung behind the pulpit as background the cross. This cross hangs in the back of the sanctuary in 1994. The WSCS completely re-did the inside of the parsonage, sanded floors, rugs, and new furniture.

The outside of the church and Annex were covered with shingles, and interest in new Sunday School rooms and a social hall peaked. A committee of Claude Stansfield, James Corbett, and Lowe, made three trips to Orlando to see Hugh Brolman, an architect, which resulted in the plans for our Friendship Hall. Much of the money raised for this project was raised during the ministry of Claude Stanfield, but in 1956, he was moved before construction could begin. His work with the children climaxed with a "shutter bug" camera campaign resulting in many unposed pictures. These "bugs" grew into the "Busy Bees" under the direction of the wife of Rev. Howell, our next minister.

The Rev. W.R. Howell came to us from Alachua where he had just completed a building program and he wanted to "catch his breath" before going into another. Consequently, it was late in 1957 when work was begun. Billy Ogle, who had gone to school in Dunnellon, was eager to get the contract for this, his second building contract. Mr. Earl Danforth was the official "unofficial" building inspector. Their works resulted in several changes in the plans, greatly improving the building. The Florida Power Corp. sent an "expert" on kitchens to do attendance. However, there was a slight difference in opinions as to who would use the facility, but this ended with all happy. Brother Howell stayed five years and retired from active service on leaving this appointment.

A complete change in procedure came with Rev. William H. Compton, a Union Theological Seminarian, just three years out of school. His clerical collar, introducing acolytes using the "long form" communion, and Wesley hymns as much as possible, brought accusing labels of "high church" and even "Romanism". His interest in music brought him the honor of being one of those to consider the value hymns to be used in the next Hymnal authorized by the General Board of Methodism. He was first to have three Sunday services, with Holy Communion served at the early service every Sunday. A youth choir that he organized and directed developed with Byron Nichols playing and even using some services as outlined by John Wesley. Brother Bill's calm and sweet personality was not enough to keep three prominent families from withdrawing their membership because of the "Wesley-Catholic" forms used. The Friendship Hall mortgage was paid off and the building dedicated in 1961.

In 1964 we welcomed Rev. Morris J. Holtzclaw, his wife Marcia and daughter Marcia, and shortly after their arrival a new parsonage was acquired in the Vogt Springs area of Dunnellon. The old parsonage on West Park Avenue was sold and proceeds went to the new purchase. Trustees, Bill Gracy and David Dickerson, were two principal people in the selection and securing of the new parsonage. Rev. Holtzclaw was the prime factor in organizing the Rainbow Lakes Estates Church. With Mary Virginia Dinkins as pianist, and early morning service was held in the Lakeside Club House.

This remained a preaching service with succeeding pastors until 1975. After just two short years here, Morris went into the military service as a chaplain. We believe Chaplain Colonel Holtzclaw is still serving in the military.

The Rev. Raymond J. (Spike) Sharp moved here in 1966 and, shortly thereafter, started an addition to the parsonage. This for a while was the pastors study, but also served various purposes for different families. Since this construction was 95% Spike's own work, it is considered his addition. Another addition came in these years— a beautiful baby girl named Chris. Other lasting events were the purchase of the Ruby Walker (a long-time member) property from her children for

\$8,000.00 and traded to Mrs. Mae Tucker for the home located where the present sanctuary stands. This was an even trade, and this advantageous- to - all deal was accomplished thru the loving dedication of P.D. Nichols.

The Cedar Grove Methodist Church was declared "abandoned property" by the Florida Annual Conference in the 1960's, and Brother Sharpe secured the ownership for this church and cemetery by First Church and so deeded November 7, 1968. When this property was about to be sold to a newly formed "independent" Christian group, some who had loved ones in the cemetery objected so the deal was called off, and the property has remained as somewhat of a responsibility for First Church to the present time.

In 1970, Rev. William G. Cofield came with a profound sense of prayer. All visits and phone calls ended with a prayer. Rev. Coalfield and his wife Dorothy's ever present smiles lightened many burdens. While here, Dorothy also served as church organist. In his first year here, Bill produced and directed a Passion Play that had to show two nights to serve the crowds. This play had scenes (2 on stage and on each side with special lighting effects by Charlie Keele). All ages were used and costumes were of a professional caliber. In construction of the stages for scenes, a non-churched newsman was heard to say, "that's the hardest working preacher I have ever seen". A full page of pictures was presented in the Ocala Star Banner. The next play was a musical "Joseph's Multi-Color, Techni-Color Dream Coat". This was nearly two years before the play became a hit on New York's Broadway. This colorful musical was also taken to Crystal River and to Plant City where the cast (again all ages) was applauded and praised. Both productions used teenagers from other churches and, one a Presbyterian, became a minister. During Brother Cofield's two year ministry, Friendship Hall was air-conditioned.

From 1972 to 1975 Rev. Morris G. Hanley was the "Pastor in charge" and that was a most accurate description. He served two churches, First and Rainbow Lakes, and both launched into building programs. In First Church, it was layman Paul Post that took the leadership in promoting a new sanctuary. He visited a number of new churches and had other members go with him. On the occasion of the Hernando Nazarene and the Dunnellon Pentecostal, a dozen or more members went with him to get ideas. Paul then drew the plans but had to get them done by a licensed architect to make it all legal. Ground breaking was held on February 16, 1975 and work immediately started. Removing the old "Tucker house" and an enormous camphor tree were part of the drudgery work before the visible construction began. Paul acted as general contractor and made advantageous deals with sub-contractors and material suppliers, and did daily work along with J.C. Meredith and son C.S. Meredith, Everett Griffith (Paul by proxy), and one skilled pro, Mr. Jesse Pritt. Financing the project was handled by Maxie Lowe and when the building was completed and furnished completely, there remained only \$25,000 indebtedness. Pews from the old church were used for the choir and pulpit, two pulpit chairs and the communion table were used in the Narthex. The beautiful stained glass window was given by Sally Seigler, a long time, much loved and faithful member of our church. The old organ, given anonymously during the Stanfield ministry, was used until the present Allen church organ was given by Marjorie and Douglas Hazen (Marjorie being the daughter of the late Raymond and Montine King). Stained glass from a window in the old church is lighted about the outside center door of the sanctuary, and the old church bell is in a usable steel structure near the Friendship Hall. Morris and his lovely wife Marvine, their three grown children and family pooch, filed the parsonage almost to the explosive point. He served two churches in building programs, did some substitute teaching, repaired small motors, all coming from a heart attack in a large church and told to "take it easy". His devotion to God and sense of humor kept him going...he could have made it as a stand-up comedian.

In June of 1975, the Rev. Gene Carter took over this ministry and had the new sanctuary ready for consecration on December 14, 1975. The Rev. Hanley, having had so much time in planning and actual construction of the building, was invited back for this first service. Dr. Durward McDonnell, District Superintendent of the Gainesville District, conducted the consecration service. During Gene's two-year ministry here, the utility building, parking lot, bell tower, fence on North

and West boundaries of the property, were added. He also had the distinction of being the first pastor to regularly wear a clerical robe in the pulpit.

The Rev. Allen DeWald could best be described "as angelic". Here only one year, 1978–1979, because of health problems, but lending strong spiritual support to all ages and getting new and better air conditioning for the sanctuary and a new roof on Friendship Hall. They also gave fifty copies of the Cokesbury Hymnal to the church for special use in evening worship services. He and his wife, Alma, left a grateful membership.

