

*Faithful Past,
Prayerful Present,
Promising Future*



**Some of the History of First United Methodist Church
Lawrence, Kansas**

1954 - 2004

**Compiled and written by the
Sesquicentennial Committee**

Contents

Preface	iii
Forward	iv
Senior Pastors of First Church	vi
Al Bramble 1952-1962	1
Charles Wesley Garrett 1962-1966	6
Ron Sundbye 1966-1974	9
Wayne Castle 1974-1976	30
Richard Johnson 1976-1983	32
Virgil Brady 1983-1999	40
Sharon Howell 1999-present	60
Conclusion – A Beginning	72
Chancel Cross	73
Happy Friends Adult Fellowship	75
United Child Development Center (UCDC)	78
Rowena Pine	80
Dan Abrahamson	81
The Russell Memorial Pipe Organ	82
Music	86
The Sesquicentennial Committee	90
Vista	92

Preface

First Church has been served by 38 different senior pastors in 39 pastorates in its 150 year history. Rev. Levin B. Dennis served for a few months in 1855 then returned for a one-year term in 1862. He is pictured twice in the gallery of senior pastors on the following pages. More than a third of the pastorates were prior to 1875. The longest pastorate has been Rev. Virgil Brady at sixteen years beginning in 1983. In our past 50 years First Church has been served by seven senior pastors and a multitude of associates, staff, and lay persons.

The pictures of senior pastors printed here are taken from digital photographs of the gallery of portraits on the walls near the church offices.

At the time of this writing there exists an excellent Web site about our first pastor, James Griffing, created and maintained by his Great Great Grandson, Bill Griffing, at www.griffingweb.com

A timeline of the seven senior pastors included in this history is shown here.

1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9	9	9	9	9	9	9
5	6	6	7	7	8	9
2	2	6	4	6	3	9
Bramble	Garrett	Sundbye	Castle	Johnson	Brady	Howell . . .

Forward

It is a thrill to take a family into the sanctuary for the first time. Its beauty literally takes their breath away. Most don't know whether to focus on the overall structure, the stained glass windows, the organ, the pews or the chancel cross suspended over the altar. It is a holy moment. Usually I find myself repeating Psalm 100:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

For 150 years the congregation of First United Methodist Church has been praising and blessing the Lord of all creation. Worship and music have been at the center of our thanksgiving. Discipleship has been our expression of God's love for our neighbors near and far

As you read this volume of our history, remember to say a thank you to the Sesquicentennial Committee for their two year commitment to this project. Jerry and Judy Niebaum have tirelessly led the committee and congregation into many celebrations. The writing and publishing of this volume of our history has been a joyful task and I am thankful for the Niebaums and the other committee members: Dan and Carol Abrahamson, Judy Dailey, Phil and Phoebe Godwin, Ruth Ann Paddock, Ken and Rowena Pine, Phil (deceased May, 2004) and Diane Stiles who have served with passion and a great love for this church.

As I write this forward I am celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of my ordination as an elder in the Kansas East Conference of the United Methodist Church. The three elders who participated in my ordination are all rejoicing in God's heavenly home. Their commitment to Christ's transforming love in the world is passed on to those they helped mentor in ministry.

It reminds me that the stories in this volume are another way of honoring those who have helped shape, mold and influence the mission and ministry of First Church over these last 50 years. It is a testimony to their faithfulness. Thanks be to God for each and every

pastor, staff person, member and participant who has walked all or a portion of their faith journey at First Church.

We are invited by God to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ and make faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. I believe that invitation calls First Church into a challenging and bold future!

Put on your walking shoes as your read and prepare for the next part of the journey.

Blessings,
H. Sharon Howell, Senior Pastor
November 2004

Senior Pastors of First United Methodist Church – Lawrence, Kansas



James S. Griffing
Nov. 1854–Aug. 1855



Levin Beauchamp Dennis
June 1855–Oct. 1855



Charles Hazeltin Lovejoy
Oct. 1855–April 1857



Ira Blackford
April 1857–April 1858



Jonas Dodge
Nov. 1858–Mar. 1859



Homer H. Moore
April 1859–Mar. 1861



Hugh Dunn Fisher
Mar. 1861–Sept. 1861



Thomas J. Ferrill
Sept. 1861–Mar. 1862



Levin B. Dennis
Mar. 1862–Mar. 1863



George W. Paddock
Mar. 1863–Mar. 1866



George Sullivan Dearborn
Mar. 1866–Mar. 1869



Robert Latimore Harford
Mar. 1869–Mar. 1872



William Kennedy Marshall
Mar. 1872–Mar. 1875



Sylvester B. Lloyd
Mar. 1875–Mar. 1877



Jephthah Howard Phillips
Mar. 1877–Oct. 1877



George W. Henning
Oct. 1877–Mar. 1879



Simon Peter Jacobs
Mar. 1879–Dec. 1879



William Jones
Feb. 1880–Mar. 1883



James Watkins Alderman
June 1883–Sept. 1885



James Marvin
Sept. 1885–Mar. 1891



Joseph Kendall Miller
Mar. 1891–Mar. 1895



J. Wilbur Somerville
Mar. 1895-Oct. 1899



Morris Bamford
Oct. 1899-Sept. 1903



Frank Lenig
Sept. 1903-Mar. 1907



Milton Emory Nethercutt
Mar. 1907-Oct. 1909



Henry Emerson Wolfe
Oct. 1909-Mar. 1915



Henry W. Hargett
Mar. 1915-Mar. 1918



Samuel Sylvester Klyne
Mar. 1918-Oct. 1922



Edward Hislop
Oct. 1922-Oct. 1928



Harry A. Gordon
Oct. 1928-Mar. 1931



Robert A. Hunt
Mar. 1931-May 1941



Oscar Ethan Allison
May 1941-June 1952



Albert F. Bramble
June 1952-June 1962



Charles Wesley Garrett
June 1962-June 1966



Ron Sundbye
June 1966-June 1974



Wayne Castile
June 1974-June 1976



Richard Johnson
June 1976-June 1983



Virgil Brady
June 1983-June 1999



H. Sharon Howell
June 1999-present

**Jesus said, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”
Simon replied, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”
Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.”**

John 21:16

Times for Growth
Al Bramble, 1952 – 1962
Charles Wesley Garrett, 1962 - 1966

From the August 29, 1951 “Church News” – “The Methodist Church is a world organization on which the sun never sets. In America it began in 1766 with the preaching of a Methodist Irishman, Philip Embury, in New York City. On December 24, 1784 some sixty Methodist preachers met in Baltimore for what is historically known as the Christmas Conference, and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. The blessing of God was on this venture and its success was immediate. Moving westward with the tides of immigration it reached Lawrence where this church was organized in 1854.”

The summer of 1952 marked the first time the national political conventions were televised live. In November of that year a Kansan, Dwight Eisenhower, with his running mate, Richard Nixon, were elected to the first of two terms as President and Vice President. The University of Kansas fall enrollment topped 6,000. The city of Lawrence had about 25,000 residents and plans were beginning for a celebration of the centennial of the birth of our city two years hence. Mary Patterson Clarke was completing her second history of First Church.

First Church had about 1200 members at the beginning of Al Bramble’s ministry. By fiscal year 1954 (June 1, 1953 through May 31, 1954) the general budget expenses had risen to \$31,410.16 while receipts were reported as \$30,391.81. Conference assessments that year were \$7,822.00. Total staff salaries were reported to be \$12,099.50. Contributions to the building fund, independent of the general budget, were \$25,504.84.



Al Bramble

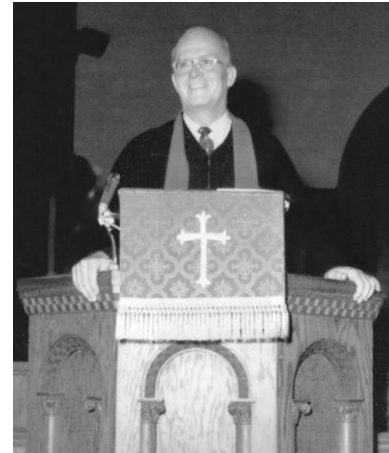
Born in 1913 Al Bramble grew up in the El Dorado, Kansas area where he graduated from high school in 1932 and community college in 1934. He completed a degree at Baker University in 1936 and went on to complete a theology degree at Boston University School of Theology in 1939.

Rev. Bramble served as pastor at Danvers, Massachusetts Methodist Church from 1940 to 1943. In Kansas he served Crawford County Larger Parish from 1944 to 1946, and at Parsons 1946 to 1952. He came to First Church in June 1952.

While Lawrence celebrated the Centennial of its founding in 1854, First Church celebrated “One Hundred Years of Methodism in Lawrence, Kansas 1854 to 1954.” The newsletter, “First Methodist Church Tower” of September 22, 1954 announced the centennial events this way. “As the Church Tower tells you, we’re 100 years old this year. So we’re celebrating our centennial with a special worship service at the 10:50 a.m. service next Sunday. Then in the afternoon, 2 p.m. at the church, an Open House and historical exhibit. At 3 p.m. an informal program at which former pastors and old friends will speak. Then at 4 p.m., our centennial tea. This is your party. We urge you to come and bring your friends.

It’s quite an achievement to celebrate 100 years of service in this community. We who live in the present and constitute the living church owe much to our forefathers. Not only have they passed on to us a building, a program, and an organization –but also a spirit, which, if we possess it, will enable us to serve the future as the past has served the present. A reading of history reveals a spirit guided by a great purpose, willing to sacrifice and dare for it, and devoted to the causes of that purpose. We know that purpose is God, known through Jesus Christ. If we, as the past, live for Him; completely devoted to His causes; willing to sacrifice and dare – then we will give to the future as we have received from the past.”

Former senior pastors Dr. Gordon Thompson, Dr. Robert Hunt, and Dr. O.E. Allison all participated in morning services on September 26 and spoke briefly at the “Historical Fellowship Service” in the afternoon. The title of Reverend Al’s morning sermon that day was “Past, Present, Future.” Church membership at that time was about 1400.



Rev. Bramble in First Church pulpit

The bulletin for the Centennial Sunday service included a 3-page history overview by Dr. Mary P. Clarke. Part of her writing included the following. “Throughout the years a number of people, nearly one hundred twenty-five, have gone out from this church or the University Student work affiliated with it, into full-time religious work as ministers, missionaries, deaconesses, Christian Association leaders, and teachers of religious education. Through personal contacts with these and others, and through numerous study groups we have much interest in the Church Around the World. In 1854 the eyes of the world were on Lawrence; in 1954 the eyes of Lawrence are on all the world.”

In October 1954 Rev. Bramble initiated Sunday evening Fellowship Services from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Recreation and cafeteria were 5-6:30 followed by age group meetings. “For adults, from 6:30-7:30 [there will be] a hymn sing and service. The Sr. MYF [Methodist Youth Fellowship] meets in Ecke Hall from 6 to 7:30 (Counselor, Irene Gutschenritter); the Jr. High MYF meets from 6:30 to 7:30 (Counselors Mr. & Mrs. J.W. Paddock); the Junior children meet with counselors Mr. & Mrs. R.L. Harris. And there is a nursery for the very young.” Under the leadership of Choir Director, Gerald Carney, and with the incentive of one-half hour University of Kansas credit for participation, the chancel choir grew to 77 members by

December 1954. There were 21 sopranos, 22 altos, 14 tenors, and 20 in the bass section. Choir rehearsal was each Tuesday at 7:10 p.m.

In January 1956 Al Bramble was joined by Associate Pastor, James J. Nabors, who had recently completed ministerial training at Vanderbilt University School of Religion. He had responsibility for the Youth Division as well as “general pastoral duties.”

By February 1956 the Methodist Men, led by Martin Jones as president, completed the construction of a library room above the Church Office. The room included a “beautiful set of shelves lining the north side made of mahogany and durably constructed.” Others working on the project were Harold Craig as chair of the library committee and Alan Fisher, Phillip White, and Olie Parsons.

In June 1956 First Church hosted the Centennial session of the Kansas Annual Conference. The church newsletter announced the event as follows:

“The Centennial session of the Kansas Annual Conference will meet at First Methodist, June 5-10, Bishop Dana Dawson presiding. The Conference begins with a Communion Service Tuesday afternoon of the 5th, at which our choir will sing.

One hundred years ago the Kansas-Nebraska Conference was organized in Lawrence. The historical significance of this event will be the theme of the service (open to the public) on Tuesday evening, at which Roy L. Smith will speak.

Roy L. Smith, widely known as one of the most effective speakers of Methodism, will be the preacher for the evening services at 7:45 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. These services, open to the public, will offer our people an unusual speaker with a great message.

Rev. Ron Meredith will be the speaker at the morning devotional services at 8:30 a.m., Wednesday through Saturday. He is a speaker you will not want to miss. Services open to the public.