In 1979 the Rev. Ronald Dowman came for two years. He was listed in the Florida Conference Journal as Supply Pastor from another denomination, coming directly from England. Mrs. Dowman was helpful with the music both as soloist and with a children's choir. In 1979 the United Methodist Men was organized and became an active part in church activities. The organizational structure of the church was changed to that of Administrative Council. The popular coffee-punch fellowship time in Friendship Hall, immediately following morning services, has continued.

Members of the Florida Conference are reluctant to purge the church membership rolls because a decrease in membership looks bad on their records. However, Ron agreed and eight-nigh names were removed by Charge Conference bringing the membership roll down to 167 active and inactive members. On March 16, 1980 the burning of the mortgage and dedication of the sanctuary took place in Friendship Hall with a house full of rejoicing members. The total amount spent on building, furnishings and equipment came to \$81,516.75. Other property improvements included a new roof on the parsonage and fresh paint; also the church Lounge was started. This ministry ended with a cloudy condition among disgruntled older members, but this time there were no withdrawals from the rolls, and we proceeded to grow. The Dowman's were warmly received on a visit back from England a few years later.

The return of Eldon Simmons was a great blessing. He had retired from one of the largest churches in Florida, and having served as a District Superintendent of the exploding Orlando District, came to be near his favorite vacation area – the Rainbow River. But retired he was not. In his four years, the pastorate moved from a Conference subsidized one to a full local responsibility. As a "for instance", in 1983 the Conference Church Development Campaign set our goal at \$4,500.00 for a three year program and on Easter Sunday we gave \$5,200.00 and before the year ended and additional \$800.00. Property improvements were almost too many to list all: painting all property, padded backs to pews, security light, chrome communion set. In Friendship Hall: replaced doors, new kitchen appliances, new supply of tables, chairs, water fountain, coffee urn, china, PA system and furnished the Lounge. The parsonage: new heating and cooling system, all floors recovered, sofas and chairs, and all appliances. The two rooms, originally designated as office in Sanctuary building were furnished with desk, chairs, IBM typewriter, copies, folding machine, master addressor, calculators, files and storage. The CANDLE, a newsletter, began in 1982 and in 1983 a standing order was placed the a local florist to provide fresh flowers for the altar each Sunday. Eighteen new members were adde during this ministry of Eldon and Elizabeth Simmons.

In 1985 came handsome Rev. Bruce T. Jones and his charming and pretty wife, Haley. Bruce kept busy with ministering to an ever growing membership, preparing and delivering dynamic sermons, and all the while working on his doctorate which he completed in 1992. His seven year pastorate was the longest in this church history.

In 1985, the Brooks property (next to the church) was purchased to make room for parking, but was turned into the Methodist Mansion for youth department. Thru Bruce's efforts, the Ecumenical Development was worked into a vital movement in the community (including the Chattier area) and is old on- going reality today. The church organizational structure changed to a Council of Ministries/Administrative Board. We established a Covenant Relationship, thru the General Board of Global Ministries, pledging support of a missionary. This covenant Relationship is still active today.

Again, improvements were made including: furnishing a Conference Room, purchasing 3



televisions, VCR's, movable stands, and many Adult Bible Study and Children's Sunday School videos.

The church became "of age" in Bruce's pastorate when he added a complete computer programming system to the office equipment, and our first church secretary was hired. When Bruce left, the church was completely staffed with a secretary, music director, organist, custodian, grounds keeper, youth director, and nursery attendant. In June of 1992 Jones was transferred and this church was again blessed with a young, dynamic pastor.

The Rev. Harold R. Hendren, a consecrated and concentrated bundle of energy, took over the leadership. To enhance the beauty of this family picture is Harold's beautiful wife Donna, and sweet little daughter, Olivia. In October of 1992, a precious son, Logan, joined the family. In April of 1993, the Methodist Mansion was demolished to make room for more parking. On July 18, 1993, John O'Donald, a long-time member of the congregation, was recognized for 50 years of ringing the church bell and a dedicated plaque was inscribed out on the bell tower. A fenced-in playground was built on the old Methodist Mansion site and was dedicated in November 1993. Harold has kept the roads busy visiting the sick and shut-ins. By the end of his first year in Dunnellon, Harold had taken 70 new members into the congregation.

As you have read, our heritage and tradition runs deep in Dunnellon. With God's help, we will continue to accomplish the goals of our church. As our vision for ministry becomes increasingly clearer, our church stands tall and strong in the community. With your help, we look forward to what new traditions may be established as we grow together.

Moving into this last decade of the century, the First United Methodist Church of Dunnellon, Florida is totally dedicated to serving our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen!**

## Interesting Notes:

**The pictures in the hall** opposite the church office are the work of Mrs. J.C. (Juanita) Meredith. It took months of research and tireless contacts with old friends and relatives to get these pictures of former pastors of this church. Also, the J.C. Meredith became the backyard neighbors to all the parsonage families when the Vogt Springs property was purchased. They have helped incoming pastors and their families in many ways.

The beautiful 5'x7' **crochet picture** of "**The Last Supper**" was given to the church in July 1992 by Mr. Jesse Gilligan. It was created and designed by Jesse's late wife, Dorothy, and it took her five months to finish. She put a lot of work and love into making it, and we are very grateful to have it beautify our Friendship Hall.

**Sunday School:** Biggest Membership, 317 in 1951!

**Music:** Always good Methodist singing. Early years had a piano and organ. Occasionally trumpet, accordion, saxophone, guitar and flute being played by various members. In 1991 came the addition of handbell choirs.

**Women's Missionary Society of Christian Service, United Methodist Women:** Several titles throughout the years, but this is still a dominant part of the continued success of our church.

**United Methodist Men:** Strong in the 20's, 50's, 80's with some dead years in between. In the 90's this group had developed into a "service" ministry- dedicated to serving and helping our church and its members.

Here are the names of some long time members and the dates they joined:

Mrs. Mamie Ruth Pipkins (6-21-14); Mrs. Edith Mae Scarborough (5-12-21);  
Mr. Maxie B. Lowe (1-29-28); Mrs. Virginia B. Dinkins, Jr. (4-1-34);  
Mrs. Lela Mae Evers (10-4-36); Mr. P.D. Nichols (5-9-37);  
Mrs. Leona Koonce (9-3-39); Mrs. Ruth Riley (8-20-44);  
Mrs. Ruth Hinson (5-45); Mrs. Doris Clark (6-3-45);  
Mrs. Edna Farrell (11-4-45); Mrs. Cora Lee Giles (12-30-45);  
Mr. J. Carroll Meredith and Mrs. Juanita Meredith (2-1-48);  
Mr. C.A. Dinkins III (3-21-48)



Our first year in our new facility had been absolutely incredible! From our opening service August 24, 2003 until today, Labor Day weekend September 2004, we continue God's journey. Rev. Tony Matthews jogged the mile from our home at the corner of Ohio and Chestnut to our new home on West Highway 40. The torch that he carried will always burn brightly at this precious place as we continue to declare our Vision, "Sharing God's Light". Our year of preparation took us many times to this hallowed ground for prayer, communion, and even prayerful signatures signed on the floor beneath our feet on this special day.