Bishop Dana Dawson and Bishop Ivan Lee Holt will preach at the Sunday services on June 10. There will be two services; one at 9 a.m. with Bishop Dawson preaching and one at 11 a.m. with Bishop Holt preaching. The double services are provided to accommodate the anticipated attendance.

The business sessions of the Conference run each day from 9:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Visitors are welcome. Russell Mosser is the lay delegate representing our church.

The entertainment of the Conference is a tremendous responsibility for the local church. It calls for every member to give of his time and ability when called upon. Still, though a great task, it is a very rewarding experience. And when done we will be happy that it was our responsibility.”

Looking back a hundred years to Lawrence in October 1856 the Kansas-Nebraska Conference was organized. Bishop Osman C. Baker, for whom Baker University was later named, was the presiding officer. There were 13 names on the roll of that Conference

including Dennis, Lovejoy, Ferrill, and Griffing, all of whom served as pastors of First Church in its early years.

In December 1957 Nettie Wismer, Chairman of the Commission on Education, announced the resignation of Ruth Ann Paddock as Director of Children's Work. Ruth Ann had served in that position for about 3 years. In her announcement Miss Wismer said, "We shall miss Ruth Ann as Director of Children's Work. She has given faithful service. Much credit must be given to her for the marvelous growth and interest in the children's work of the Church School. Our wish is that she will find much happiness and joy in her chosen field (her home) and as layman in her church." She was replaced in February 1958 by Joanne Breyfogle, who joined the staff as Children's Worker.

Two new committees were formed in 1958, the Wills and Legacies Committee, which will "assist church members with any problems they may have in disposing of material goods for the benefit of local church ...," and a Committee on Christian Vocations. Also, in 1958 First Church began planning for a major facilities expansion of a new education building. In October co-chairs of the Fund Drive, Gerald Pearson and Karl Edwards, reported collections of \$47,000 from 150 persons. That same month the Church welcomed a new visitation pastor, Rev. Hjalmar Larson.

One of the interesting activities to grow out of the Keystone Sunday School class for young married couples was a square dancing group. Helen Edwards said that in the fall of 1959 she and her husband, Karl, volunteered to help with their recreation program and suggested square dancing as an activity. "Karl purchased a few records and decided to try his luck at calling. The group seemed to make good progress and to enjoy dancing, so his interest grew and he decided to continue. His first public dance was a benefit to raise funds for the Church building program in the spring of 1960. The Barn Dancers Square Dance Club grew from this start and lasted many years."

In 1960 to make way for a new education wing Smith Wrecking was hired to demolish a brick building North of the church. That same year Rowena Pine was employed as a Lay Visitor with compensation set at \$1.50 per hour not to exceed 30 hours per week.

Late in 1960 preliminary plans for a new education wing were approved and First Church launched a new Building Fund Drive to last from December 1960 through November 1963 with a goal of \$175,000. The Church School moved into the new building in April 1962.



In 1961 Mabel Whited, formerly director of the Wesley Community Center in Dallas, TX was hired as Christian Education Director at an annual salary of \$400 per month. In 1963 Bonnie Miller replaced her as Director of Christian Education at a salary of \$6,000 per year.

Following his pastorate at First Church, Rev. Bramble served as district superintendent of the Independence District of the Kansas East Conference from 1952 to 1968, and maintained a special services relationship to the conference while working at the Kansas Office on Aging from 1969 until his retirement in 1977.

After retirement, he helped to establish the Kansas Silver-Haired Legislature serving as its president from 1984 to 1986. He also helped to establish the Warm Hearts in Lawrence, a program for heating assistance to those in financial need. He received a Substantial Citizen Award from Lawrence Kiwanis Club in 1984, and was selected as the 1986 Distinguished Older Kansan at the 11th Annual Governor's Conference on Aging. Al participated in the Senior Olympics in 1989 and 1991, placing second at nationals in 1989 in tennis.



**Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Al Bramble
[probably in Chicago in the mid-1960's]**

In 1962 John F. Kennedy was in his second year as President. Tensions were high between the United States and the Soviet Union. In June Charles Wesley Garrett replaced Al Bramble as senior pastor at First Church.



Charles Wesley Garrett

Dr. Garrett came to Lawrence after serving a pastorate in Chanute, Kansas. Prior to that he served the Grace Methodist Church in Winfield, and churches in Texas and New York State. A native of Texas, he received his seminary training at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, and received undergraduate and graduate degrees from Southern Methodist University. His doctorate is from New York University.

While in Lawrence, Garrett served in 1963-64 as secretary of the local Ministerial Alliance and in 1965-66 as its president. He also served a years term as secretary of the Lawrence Council of Churches. His responsibilities in the Methodist Church have included being chairman of the Committee on Family Life of the Board of Education of the Kansas Conference, Chairman of Leadership Education for Higher Education for the State of Kansas, Chairman of the Inter Conference Commission on Higher Education for Kansas. He was a member of the Kiwanis service club.



Rev. Garrett in 1963

In July 1962 First Church mortgaged “parsonage number two” at 1421 W. 21st St. Terrace for the sum of \$7,000 to be used to remodel the parsonage at 1527 Massachusetts for the Garrett family. Rev. Garrett’s annual salary was set at \$8,000 with an \$800 expense allotment.

Trinity Methodist Church, a new church in East Lawrence, was beginning its birth. First Church began seeking ways to help this new congregation. It was reported that Sunday School attendance at the new church was in the “60 to 70” range with church attendance at 20 to 30 each Sunday. Architectural drawings for a 150 member church were being prepared and Trinity was planning a fund drive for September 1962. First Church offered use of our church facilities on October 14 for a planning meeting for Trinity with the other three Methodist churches in Lawrence to help ascertain possible membership for the new church. E. J. Allison presided at the meeting. In 1963 Trinity contracted for the construction of their church for about \$46,000 with plans for completion by Christmas. In spite of support for the new church by First Church and others in Lawrence the Trinity congregation dissolved in ????

In November 1962 the Official Board heard a report from Dr. William Moore, Dean of the Kansas School of Religion, who presented plans for development of the School. Dean Moore noted that the University of Kansas cannot directly support the program, but has encouraged the expansion of the School and accepts up to 25 semester hours of credit toward the completion of University of Kansas degree programs.

A January 1963 Fellowship Supper was attended by 82 persons. The programs “consisted of slides and commentary by Professor and Mrs. Tiedman, recently returned from teaching in Japan. Rev. and Mrs. Ingram Yoder, missionaries in South America, will present the program at the February 4 Fellowship Supper.”