In this last year we have accomplished so many goals. We have averaged 400 in Sunday Worship throughout the year. Wednesday night Family worship had truly blossomed averaging 150 people each week. Resources had been set aside to always have a Praise Team and Youth Director on Staff. Our ministry must be to the aged and young on a constant basis. Our mission must be local as well as across the Seas. This last year we spent almost \$20,000 sending 14 missionaries to Honduras. These resources came from our missionaries as well as our church where we

ministered in a dental unit, medical unit, and build a new church. We continued to give \$25,000 to United Methodist missions and \$10,000 to Missions set by our mission committee per year. We have placed our Bell Tower from the Ohio Street facility right at the entrance of our new sanctuary. A children's playground has been purchased and a toddler playground outside our nursery. We have a basketball goal behind our facility that is readily used by our 30-40 young people who use our Worship Center weekly. Our United Methodist Men have renamed themselves the "Men's Ministry" and moved their meeting time to the evenings to attract the working men. Our ladies continue to lead us in so many forms of mission and ministry. Our sanctuary had already been used in a number of ways for our community in the form of weddings, chorales, funerals. The High School Baccalaureate, Middle School graduation, United Methodist District meeting, Ministerial Association meetings and many other activities. Our Narthex has been graced by two beautiful wood inlays from Mr. Jim Bell. This first is the scene of the Lord's Supper and second will be revealed at our Christmas Cantata Service on December 19th. Our Comfort Room has been specially decorated to bring every need to a Bride and for a child that needs to rest from the worship service. Each one has truly blessed us as our worshipping community has the opportunity to come together in the sight of our Lord. This coming year we are excited as we plan for our first "Pumpkin Patch" where we will have opportunities to meet and bless new people and sell them a pumpkin. We will probably see faces that we first met when we had our "Celebrate Jesus". We opened our church to the entire community to come have a block party with us. Hundreds attended that grand day. Christmas Eve brought a packed house this year as our children blessed us with a play and a Candlelight Service. We are presently looking at ways to enhance our Youth Ministry regarding our facility. We have 14 acres behind us that simply await the Lord's artistic hand to create new ministries, church, as an acronym "Christ Hopes U R Coming Home," is being experienced seven days a week in this, your Home. May God be praised for all He continues to do in our very midst.

Eddie Fulford



## **Building A New Church**

“Build a new church!” You can imagine my concern and excitement as I was told about Dunnellon First United Methodist Church looking into relocating. I had just been appointed to serve this charge of the Florida Annual Conference in January 1997. Here it is April of 2002 and we have recently held our ground breaking ceremony, all papers signed, and work beginning on the new 20 acre lot located on CR-40 across from Voigt Springs. We are still in the city limits, which was a powerful desire for the church. The building committee had been formed in 1994 to research growth, expansion, possible relocation and basically what to do with all the info that would come in. That early committee did an inspiring job of gaining information and then making a presentation to the Charge Conference (a yearly meeting with the District Superintendent) of 1994. But the story doesn’t really start there. In 1885 a community of Methodist’s began gathering at Rockwell in Dunnellon for religious services. It’s interesting that our new location is only about 1/2 mile west of the original fellowship. In these last 117 years, the church has mostly resided at 11818 Ohio St. and even though no longer holding the oldest sanctuary in town, we still are the oldest congregation. We have been served by pastors in this venture but according to those that have been here at least twenty years, the ball started rolling for blessed growth by the return of Rev. Eldon Simmons to serve our church from 1981–85. Rev. Simmons had been an early pastor of our church in 1948–49 going from there to serve many churches in Florida as well as District Superintendent of Orlando District. He returned in 1981 and set the wheel in motion to being younger pastors into our leadership. Rev. Bruce Jones served 1985–92, Rev. Harold Hendren served 1992–97 and Rev. Eddie Fulford is now in his sixth year. These extended stages by our last four pastors say so much about the sweet fellowship here at Dunnellon. When our ministers have felt blessed to stay extended years, this has to be one of the best churches in the Florida Annual Conference. I’m proud to be in my sixth year. The family of God has brought so much warmth and love to my family. We are so proud to be appointed here at this time in the church’s growth and relocation.

In the early years of expansion, hours upon hours were spent in planning, questioning, and seeking direction from our growth. Those around our present location in the historic section of Dunnellon did not prove to meet our needs. As those doors closed we began to look outside our present piece of property. It was very clear our desire would be to stay within Dunnellon City limits. In 1994 a new United Methodist church had been formed. The congregation of around 50 were meeting in the Citrus Springs Middle School. Those doors were closed down in 1997 and was explained to us in the district as not a failure only that it had been a failure of time. We as a denomination tried too late to present a church in Citrus Springs after their main growth had occurred in previous years. To our north is the Rainbow Lakes United Methodist Church and the general rule of our denomination is to not have a church within 5 miles of another United Methodist Church. To our East on State Rd. 484 many congregations have moved their location but this is outside our city limits. The committee looked at every location they could find within the local downtown area even the old middle school but these considerations did not fit the picture we were looking for. We needed at least five acres and hoped for more. We found land available west of our present location available.

Excitement formed as we looked to what was for sale on West Hwy 40 still in our City Limits. South of Hwy 40 was an area for sale that seemed to offer us exactly what we wanted. After a study was made we realized that a considerable amount of that land could not be used. We then looked to the north of Hwy 40 still within the city limits, west of Oak Bend Village. There was some concern from a few folks in Oak Bend about this noise problem of our new construction but with the knowledge that we were actually bringing 10 acres between them quieted that concern. The rectangular shaped property would be adequate for our endeavor but because of its shape and small front to Hwy 40 it was decided it would be much better if we had more land to the west of us. To the west was a 40 acre tract of planted pines. This happened to be owned by Mrs. Geneva Bernkik. Mrs. Bernkik’s mother is the one who had given us our beautiful stained glass

window in our sanctuary. Her daughter, Geneava, blessed us with 6 new stained glass windows for our new church. A call was made and after many meetings for approval, we bought 10 of the 40 acres from Mrs. Bernkik, this now gave us a parcel of 20 acres. It is now all zoned for the church use.

The building committee met on a continual basis to insure that “what we believed to be our god given dream” would come true. We were blessed to have one of our members front the money for both parcels of land. As we paid back this individual, they in turn donated the interest back to the church. It is moments like that, that truly help us realize we are heading in the right direction. Two of the main reasons that we as a church have continued to along at such a good speed has been through the hard work of our two building chairman: Mr. Joe Farley and Mr. Fred Kingery. These two men have truly been visionaries for our church always looking down the road to future ministry and expansion.



I can honestly say that without their continued leadership and support of their endearing wives we would not be where we are today. They represent the many long hours that this great crew of Godly men and women have given to our Lord Jesus Christ.

I must take a moment now and mention that while those plans were coming alive there was a growing concern about the speed of this plan. As I mentioned, the dream was anchored in 1994 but now the year was 1998–1999 and how could we pay for such an adventure. Around this time, Mr. Jack Bergstrom who with his lovely wife Audrey, worked at our church in the winter months, came to my office. Jack said that he was looking for ways to spend his time in service to God and his church. Little did Jack know that what was on my heart was not painting doors but heading a tremendous financial campaign for us to see if we could support of growing endeavor. When I found out that Jack’s past career was perfect for what we needed a church for a church financing building fund, we just couldn’t let him go. Jack, from then on, spent so much time in planning and preparation for this great need. A committee for him was designated and in January of 2000 we kicked off an incredible professional pledge campaign with two donors and special invitation to all members. Jack’s creativity in this cannot be matched as he blended the past and present to encourage our giving. Beautiful brochures that are included were given out to each and everyone. Mr. Howard Carpenter, our financial secretary kept all our records and within a few months we had pledges and were receiving giving units to the Building Fund. This was a three year pledge with intent to make a decision in the 3rd year to move forward. These gifts were factored over a 3 year period and would allow us to make payments if we ventured into a loan of \$10,900 a month.