At the January 23, 1962 Official Board meeting “Charles Arthur called attention to the forces being mobilized to alter Kansas legislation relative to the sale of liquor. He noted our special concern for the many young people in our community by reason of the University, expressed confidence in the legislative leadership with respect to this matter, and urged support for the continuation of the present Kansas program of regulation of the sale of liquor.”

The July 1963 minutes of the Official Board reported simply “that a new organist, Mr. Dan Abrahamson, had been hired by the Music Committee.” At the same Board meeting it was reported that “Methodists along with Catholics, Jews, and others are moving to help in the construction of the new building of the Kansas School of Religion, which will be built on the present site of Myers Hall. ... There are more Methodist students at KU than at all three of the Methodist Colleges in Kansas consequently we should support the School of Religion at KU.” First Church expected to contribute about \$500 for the year, but that was later lowered to \$250 because funds were not available.

In 1964 at the request of organist, Dan Abrahamson, and with the support of the music committee the church authorized a renovation of the Russell organ at an estimated cost of \$3350. Considering that this was equivalent to nearly a half years salary of the senior pastor at that time this was quite a commitment to music ministry for First Church.

In response to recommendations by the Commission on Christian Social Concerns in the summer of 1964 the Official Board adopted the use of the following statement on equal opportunity in housing developed by the United Church Women of Lawrence:

“I believe that God created each human being in His own image and that He expects each man to respond with concern for every other human being. Discrimination is contrary to my faith and contrary to democracy. Realizing that some people are suffering and being humiliated because of their color or ancestry, I believe it is necessary to me to make my own faith known.

I believe that discrimination in housing opportunities is inconsistent with the principles of a free society, and that every person of good character, regardless of race, religion, or national origin has the right to rent, buy, or build a home which he can afford in our community.

I will accept as a neighbor any law-abiding, responsible person moving into my own neighborhood, and I will not practice racial, religious, or ethnic discrimination when I am involved in a real estate transaction.”

SIGNATURE _____
ADDRESS _____
TELEPHONE _____

Times of Tumult
Ron Sundbye, 1966 - 1974

In 1966 our country was heavily engaged in the Viet Nam war. Emotions about our involvement in that conflict ran high on both sides. President Lyndon Johnson was midway through his first elected term as President. Racial tensions were high in many parts of the country, including Lawrence. In eloquent speeches throughout the country the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others spoke of racial injustice.

In June 1966 Rev. Ron Sundbye, at the age of 34, entered the pulpit of First Church for the first time, beginning an extraordinary and tumultuous pastorate of eight years. His first sermon title was "While We Are Waiting."



Ron Sundbye

Ron Sundbye was born in Olathe, Kansas on September 15, 1931. His parents were Clifford and Lucille (Moll) Sundbye. He attended the University of Kansas and Baker University, graduating in 1953 with a B.A. in Speech and Dramatics. He received his Bachelor of Divinity Degree from Boston University School of Theology in 1956. On returning to Kansas he served a three-year pastorate at Moran, and seven years at Countryside United Methodist in Topeka. At Countryside membership grew from 300 to 1600 during his tenure and a new sanctuary was constructed. At the time he came to First Church his four children ranged in ages from 6 months to 8 years.

Rev. Sundbye was serving on the Board of Evangelism of the Kansas Conference, had just finished a term as president of the Ministerial Alliance of Topeka, and was a member of the Board of Directors of the Shawnee County Mental Health Association at the time he moved to Lawrence. By October he was elected to the Douglas County Mental Health Association.

In 1966 he had a reputation as a popular and dynamic preacher. The Baker Orange campus paper of Baker University on November 1966 reported:

"Rev. Ronald Sundbye, minister of the First Methodist Church in Lawrence, will be the guest preacher at All-University Worship tomorrow at 9:45 a.m. in the Baldwin Methodist Church.

Rev. Sundbye, returning to the campus after an enthusiastically received appearance last year, will speak on the topic, 'Stop the World, I Want To Get On!'

Since coming to the First Methodist Church in June, he has had to schedule three Sunday morning services instead of two in order to accommodate the overflow congregation."

Rev. Sundbye was guest speaker for the Union Thanksgiving Service of 1966 at First Presbyterian Church. The following spring he delivered baccalaureate sermons at Pittsburg State Teacher's College and at Lawrence and Chapman High Schools. He gave commencement addresses in Burlington, Eudora, and Tonganoxie.



Certificate of becoming an Elder of The Methodist Church

This certification is used for all Methodist Ministers as part of ordination. The above certificate reads as follows:

“Know all men by these presents, that I, Dana Dawson, one of the Bishops of The Methodist Church, under the protection of Almighty God and with a single eye to His glory by the imposition of my hands and prayer (being assisted by the Elders present) have this day set apart Ronald Lee Sundbye for the office of an Elder in the said Methodist Church, a man who, in the judgment of the Kansas Annual Conference, is well qualified for that work; and he is hereby recommended to all whom it may concern as a proper person to administer the Sacraments and Ordinances and to Feed the Flock of Christ so long as his spirit and practice are such as become the Gospel of Christ and he continueth to hold fast the form of sound words according to the established doctrines of the Gospel. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of my office this tenth day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and fifty-six. Done at Lawrence, Kansas. Dana Dawson”

In his first year at First Church attendance tripled and included more than a thousand students from the University of Kansas each Sunday. In addition to 3 Sunday morning services a closed circuit television system, loaned by First Methodist Church of Topeka, was installed to serve more than 200 persons in rooms other than the sanctuary.

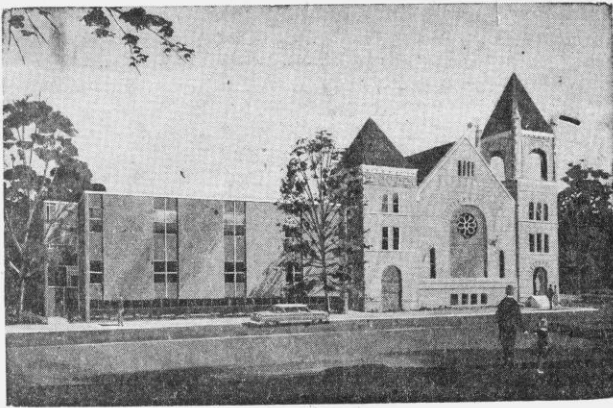
Other First Church staff members were getting recognition as well as noted in the Church newsletter. "Methodist kindergartners around the country read a story in their story paper written by our staff member, Bonnie Miller, Director of Christian Education. It was entitled, 'The Flowers Appear on the Earth.' We are fortunate to have her on our staff. Her talents and training combine to make her one of the outstanding educators in our denomination." Most of the newsletter articles such as this gave no attribution to the author, but many were written by Rev. Sundbye and others by church staff.