During the summer months Mrs. Linda Jones was nominated to creatively keep the ball rolling

when Jack would return to the North. Linda created out of 30 gallon gasoline can a figure of Miss Anita Penny where people could drop their loose change in for the building fund. Linda had also chaired for us on yearly Jubilee celebration in the Fall starting in 1998. We have a fall flea market, silent auction on the following day is our honoring services at the grounds. Each year we have raised between 5 and 10 thousand dollars for our building fund.

This annual celebration has given us many laughs like the one when a horse was into our sanctuary where he had a slight accident. One year we had a series of skits in preparation for Jubilee that included a feud between our Hat Fields and the McCoys. The list goes on and on.

We all enjoy dressing up like the turn of the 20th Century and thoroughly enjoy having one service under the big tent on that Sunday morning. We usually average close to 300 people on that day. All of these events bless us spiritually as well as keeping an eye upon the need for finances to fund the new facility. The Jubilee for the year 2002 is now being planned. We will use our own people, their talents and skills this year instead of bringing in great leaders. So many of our members have an outstanding job leading us on these Jubilee programs but I would be amiss if I did not mention a special thanks to Mrs. Ida Tacker and her group of folks that meet throughout the year making crafts for the Jubilee Celebration.



The Fulford Family



Eddie Fulford



Another big contributor to this program is the Flea Market that is functioning at the same time. We give a special thanks to Mrs. Flo Pohlman for her helpers and all their hard work. Flo has also been the chair of our Missions Committee over the last couple of years. They have presented to our congregation a monthly list usually done in such creative ways, mission programs that we have graciously given to. There is no doubt we have an outstanding congregation that believes in giving to others.

As the months began to roll by we were all amazed at the way our giving continued to grow. Not only were we holding steady with funds for our Building Fund but our General Fund was truly growing by leaps and bounds. This plus a couple of other interesting situations developed that led us to speed up our Building process. Our attendance continued to blossom at this time as well. Parking continued to be a major problem. Three Sunday morning worship services were being offered to try and meet the growing needs. Looking at all that was going on, knowing that whenever we decided to build we would have at least a year of construction also knowing that statistics show that new churches usually grow at astounding rates as the doors are opened.

I called a special meeting of all those that were on the Building Committee plus those on the "Building Fund Raising" committee. Three suggestions were offered:

1. We can decide not to build.
2. We can wait 3 years to see where we are financially and then decide to build or not. This was the period of time listed for the Fund Raising Campaign.
3. We can build now!

Of course the question was raised of how we could achieve this 3rd step at the present time. We realized that the Florida Annual Conference at that time had the resources to loan us the money. Usually they did not have the reserves and probably would not have them in the future. We also had learned that by moving 25% of our General Fund over to the Building Fund we could still operate our budget easily plus have enough resources to make our monthly loan payments. This third plus was that we were at a time in our nations economics that we could get a loan at an incredible low interest rate.

After much discussion our combined committees agreed to pray for a month and then make a decision. One month later the group was ready to go if the church voted to allow the 25% to go for the Building Fund. The church overwhelmingly approved this and the light was green! Fred and I made the visit to our District Committee on Church Relocation. The committee was so impressed with our homework and growth that they unanimously gave us permission to seek a loan for construction. Meetings, meetings, and more meetings followed. Our dear folks continued to give of their time, resources, and efforts. The dream that our miniature church model displayed was actually going to happen and happen soon. We kept this model for a number of months to continue

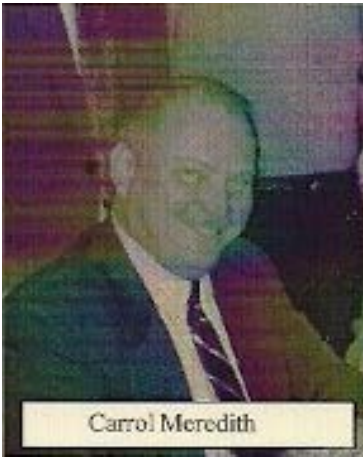
to excite our congregation. Mr. Earl Hausman made this for us and it will be a treasure for the archives of our church. Research was done for comparison in local and distant banks regarding a loan that could be obtained from the Florida Conference. By the time we were able to get all our paper work done we found that the Conference had already out the monies we were seeking. Their process leaves them open to first come first served. The best offer that we received and the one we applied for was from our own Dunnellon State Bank. We have kept our church resources there for many a year. They offered us a 1.5 million dollar loan at 5.9% interest. This could go up by two percent per year for three years. The highest this would be was 11.9%. Our finance committee gave the approval as did our Administrative Board. Our first full payment of \$10,900 a month will be made in May of 2003. Presently after the first eight months of 2002 we are averaging \$11,500 per month in the Building Fund. We noted that we have spent \$450,000 as of August 2002 before the bank loan kicked in.

In the process of signing for this loan we realized that since we are an incorporated body our Board of Directors chairperson and trustee chairperson had to both sign our legal papers. Mr. Larry Slaughter has served as chairperson of the trustees for the last couple of years and has been so faithful to this task. Mr. Carrol Meredith has been our Administrative Chairman for many years and his constant tedious insight to the workings of our church and this process has been greatly appreciated. Carrol's advice on the Administrative level into the needs of our facility had helped. I cannot tell you the hours and I mean hours that Carrol, myself, Sharon and others have planned and strategized about our growth. The coffee pot at our church office has been worked over many times as we discussed and discussed. Prayers were constantly lifted up by our faithful for this door to be opened and others closed. In this process, we saw the need to lift Mrs. Sharon Gane's position from secretary to Administrative Assistant. She has excelled in this position, calmed many nerves in a zillion transactions, and honestly helped our church continue forward with a loving, smiling manner. Sub-committee reports were kept in our records over the years by Fred. Each committee was charged to research, held our budget or plan ways to cover extra expenses and report such at a certain date.

A "Thank You" to all chairpersons who assisted in all areas of our building process. Listed below are just a few of our chairpersons:

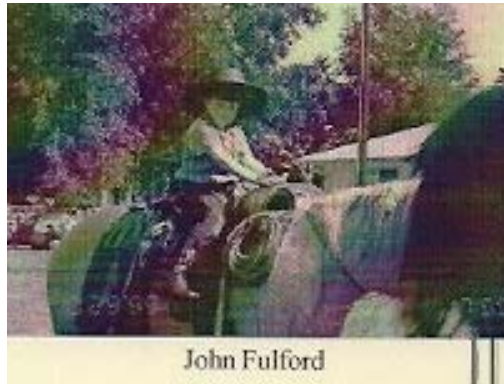
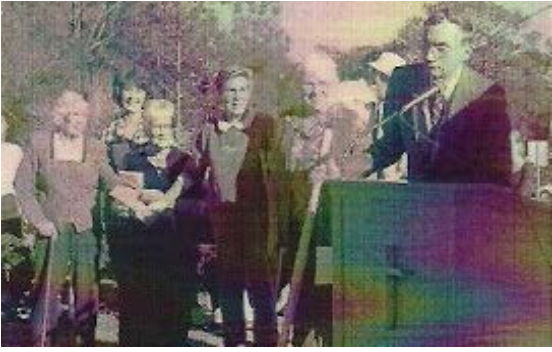
Mrs. Grace Burks: Stained Glass Committee  
Mr. Carrol Meredith: Pews and chapel furniture ~ Mr. Ken Kouba  
Mrs. Elaine Carter: Sound system/phone/chapel furniture  
Mr. Al Martinez: Landscaping and Memorial garden  
Mr. Joe Farley: Steeple/sign  
Mrs. Linda Fagan - Mrs. Les Risley: Color/Flooring Committee  
Mr. Bob Van Stee  
Mrs. Kathy Klein: Kitchen Accessories





Each committee was composed of a number of our church family. Hours of research and work was offered. Our Administrative Board was held in August 2002 to compose these commissions. Their reports were wonderfully received by our church and voted into approval status. This meeting was held one day after our called church conference to decide whether or not to sell our present facility. Our new District Superintendent chaired this meeting we unanimously charged our Trustees and Board of Directors to pursue selling our present church. Mr. Ron Wright was given chair of approaching those that might be interested in our lot. Three churches have presently showed interest. Our professional appraisal set one value of our present location at \$475,000.

We have been especially blessed through this process by our official photographer, Mr. Horace Mann. Horace has kept an ongoing set of photos of our building events. These have been placed in our newsletter as well as our bulletin boards. Every effort has been made to keep all of our church family abreast of our progresses. Prayer walks have been offered for us to prayerfully walk around our new facilities. One new school with Holy Communion. We offer a special thanks to Mrs. Linda Reynolds for scheduling these for us.



Our last Jubilee/Homecoming from the old Sanctuary site was held November 2002. Around 325 people enjoyed our friendly service and our pastor rode in on Freddie the Mule. Freddie had been publicized all month in preparation for Jubilee. Signs covered the church, is Freddie ready for Freddy. Amy Gregory brought Freddie to us and on Saturdays count Fair, many children and adults had the chance to ride him. This marked our fifth year of Jubilee which has given us money for our Building Fund.

Watching three facilities come into existence has been a church wide dream come true. We have continues to have special meetings along each step of the way to make sure that no stone is left unturned. He was received special financial gifts in 2002 to cover special projects or this program. By November 2002 we received:

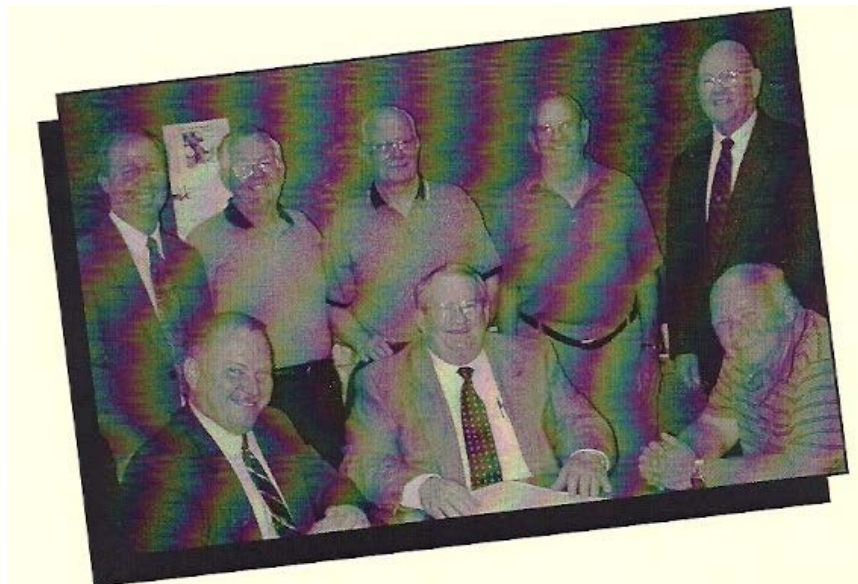
Kitchen Stove: \$5,700  
Stained Glass: \$17,400  
S/S Room: \$14,000  
Steeple: \$8,200  
Nursery: \$650  
Property Appraisal: \$1,200  
Church Pews: \$29,684  
Choir Chairs: 1,420  
Alter Rail: \$2,312  
New Organ: \$25,000

We have continued to have a regular monthly giving to the building fund of between \$10,000 and \$15,000. This has been received since January of 2001.

The church Board offered giving our new kitchen excellent materials for the ladies and to use. Mrs. Kathy Klein gave this report in October of 2002. The color and flooring committee have spent hours researching what will be best for us as has the church/sound committee. A retractable screen will be placed in front of our stained glass windows for all the glory service and other times when needed. The same company who placed our windows in the previous church is moving the window to the new church. One of these will be in the Sanctuary and two in the chapel. A wish list has been given to our church including:

1. Portable stage or hall estimate \$7500
2. Memorial Garden
3. Power point projector/computer for Sanctuary \$10,000
4. Youth Building
5. New Piano
6. Exercise Track
7. Prayer Walk
8. This Church Building story is a work in progress

## Building A New Church

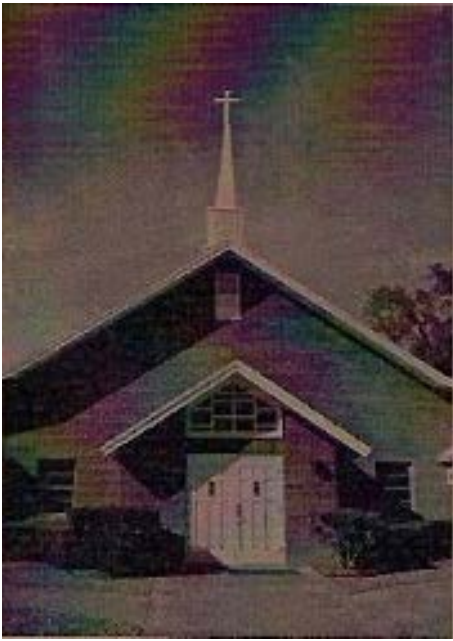


# **Building Executive Committee Signing Our Mortgage**

## **Sharing God's Light**



Our People's Vision Made Manifest  
"A Mountain-Top Experience Since 1885"



# First United Methodist Church History 2003–2008

Since entering our new facility in the year of our Lord 2003, many missions and ministries have birthed and grown to maturity. A listing of those that started these services will help in our everyday calling as Gods' family as we seek to continue to gown in His grace.

Sundays find us worshipping in three different modes with 8:00 a.m. being a weekly communion blended style of worship. Our Lay Leaders and Administrative Assistant with our Liturgist and Organist lead the hour. In our new facility, the sound room is an active part of our worship. Mrs. Carol Stroub ministers there. The doors are always open and everything ready to worship by Mr. John Jones. Our appointed Senior Pastor rotates each Sunday, with four other leaders of our congregation sharing the three Sunday Sermons preaching schedule. They are Rev. Tony Matthews, Rev. Bob Weimert, Mrs. Sherri Woodstuff and Mrs. Bonnie Russell. On the fifth Sunday, Mr. Don Holsipple joins the team and Mrs. Debbie Wright fills in during the year as needed. These six individuals meet monthly with our Senior Minister this group is called the CLOMS. (Certified Lay and Ordained Ministers.)