In October 1966 a former member of First Methodist Church, residing in another state, sent a check for \$4,000 for "some unbudgeted items." At the specific request of the donor, the money was used for new choir robes for the Chancel and Angelus Choirs, 2 pianos for the church school, and an IBM electric typewriter for the church office.

October also saw the beginnings of a weekday nursery school "operating with a full enrollment of 48 children in three classes." The following year a joint committee of the Commissions on Education and Outreach was investigating initiation of a full-time day care center at First United Methodist. This day care would run 5 days a week. In September 1968 the United Child Care Center opened with 15 children enrolled. The Center employed Mrs. Judith Bencivengo as both director and teacher with Mrs. Anita Martin as the second head teacher and Mrs. Zella Myer as cook. These were the beginnings of the very successful United Child Day Care (UCDC) program.

The January 31, 1967 First Church newsletter reported that several families in our church were participating in a special program of friendship with the Methodist students at Haskell. "These families 'adopt' two or three students for a year, having them in their home or taking them to some event from time to time and remembering them on special occasions."

In late Spring 1967 arrangements were made to hold First Church Easter services at Hoch Auditorium at 11 a.m. in addition to regular services in the sanctuary at 8:15 a.m. Rev. Sundbye's sermon for the services was titled 'For Christ's Sake.'



FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

946 Vermont

Worship with us each Sunday as we attempt to make an ancient faith relevant to 20th century conditions.

Rev. Ronald L. Sundbye, minister, came to the church last year after a seven year ministry at the Countryside Methodist Church in Topeka. He is a graduate of Baker University and the Boston University School of Theology. During the last year, many students and faculty have worshipped with us. We invite you to our services.

SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning Wqrship, 8:15, 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.
 Church School, 9:20 and 10:50 a.m.
 Teen Action Group (Sr. High), 7-8:30 p.m.
 Junior Youth Fellowship, 5-7 p.m.
 Campus Wesley Foundation
 Sunday Evening Program
 5-7 p.m., dinner included (50c)
 1314 Oread
 Tuesday 9:30 p.m. Worship

Rev. R. Dennis Bowers, associate minister, is a former newspaperman and a graduate of Kansas University. He is a graduate of Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, N.J.

Rev. Thomas Rehorn, Jr. is the director of the Wesley Foundation. He is a graduate of Baker University and the Iliff School of Theology in Denver.

"It is not for us to fortell the day, but the day will come when men will be called to utter the Word of God in such a way that the world is changed and renewed. There will be a new language, perhaps quite unreligious, but liberating and saving, like the language of Jesus, so that men are horrified at it, and yet conquered by its power . . ."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Advertisement in the Lawrence Journal World in 1967

July 25, 1967

"NEXUS was picked as the name of the church newsletter. No, the word is not Greek or Hebrew, but English meaning the 'tie, the link, the Interconnection.' We hope it will be just that, a link of communications between members of First Church. We thank all those who sent in names for our newsletter."

In July 1967 Rev. Dennis Bowers was appointed Associate Minister to First Church after becoming an ordained elder at the concluding session of Annual Conference. Dennis was a native of Kansas City, KS, and a graduate of Kansas University and Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, NJ. His degree from KU was in Journalism and he served for two years on the editorial staff of the Kansas City Star before leaving for seminary. While in seminary he served as part-time asst. minister at Chatham UMC. His work with youth was the subject of an article in the March issue of Together Magazine. On June 17 Dennis Bowers married Nell Shuman at Trinity UMC in Kansas City. After a trip to the Jamaica Islands, they returned to Lawrence where Rev. Bowers assumed his pastoral duties on July 1. Nell was a full-time student at the university.

Under the ministry of Dennis Bowers big changes were in store for the youth program of first church and they began to happen almost immediately on his arrival.

June 1967 NEXUS

“The MYF is about to undergo some changes during the rest of the fall to prepare for a totally new approach to youth fellowship activities in the fall. With the assistance of Mr. & Mrs. Peters and Rev. Bowers, the youth group, which numbers about 23 active members, hopes to expand both program and membership. The first signs of this “new approach” has already taken place in the MYF’s sponsoring of ‘Thing #1’ and their hope of sponsoring a bi-weekly dance for all Lawrence teenagers in Ecke Hall. These planning times are being called ‘TEEN ACTIONS sessions.’”

July 25, 1967 NEXUS

“TAG [Teen Action Group] replaces MYF [Methodist Youth Fellowship] as the Church-sponsored youth group. Attendance is up 300%. The MYF voted itself out of existence at their meeting Sunday, July 16. The action made way for the birth of a new church-sponsored youth group know as “Teen Action Group”. The action was in keeping with a trend in modern church youth programs to de-emphasize the denominational emphasis of the group because it tends to limit the ministry of the group. The new group is planning a whole series of programs for the rest of the summer. They have asked the church to allow them to sponsor a teenage dance for all Lawrence High School students to be run by TAG members with adult supervision.”

By late summer a plea was made that “Adult help is needed to transform Ecke Hall for TAG activities. Men with electrical training and carpentry are needed. Also someone with artistic talent is needed to paint a mural on the wall of Ecke.”

August 1967 NEXUS

“The ‘Thirsty Ear’ teen dance attracted about 325 youth to Ecke Hall. Eight adult couples chaperoned the dance, which is now being promoted by eight other churches in Lawrence and the recreation commission. Not one ‘incident’ occurred during the entire evening. Enough profit was gained from selling of ID cards to begin three of TAG service projects immediately”

October 24, 1967 NEXUS

“Thirty members of the TAG group leave Thursday for a 3-day work project in the inner city in Kansas City. They will be involved in several Methodist and community sponsored projects, from tutoring and visitation to physical labor and working with other teenagers.”

November 14, 1967 NEXUS

“The head of youth work of the General Board of Education of The Methodist Church and the person responsible for youth work for the World Council of Churches have written letters of inquiry about the positive steps taken in youth

work here at First. One of our young people has been invited to present one of five papers at the National Convention of Christian Educators to be held in Dallas in February. So you see- the churches that are willing to flounder a bit and take some time to work out some kinks are the ones that might, in the long run, be the forerunners in the reformation.”

Ron Sundbye.

The First Church TAG program began to attract regional and national attention. It was covered at length in the Sunday magazine supplement of January 28, 1968 of the Topeka Capital-Journal cover article titled, “THE TURNED ON TEENS.” The article records that there are “approximately 85 Lawrence High School participants.” In his article Dick Russell writes: “In an era when American youth is often berated for draft dodging, pot-smoking, and generally not caring, these Lawrence students have come up with a unique interdenominational youth group. It is based on action and involvement – not only inter-city and community involvement but inter-personal relationships as well.” He goes on to say that, “Ironically, the TAG slogan is straight out of hippie-land: ‘Don’t get so hung up on your hang-ups that you can’t do your own thing.’ But ‘doing their own thing’ means more than rebellion to this group.” Russell concludes with this observation that, “TAG has brought renewed individuality and a feeling of accomplishment to a group of teenagers that might otherwise be lost in a clique-dominated, mass society.”

February 12, 1968 NEXUS

“Ron Casteel, a member of First Methodist and president of TAG, left Monday for Dallas where he will be the only teenager to present a paper at the National Convention of Christian Educators. The paper presents the TAG philosophy as a possible prototype for churches of other denominations

July 9, 1968 NEXUS

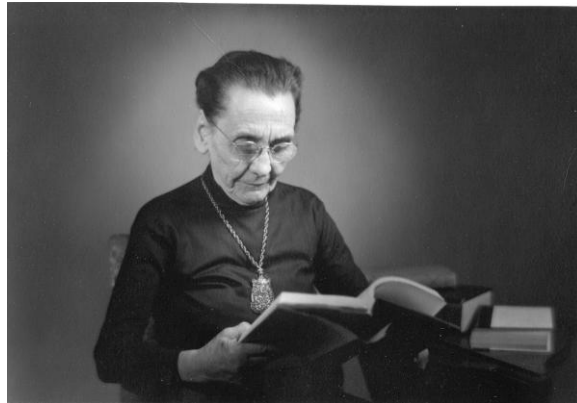
“Our youth program is at a very critical stage right now. It has grown rapidly during the last year to the point that at present we have nearly 50 youth waiting to participate in the program. It is unfortunate that even after several appeals, only two persons from the entire church have offered to help with the youth program. Please, if you have some time to work with the youth, even if you feel unqualified, call Rev. Bowers. Your services are needed.”

In July Rev. Bowers made another appeal noting that, “It is unfortunate that even after several appeals, only two persons from the entire church have offered to help with the youth program.”

February 12, 1968 NEXUS

“Miss Bessie Daum has found it necessary to retire as church librarian after many years of devoted loyal service. On behalf of the entire congregation, a genuine “thank you” is expressed. The library has grown under her supervision and the many selections she has made have been varied and well chosen. She has spent many hours cataloging and the records are in excellent shape. A successor will be named soon by the Commission on Education. The

Church Library will be known as Bessie Daum Library. A citation and expression of appreciation from the board has been sent to Miss Daum along with the information of the board's decision to name the library in her honor."



Bessie Daum

Merger became a reality for the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church in April 1968. After years of study and planning the Uniting Conference for the United Methodist Church was held in the Memorial auditorium in Dallas, TX. The following Ministers and laymen represented Kansas Conferences:

C Moyer, Floyd Coffman, Mrs. Barton Dean, Charles S. Scott, Albert F. Bramble, Clare J. Hayes, Don W. Holter, and Roger E. Biddle.

In July 1968 the former EUB and Methodist Churches of the Kansas East Conference were formally joined in an uniting conference on July 31 at Baker University in a service titled, 'The Act of Union.' Bishop Paul W. Milhouse of Kansas City, MO, bishop of this area for the former EUB church, presided and Bishop Stowe of the Methodist Conference spoke. An interpretative dance group of Lawrence First Church, directed by Mrs. Robert Shelton, performed.

In October 1968 with the unification of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren denominations, the women's groups in the churches were reorganized and each local society re-chartered. The charter service called a "Service of Celebration," was planned by Mrs. Monte Pearson with Mrs. Leroy Dutt serving as the leader. Mrs. Clyde Woods served as new president of the Women's Society, replacing Mrs. J.D. Sheppard who moved to Texas. Following the charter service, a business meeting and fellowship hour was held in Fellowship Hall.

In November 1968 two historical banners were hung in the sanctuary made especially for the formal uniting conference of the EUB and Methodist denominations in Kansas last summer. The orange banner on the south depicted the history of the EUB denomination. The women from the First Methodist and Central Methodist in Lawrence who made them were Mrs. James Stoner, Mrs. Glenn Kappelman, Mrs. Richard Garrett, Mrs. Orvel Durham, Mrs. Ott Gather and Mrs. Elmer Pippert.

November 12, 1968 NEXUS

“In conjunction with the Commission on Membership and Evangelism, Teen Action Group will begin this Sunday to provide home-made rolls for the first all church coffee, to be held after each of the three services. Since most of these coffees will coincide with new members Sundays, it will provide a time to come meet new members. The youth are hoping many members of the congregation will want to order rolls on a regular monthly basis. Profits will go towards TAG service projects such as the African orphan, which they support, and their annual trip.”

In late December 1968 Rev. Sundbye entered Menorah Hospital in Kansas City where he stayed for several days recovering from physical exhaustion. It was an early warning of serious medical problems that would arise again later. The church newsletter offered the following on December 31, 1968:

“Most of us forget that ministers are human though no one has tried harder to convey this humanness than he [Rev. Sundbye] has.

Many pressures have weighed upon Rev. Sundbye’s heart and mind these past few months and he was in dire need of complete quiet and rest. He is planning on leaving the hospital tomorrow. He will meet his counseling appointments for this week unless you are called specifically with different information. He probably will not return to the pulpit before February 2nd.”

In the following series of letters to First Church congregation over the next few weeks Ron Sundbye would reveal more of himself and his own personal problems in a very public forum:

January 7, 1969 NEXUS

“I cannot tell you how much your cards and notes are meaning to me. They make receiving mail a pure joy. Thank you most sincerely.

As I said on Sunday, it will no longer be possible for me to preach three services. We have canceled the 8:30 service effective immediately. Let me repeat the two suggestions I made to those of you who have preferred that service. First, I know some of you like it because you do not like the large crowd at 11. If you go to Sunday school, you have to attend that service. My suggestions are that you talk this over in your classes and see if they could meet at 11. That would free you to attend the 9:30 service. Second, I know that some of you prefer the more traditional forms of worship. I would be willing to find preachers for an 8:30 service if enough of you feel this way. Please drop me a line, letting me know what your wishes are, and I will cooperate as much as possible to provide a service, which you find meaningful.