The 9:30 a.m. service begins our Contemporary style of worship. Over the years, we have had many leading the worship. Presently Mr. Mike Kirk, Mrs. Debbie Wright, Ms. Michelle McClain and Ms. Rachel O'Brien, join the Pastor to lead this service. Most of our young families attend this weekly worship. There is always a children's time in the service and then they are dismissed to go to Sunday School. Mrs. Lija Kirk and Mrs. Nancy Fulford share this children's class. On the first Sunday of the month all share communion and then the children go to their classes. Mrs. Leslie Risley and Mrs. Betty Perlmutter serve communion at the 9:30 hour, while Pastor Bob anoints those with oil at the altar for healing. We have quarterly rotating teams that set the communion for 8:00 (Mr. & Mrs. Jim Bell, Mr. & Mrs. Bill Fagan, Mr. & Mrs. Pat Anguilio and Carol Crandall. Mr. Carroll Meredith and his mother, Juanita Meredith, set the communion for the 11:00 a.m. service. Since we use the screen and sound system more fully at the 9:30 service, we have more activity there at 9:30. Mr. John Jones, Mr. Mike McClain, Mr. Travis Peebles. At 11:00, Mr. Ralph Levatino and Mr. Tom Laccone lead. Mr. Ralph Levatino and others have been a great help running the sound booth for Chairman John Jones for various weekly activities such as funerals and weddings. At 11:00, our Liturgist, Choir Director Mr. Cory Stroup our church choir, and organist join our Pastor and worship leaders to lead us in our more traditional worship. The Pastor's robe at the 8 and 11:00 a.m. worship services. Mrs. Doris Burch sets our weekly liturgist and helps set our Psalter and sets the stewards for communion on Sunday, while our choir director sets our hymns. Mr. & Mrs. Wilbur Heath lead our weekly ushers for this service and combine with Mr. & Mrs. Hannington to lead the ushers for the 8:00 a.m service. Each Sunday at 11:00, Mrs. Patti Purvis rotates with Mrs. Sharon Gane as our worship leaders.

Our office is open Monday thru Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m... Sharon Gane continues to lead our Staff as our Administrative Assistant. Mrs. Lin Roosa is our secretary working, Tuesday thru Thursday and Mrs. Grace Burks works Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday as our Bookkeeper. Through the week, Mr. John Jones serves on our Staff as our Facility manager and takes care of a variety of church needs. Rev. Bob Weimert has been our Visitation Pastor for some years now and

continues to bless so many in his ministry. Pastor Eddie and Pastor Bob try to rotate days where they visit the hospitals, rehabs, and nursing homes. Mrs. Debbi Wright has felt a calling to volunteer in this ministry as well and helps tremendously in visitation. For 2008 as a trial program Mrs. Debbie Wright joins our staff as a Lay Visitor. Pastor Bob has moved to fill in as Pastor to Rainbow Lakes United Methodist Church.

On our present calendar, Mrs. Carol Stroub leads a "Disciple" class each Monday afternoon. She has led these series of classes that are approved by the United Methodist Church, a number of different times for our congregation. Disciple 1,2,3,4 is all in depth studies that encourage almost a year-long endeavor into the scriptures. Each Monday evening, Mr. Al Martinez leads a Bible Study, open to all, as a verse-by-verse Bible study. On Tuesday mornings, Mrs. Barbara Keller rotates with Rev. Bob Weimert for a Bible Study and each Tuesday evening at 6:00 p.m., Mr. Bob Wood leads a Bible Study (Spirit Builders) open to all. These two studies are in our Friendship Hall. Quarterly, Pastor Eddie shares for a month on different Biblical topics. Each Tuesday evening, after Spirit Builders, usually finds us in one of our Administrative Board meetings. Quarterly, our Youth Council meets on the first Tuesday of the month. Each month our Trustees meet on the Second Tuesday, third Tuesday is the Finance meeting. The last Tuesday has the Administrative Board meeting one month and the alternate month on the last Tuesday is our Council on Ministries meeting. We have great plans for 2008 as Mrs. Linda Jones become our new Council on Ministries Chairperson.

Wednesdays and Saturdays at noon, we host the AA program that was started as a ministry here by Mr. Fred Ashmead. There is usually a day-long process on Wednesday in preparation for our evening family dinner. Mrs. Nancy Fulford has been leading this ministry for many years. The meal has grown from a dinner to help those in ministry on Wednesday nights – such as Choir and other programs, to a weekly fellowship time for an average of 125 to 175 people. Her son John and daughter Emily and a wonderful group of volunteers join Nancy. The meal is offered weekly at no charge, even though there is an offering received during the weekly worship service. We cannot list all the names of those that help make this family time come together, but we do offer our deep appreciation to Nancy and to Mr. Howard Carpenter and those who assist him in cleaning up the kitchen each Wednesday night. Mr. Carpenter is also our Finance Secretary and leads our counting team of Mrs. Leslie Risley and Mr. Earl Decker, who meet each Tuesday for hours upon hours to take care of our weekly offerings.

The meal is shared at 5:30 p.m. and then the children, youth, and nursery are dismissed for their programs at 6:00 p.m. Our Lay Leader, Mrs. Sherri Woodstuff, and Mr. Don Holsipple leading our singing with Mrs. Joyce Gabel, our pianist, lead the adults in worship. We rotate our speakers weekly with our certified Lay Speakers, retired ministers, our Parrish Nurse, Mrs. Joey Weisbaum, and our Home Fellowship groups. Communion is set for us under Mrs. Doris Burch every six weeks. Pastor Eddie now leads a Parenting Class at this hour on the first and third Wednesdays of the month. At the present time Mrs. Debbi Wright and Mr. & Mrs. Travis Peebles lead our youth. Mrs. Dana Matthews takes charge of our children's ministry and Mrs. Millie Porter is in charge of our nursery. Our Staff for our nursery is led by Mrs. Judy Roseski and assisted by Mrs. Millie Porter.

Following the worship service, our Chancel Choir meets with our Director Mr. Corey Stroup and Mrs. Joyce Gabel. We also have a Handbell Choir meeting for practice every Monday evening under the direction of Mrs. Marilyn Holsipple. We have a beautiful selection of Bells given to us by Mrs. Kathy Klein in memory of her deceased husband.

In the prayer Chapel on Wednesday nights, our Prayer Box Ministry team meets for prayer. This is open to all that would like to join. Mr. Charlie Skinner is our present Chairman for this prayer group. Prayer boxes have been placed throughout the community in businesses and are checked weekly to be prayed for. Our church secretary combines these requests and adds the prayer card needs that came in each Sunday through our offering plates. These combined needs for the month are typed out and placed in the Chapel for our church to pray.

We have seen a mighty out pouring of prayers answered in our church and we praise our Lord for this. We have now branched out to a time on the first Sunday of each month to have anointing oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit on these communion Sundays. Mr. Don Holsipple and Mr. Fred Kingery are leading these individuals to bless our entire congregation believing in God's healing grace. We have already witnessed this with our Home Fellowship Group leading on several Wednesday nights and communion Sundays. Presently, we have a committee meeting to cover this new ministry of healing comprised of: Mr. Fred Kingery, Mr. Don Holsipple, Mrs. Lorna Gillespie, Mrs. Georgia Law, Mrs. Beverly Snyder, and Mrs. Linda Reynolds. Mrs. Reynolds has taken the worship lead of the Wednesday night prayer chapel ministry.