My recovery is a bit too slow for my impatient nature. I still find that I tire very rapidly and so I am going to have to work at a very limited pace this

month. I want to be completely well by February, and I know that depends largely on how sensible I approach things now.”

January 19, 1969 NEXUS

“Because a minister’s life is open to very little privacy I felt it best that I be the one to tell you that my wife and I have reached the decision to terminate our marriage. This comes after 16 years of frustration and unhappiness for both of us. We have sought to preserve the union by using every kind of professional counseling. Our decision comes only because all efforts to find happiness together have failed.

The adjustment that lies ahead of me is going to be difficult, and it will be helpful to be with friends and people I know. This situation presents you with the unique opportunity to “minister to the minister.” I need you now far more badly than you need me. Perhaps this can be a very strengthening experience for you.

I give you my word there is no scandal: there is no other woman, no other man. The situation is one of gross incompatibility. We have weighed heaviest the interests of our four children, and we truly feel they will be better off without a marriage that produces nothing but tensions and strains.

I ask that you not judge us. Let me remind you again of the Indian prayer: “Great Spirit, let me not judge my brother until I have walked in his moccasins for two weeks.” You have not lived through this marriage, and it is therefore not possible for you to make judgments as to whether we have made the best decision. That decision was ours to make and it is now ours to live with. I ask, as I have so many times, for your continuing love and support as we go on in this church to make Christ’s word vital and profound for the people of this century.”

In spite of his problems he continued to lead the church in innovative new directions of worship and service. On January 29, 1969 Rev. Sundbye returned to the pulpit. The service was the first in a series of four utilizing popular and folk artists. His first was based on the music of Simon and Garfunkel with a focus on “Bridge Over Troubled Water.”

Nita Sundbye Sewell offers the following about Rev. Sundbye’s methods:

“One of Ron’s innovations was his annual ‘sermon at the piano.’ He wove songs into his sermon outline that illustrated or supported the ideas and feelings he wanted to communicate. Then he sat at the piano to deliver the sermon, playing and singing the songs when they appeared in his outline. The songs were usually contemporary music that did not appear in the church hymnal.

For renewal and inspiration he made an annual vacation pilgrimage to New York City where he spent two weeks attending all the recent Broadway plays. He absorbed the human emotions and conflicts in the newest dramas for

potential use in his sermons. He also bought recordings of the musicals so he would have the lyrics and music for possible use at church services.”

February 4, 1969 NEXUS

“It is very, very good to be back on the job again. My month of rest was badly needed but enough is enough. I am still going to take it slow for awhile, as the last thing I want to encounter is a setback. I will be in the office several hours a day and am again available for appointments.

I hope you will participate in the experimental services we are having during February. As I stated last Sunday, no one insists you like the new music we are using. We ask only that you come with an open mind and hear what is being said through the songs.”

February 9, 1969 NEXUS

“A former professor of mine once said that the two most neglected words in the English language are thank you. I don’t want to neglect those words any longer. Thank you for the many acts of thoughtfulness you are performing to make this difficult time in my life easier. The cards and letters continue to arrive daily and how I welcome each one of them. I have also been very grateful for the dinner invitations that have been extended to my son and me. These are particularly welcomed, as we are not the best cooks in the world. ...

I also want to thank those of you who are entering into the experimental services this month with a spirit of openness. I realize that the music represents a sharp change and change is always painful. However, I feel those kinds of experiments are necessary now if we are to meet the future with relevant forms of worship. I hope none of you think such experiments are going on in our church alone. They are being conducted in churches of every denomination all across the country.”

March 18, 1969 NEXUS

“One of the things we have tried hardest to achieve this year has been to develop services and programs that enable us to become a ‘servant church.’ We are trying to be sensitive to the needs of our community and to serve those needs when we can. There has been a wonderful response from many persons in the congregation. This response has enabled us to provide volunteer workers for many social agencies in the city.

Probably our biggest undertaking has been the establishment of a Child Care Center. We now have an enrollment of thirty, and most of the children come from low-income families receiving government assistance. The Center makes it possible for children to receive professional care while their mothers work. The service goes beyond baby-sitting. There is a very creative effort to help ready them for Kindergarten and to provide them with skills they would not achieve without help from outside the home. The parents pay a fee of \$17.50

per week and the Dept. of Health Education and Welfare pays \$3 per day for each day the child attends.

Some of the most important work a church accomplishes does not show and easily goes unnoticed. Those of us on the staff are constantly searching for new ways in which we can efficiently minister to real needs. We are deeply grateful to those of you who are helping and hope others will enlist themselves in worthwhile service projects”

In April 1969 the Administrative Board, a new title brought about by unification with the EUB church, passed “several important resolutions” exhibited here:

“Charles Saunders, Chairman of First United Methodist Committee to investigate possibilities of low cost housing in Lawrence, reported on the general plan and development to date of the proposed Michigan Street low-income housing project. He then moved that the Board approve the following statement: “The Administrative Board of the First United Methodist Church of Lawrence, Kansas hereby requests that it be approved as a co-sponsor for the proposed Michigan Street low-income housing project (Section 236 of the National Housing Act.). The motion was seconded by J.J. Wilson and unanimously approved by voice vote of members present.”

“Rev. Sundbye discussed some current developments in the area of Ministerial Assignments and suggested it would be in order for the Board to issue a statement pertaining thereto. It was moved by Warren Bell and seconded by Gerald Pearson that the following resolution be adopted: ‘We resolve that the Administrative Board of First United Methodist Church of Lawrence would not refuse to accept a ministerial appointment on the basis of race or color.’ Motion carried unanimously.”

In May of 1969 the death of Charles B. Russell was reported in the church newsletter. “Our church will always be most grateful for our lovely pipe organ given in 1938 by Mr. Russell and his brother, Lloyd Russell, as a memorial to their parents, Mr. & Mrs. J.B. Russell.”

In June 1969 Rev. Stuart Herrick replaced Dennis Bowers as Associate Pastor. Stuart was a native of Minnesota and a recent graduate of the St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. He held a degree in psychology from Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa. While in seminary, he served as a student intern for the Methodist Inner City Parish in Kansas City where he was a community organizer with such groups as welfare rights, public housing and community-based model cities planning organizations. He also served the College Heights United Methodist Church as part-time student director of the senior high group.