There is a group of men that meet under the direction of our Trustees and Men's leadership on Thursday mornings to do any work needed around our facility. One area for future ministry they are working on is preparing a "Prayer Walk Garden" directly behind our west parking lot. Located in this area is our, "Liberty Tree," dedicated on Labor Day Sunday 2007. We also have a group of men's fellowship that meet each Thursday at noon and on the last Thursday of the month they eat chicken at the church and Pastor Eddie gives devotion. The men's ministry is under the direction of an executive committee that meets quarterly. One group that meets every other Monday morning is called "Men on a Mission" Their outreach project is the Backpack ministry, where they share with other churches programs in the community to help feed hungry children on the weekend.

Our United Methodist Women's program has been under the leadership of Mrs. Pat Vitek for past three years. Mrs. Laura Rutkowski has been our Fall Festival Chairperson for the last couple of years and will become the new United Methodist Women's president. Presently, we have three women Circles, Naomi, Ruth, and Virginia that meet monthly. They are under the UMW executive committee. Events for all women are planned periodically. The outreach and mission giving of these women continues to be one of the strongest and most crucial ministries in our church family as well as the entire United Methodist Church connections.

Our facility is host for a number of ministries and programs throughout the year. These range from High School testing, Baccalaureate, line dancing on Tuesday, Square Dancing on Thursdays, AA group, Kiwanis Health Fair, etc. All programs fall under the Direction of the Trustees, who relate directly to the Administrative Board. To be on the agenda, please call the church office in advance of the regular scheduled meetings.

Sunday school is a major area of our growth as disciples of Jesus church. Mrs. Judy Capone is our Sunday School Superintendent. We have three adult classes at 9:30 a.m. under the leadership of Mr. Al Martinez, Mr. Bob Wood, and Mr. Tony Matthews (his class has a shared teaching scheduled.) Mrs. Lija Kirk and Mrs Nancy Fulford lead our children's class at 9:30 a.m. as well. At 11:00, Mr. Mike Kirk leads a youth class and Mr. Bill Gaunt directs an adult class. The children are allowed at this time to work in our computer lab under the direction of Mrs. Irene Bruch.

We are in our second year of "Home Fellowship Ministry." Over ten groups are meeting in homes throughout the month encouraging discipleship with a family atmosphere. Our church is thankful to Mr. Fred Kingery who brought this program to us and operates under a steering committee.

Mr. David Priest is serving us this year with his wife Nancy in preparing our bi-monthly newsletter, "The Candle." David also changes our marquee sign on Highway 40 and gives us Christian inspiration in the thoughts he post.

Over the past few years we have had wonderful Evangelist, such as John Barret, Mr. John Riley, Dr. Chic Shaver and Rev. Charles Kinder, Mr. & Mrs. Joe Farley have chaired our Evangelism committee and done a tremendous job. Mr. Don Holsipple begins this Chair in 2008.

Mrs. Betty Ashmead is serving our church as our New Member Chairperson and putting together classes for new members three times a year. We welcome these new members with packets of information and a handmade wooden cross-built by Mr. Bob Burks. Bob has hand crafted over 600 of these crosses. Many of them adorn our new member homes. There is a new member dinner each fall. This process is a regular activity, we deeply appreciate the hard work here, and



other areas of ministry noted.

Mrs. Leslie Risley continues to relay "called in prayer requests" on our e-mail prayer chain. She also leads our volunteers who help families for support for funerals, or a stay in the hospital. We try to provide a meal or coffee/cake after a funeral service.

This coming January, we will host our second talent show evening. Mrs. Carol Crandall leads us in this event, which was a tremendous success in the past.

Our vision for our Youth has grown over the years. Our Directors, since we have moved into our new facility, have been Amanda Fulford, Matthew Eldridge, Mike Kirk, Debbie Wright, Joy, and Travis Peebles. We bought the Vocational-Tech portable from the Marion Country School District for about \$1,000.00 in 2004 and moved it on to our property. The cost of moving was approximately \$17,000.00. A tremendous amount of work has gone into this building by so many, such as John Jones, Bob Burks our Directors and John Woodstuff installing the air conditioning and so many others.

It is presently used weekly for Sunday school and Wednesday for Youth programs. It contains a pool table, ping-pong table, refrigerator, microwave, meeting room, stage setup by Coach Jones and an incredible sound system/computer set up by Travis Peebles. We average 10-20 youth on any given Wednesday. We do want to give thanks to the many sponsors that have faithfully given \$10, \$20, \$50 a month for the past couple of years to our youth ministry. We hope someday to be set up to have other youth groups come and camp out at our facility. They could float down the Rainbow River and join us for worship on Sunday mornings.

Mrs. Joey Weisbaum was consecrated by our church a few years ago as our, Parrish Nurse." Her ministry, while she is still a full-time Hospice Nurse, is to provide regular education on medical and spiritual health. She usually takes one Wednesday night service per month and leads the program. Joey has also offered us a flu-shot clinic, blood mobile opportunities, seminars, etc. She is always on call to help us in our needs.

Mrs. Jackie Adley is the present Chairperson of our K.F.C. program. The "Klowns for Christ" share with our congregation the last Sunday of each month. They are also in ministry in and around our community for various events. Mrs. Lois Hill started this program for us 7 years ago.

We have been so blessed over the years during our Fall Festival. We started this program, which among many activities would always have a major "Flea Market Sale." Different ones have worked so hard on these events that have included "Pumpkin Patch" Jubilee Days, Craft Sales, Children's games, and ride etc. We started these events in 1997 to help raise funds for our future building which we reside in now.

Each Christmas and sometimes, at Easter, as well, our Chancel Choir gives us a wonderful Cantata and our Praise Team offers special music for these High Holy Days. On the Cantata Sunday Mrs. Nancy Fulford blesses the congregation by offering a "Sunday Christmas Brunch" to all from the Fulford family. She feels it is the Pastor's family way of giving back. There is usually "semi" cinnamon rolls, egg and sausage dishes, rolls, fruit salad and starbucks coffee. Mrs. Tiny Weimert has blessed us as well providing biscuits and jelly.

During the school season, Mrs. Ellen Zink has offered us on the last Sunday of the month our, "Java Jabber Hours." She, assisted by a few others, offers tons of cookies, coffee, and hot chocolate from 10:30 to 11:15 for fellowship and goodies.

Bob Wood, Jr. brought to our attention four years ago the great need we, as Christians, have to give to the mission needs of our world. Before this, Mrs. Flo Pohlman led us each year in many wonderful mission opportunities. Now we offer the congregation a "Faith Promise: that as we seek God to give us resources to mission, we will in turn give to him.

We now call this program, "Mission Promise." For the last few years, Mr. Al Martinez has led us in this endeavor. We support the Honduras Mission, African Mission, and Rural Missions in USA. We also, through our church giving, support the Gideon Ministry, Habitat for Humanity, and FCA mission. For 2008 our Mission Promise is \$50,000 plus. We also support all of our United Methodist Mission responsibilities at 100%. We gave \$30,000.00 plus to these missions in 2007.

We are so thankful for those that have worked so hard over the years to continue to fill service positions. We cannot even begin to express our appreciation for C.A. Dinkins, III who continues to serve our Lord faithfully as Treasurer.

Mr. Carrol Meredith continues to do an outstanding job in leading our Administrative Board as well as visiting our Administrative Committees to keep in touch with all the ministries of the church. Mr. Tom Laccone has truly helped bring us into the media age. His constant improvements and creative expertise in updating our web page keeping us abreast of the many activities at FUMC. ([www.sharinggodslight.com](http://www.sharinggodslight.com) You can find Tom, his wife Aprille, Carroll, (mentioned above) Howard Carpenter and many other volunteers, with their "hands on" ministry in our kitchen on Wednesday night.

Mrs. Linda Jones has accepted the Chair of our new Council on Ministry. They meet the 1st Tuesday evening of every month. This group involves all ministry Chairs. As we plan for the immediate future and long range goals, we have decided that all ministries will flow through this agency for direction and guidance. Their most recent endeavor was "March Madness" where we gave \$20.00 sack lunches to those who came the first two Sundays in March 2008 as guests not having a church home. "Great Success!"

In March of 2008 we started a new children's Sunday school at 11:00 a.m. Under our Superintendent, Mrs. Judy Capone, volunteers will staff this new and exciting ministry as we continue to grow and expand.

FUMC Dunnellon could not run like a finely tuned engine without those who continue to lead our day to day ministries and administrations for our church body. We are so thankful to have, for the past 4 1/2 years, Mrs. Lin Roosa as our part-time secretary. Many times she has become full-time to take care of the needs of our family. Her dear husband, Jerry, has also served faithfully as head of our trustees for 2 terms. Both of these individuals continue to encourage a deeper walk among our believers by signing up folks to go to the District "Walk to Emmaus."

Mrs. Grace Burks started as data entry clerk when we switched over to "all computer." Grace has basically become our bookkeeper and has done a wonderful job bringing us into the 21st century. Mrs. Sharon Gane continues, as she has for so many years, to connect all the many different dots of our church family. We all truly applaud her continued ministry to us as our Administrative Assistant. I have no idea where we would be without her creativity, inspiration, humor and true human kindness. As your pastor, let me say that I could not serve this great church without her in our church office.

My wife has given me a great inspiration, the possibility of all our leaders coming together, as much as possible, for a time of prayer and devotion. Starting July 1st. we are inviting all staff, members of CLOM, our Administrative Chairs, and Bible Study leaders to join. We believe this will enhance our vision of God for our personal lives and also the broader church. All are welcome to attend. We will call this program "The CAL" (Called Administrative Leaders). We will seek the Lord's vision for our church in the next few years. Our first meeting brought together thirty six leaders. PTL!

We are encouraging all of our leaders to connect their thoughts and visions on our Pastor's blog. This can be linked to our web page. Twelve areas our church offers in ministry as we begin our next five year plan:

- 1) Four weekly Worship experiences.
- 2) Mission service outside our facility.
- 3) Youth, children activities.
- 4) Baptisms.
- 5) Weddings.
- 6) Funeral and Memorial services.
- 7) Visiting in homes and hospitals.
- 8) Mid-week studies.
- 9) Family nights.
- 10) Facilities used by outside sources.
- 11) Place for individual talents to be nurtured.

12) Finances given to needs in our community and the world.

## “PAYING OFF OUR MORTGAGE”

**July 2013:** PTL, we burned the mortgage that we took out in 2003 for our twenty acres on west highway 40 to expand our facilities. We paid the twenty year loan off in ten years. That was absolutely amazing how our wonderful folks gave to this great ministry. Just a few years ago we bought an additional ten acres directly to the east of our property and adjacent to it.

**From July 2013 to July 2014**, our task force for expansion under the leadership of Elizabeth Letchworth met for 10 times and covered a vast array of our needs for the future. In the fall of 2014, small groups for planning and vision met with our pastor each Sunday and Monday. All together “139” persons shared their dreams and concerns. I am reminded of Psalm “139” which says that the Lord has a plan for us and will direct our paths.

**Starting in January 2015** our new “Building Committee” convened under our chairperson, Elizabeth Letchworth. They continue the task force desires plus the information we gathered from our small “Fall Group” visionary meetings. They will plan how our church can expand in the future with a “United Journey Center” and look into “Senior Living” on our property. 2015 will be a busy and exciting year!

**As I look back over the last decade**, let me mention a few of the Saints that have helped us build this foundation of mission/ministry to the Dunnellon area: 2010 gave us two amazing ministries—“Forget Me Not” adult care led by Grace Burks and Joey Weisbaum. A solid group of volunteers meet every Tuesday from 12:30 to 4:30. Services are offered to our community for respite and elder care. At the same time Amy Simpson assisted by charter leaders Tracy Baldeo and Crystal Bass brought to us “Harmony Preschool” and daycare.

**Our mission committee** over the last few years has done an outstanding work averaging over \$100,000.00 given yearly to missions above our budget. A special thanks of appreciation is given to an outstanding committee, each person leading in their own amazing way. Chairpersons were formerly Tony Matthews and currently Carol Stroup. Members presently are Al Martinez, Rick DuCharme, Lloyd Fisk, Sharon Gane, Sherry and Terry Roberts, Pat Martin, Bill Lyon and Roxanne Barnes.

**Over the years wonderful gifts** have been given to our congregation to enhance the property’s beauty. Most recently two young men, for their Eagle Scout project, blessed us tremendously. Ryan Rowles erected a flagpole outside the main sanctuary adjacent to the bell tower. Bricks were placed around it in honor or memory of someone. Sammuel Dillion built an “archway” to our prayer garden for his project. He also placed many wooden signs with a rustic look along the prayer wall. Each sign has an engraved Bible verse relating to the “outdoors.”

**We have been blessed** by Fred and Margaret Brookshier for their continued hard work in maintaining our “prayer walk.” They have also given us the “Bullywink” part of the prayer walk and a type of outdoor worship center with an airbrush portrait of Jesus walking on the water.

**Jim Bell** is an artist within our congregation who has done an amazing number of beautiful scenes of the Bible. He uses his skill of “marquetry” to unravel the popular stories of Jesus. His work can be seen in the sanctuary and narthex.

**We have also been thoroughly blessed** by the wonderful gift Mrs. Geneva Bernik and her family gave to us in our stained glass window in the chancel area. This work captures the “Last Supper.” When we moved from the 1975 sanctuary to the 2003 sanctuary, we used the same stained glass artist to move our window. He and his team added two new windows on the west and east side of the sanctuary and two in the chapel. Mrs. Ruth Riley surprised us by giving us some of the leftovers of broken stained “gold” glass from the 1903 sanctuary that she had kept. Our artist worked that glass into the stained glass of our entrance. Mrs. Bernik covered the cost of all of our “stained glass” endeavors.

**One of our offices in the administrative wing** was purchased by the Dinkins family and placed in honor of Maxie Lowe. Maxie was one of the outstanding leaders of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of our church. His biography and pictures are in the room on the wall. In our chapel one can be surprised to see an actual theological mistake in one of the stained glass windows. I will leave it up to you to locate it.

**Our chapel** has a beautiful small statue of an angel given by Mrs. Marsha Eisenmann. Marsha has also given us the knitted picture honoring our veterans. This is placed in the hallway leading to the dining area of our Friendship Hall. Many have placed pictures of their loved ones that are presently serving our country in the armed forces.

**The Stephen Ministries** came to our congregation in 2013 and continue to expand .We presently have four Stephen Leaders and fifteen Stephen Ministers. This program aids our pastoral ministry extremely well. Our four Stephen Leaders are: Liz Martynowski, Irene Brugh, Jane Peebles and Linda Hall.

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