Also, in June 1969 Mr. Hubert Carson replaced David Bezona as choir director. Mr. Carson held a Bachelor of Science degree in music education from McMurry College in Abilene, Texas and a master’s in music education from North Texas University. He also held a bachelor’s degree of arts from Texas Technological College and a master’s in Spanish and was working on a Ph.D. in Spanish at KU. He had been director of high school band and

choir in Throckmorton, Texas; director of Christian Education and Minister of Music in several Methodist churches in Kansas City. Mrs. Carson, Ann, had served as director of the South Junior High School orchestra the prior year.

October 26, 1969 NEXUS

The youth committee of our church has recently been reorganized with Mr. Jim Welborn as the new chairman. It also now numbers among its members an equal number of youth and adults. They are: Mike Sutton, Cheryl Allison representing the Junior High groups; Diane Miller, Marty Wiley and Barbara Boozer representing the Senior High groups and Betty Kappelman, Janet Mody and Allen Vick. Bonnie Miller and Stuart Herrick are staff representatives.

In a church brochure prepared during this time the staff were shown as:

THE CHURCH STAFF	
Minister	Rev. Ronald L. Sundbye
Associate Minister	Rev. R. Dennis Bowers
Director of Christian Education	Miss Bonnie Miller
Director of Evangelism	Mrs. Kenneth Pine
Director of Chancel and Chapel Choirs.	David Bezona
Director of Angelus Choir	Mrs. Duane Knos
Organist	Dan Abrahamson
Secretary	Mrs. Cloyd Ingerson
Assistant Secretary	Mrs. Phil Stiles
Custodian	Wilbur Ray
Lay Leader.	Joe Wilson
Official Board Chairman	Dr. Carl Knox
Trustee Chairman	L. Martin Jones
Commission Chairmen:	
Education	Warren Bell
Finance	Gerald Pearson
Outreach	Glenn Kappelman
Worship	Rev. Ronald L. Sundbye
Membership and Evangelism.	Phil Brown

November 11, 1969 NEXUS

“I would like to use my space this week to explain an important phase of our ministry at FUMC and to thank some of those who volunteer time to make it possible. That is our calling ministry. Each month, a group of men who compose what is called the “Fishermen’s Club” call in the homes of newcomers in our community. They are Bob Wright, Chairman; Warren Boozer, Jim Henry, Nelson Kueger, George Brenner, Clyde Woods, Bob Candlin, Fred Shaw, Dick Ailor, Don Cooper and John Wakeman. The Commission on Membership and Evangelism coordinates their work. It is through their efforts that we find persons interested in uniting with the fellowship of our church.

Each month, Mrs. Pine, who serves on the staff as Parish Visitor, visits in the homes of our shut-ins. She also provides Christmas Luncheons each December for these persons, and on Holy Thursday each year, she and I take communion to their homes. Mrs. Pine also does a great deal of visitation among newcomers.”

Thursday, November 6th, 110 high school youth danced, listened, talked, and day-dreamed to the sounds and lights of the “Joint Offering”, a band of seven senior high students. Sponsored by the Teen Action Group (T.A.G.), the occasion was the reopening of the Thirsty Ear – the third floor of Ecke Hall – for a teen dance. Fifteen adult sponsors, two personnel from the Lawrence Department of Public Safety, and eight youth workers helped to make the evening a smoothly operating success.

1970 was another eventful year for Ron Sundbye both personally and professionally. His reputation as a preacher continued to draw large congregations and regional attention. The Kansas City Star Magazine ran an extensive article about First Church and its senior minister titled “It’s Standing Room Only at Reverend Sundbye’s Place by Ivan G. Goodman. In his article Mr. Goodman writes:

“Driving into Lawrence on a miserable rainy morning not long ago, we feared the weather would keep churchgoers home, thereby ruining any photographic possibilities. But we arrived to find the familiar lengthy lines filing into the church. And despite the elements the place was filled to its 900 capacity for the 11 o’clock service. (An earlier service draws largely townspeople, while the latter is made up primarily of University of Kansas students). ...

Indicating his awareness that students do not generally have much money to spare, the minister made a small joke about the paucity in the plate on an earlier morning, and then he went on to introduce Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Moore [now U.S. Representative from Kansas Third District], a young couple who performed a folk rendition of ‘Help’ a John Lennon-Paul McCartney song. ...

The favored course of this spiritual and intellectual banquet is a sermon of relevance. And unqualified frankness. ‘The church has sold out and violated its mission in this world. For we have turned our backs on the people in hell, and there is our mission.’ Those are the words of Mr. Sundbye, ordained Methodist minister.

‘Every rose has its roots in the dirt,’ is the theme of his ‘Midnight Cowboy’ sermon, in which he finds the moving power of love lifting the souls of Ratso and Joe. ...”

The article also describes some of the financial problems created for the church with expanding programs and declining revenues. “And in fact, not too many years ago the First Methodist functioned on a \$50,000 annual budget. It stands now at \$100,000.” Some of the more traditional Methodist members and larger contributors had left the church.

On May 10, 1970 occurred a singular event in the history of First Church. It was reported in the Lawrence Journal World the following day:

Blacks Interrupt Church Service to Demand \$75,000

“‘Lawrence has one of the most viciously racist power structures that exist in this country.’

On this alleged basis, 10 to 12 black men interrupted late Sunday morning services at the First United Methodist Church, 10th and Vermont, and demanded \$75,000 for Lawrence’s 3,000 black residents.”

In his letter to the congregation the following week Rev. Sundbye described the incident this way:

“You probably have heard by now that a group of black men interrupted the 11 o’clock service Sunday and read a manifesto asking for \$75,000 to aid blacks in the Lawrence community. I was totally unprepared for them and had no knowledge that they were coming. To say I was completely surprised, however, would be untrue. This has occurred in many churches. The men who came to our church represented the Coordinating Committee for the Black Community, and Mr. Bryce Rivers, the chairman of that committee, read the manifesto. The document ends with the following sentence: “We will return at this time next week for your answer.” I have notified Bishop Stowe and Rev. Neal Hiatt, our District Superintendent about the situation. Three meetings are planned this week to discuss this matter. The first is an open forum for all members and friends of the church to express their views and offer suggestions. We will read the manifesto again so those of you who were not here will know its content. The second meeting will be a meeting of the Executive Committee. The third will be a meeting of the Administrative Board.

Being Christian has NEVER been easy. Let us not run from our difficulties. Let us face them bravely and together.”

Rev. Sundbye described the response to the ‘Black Manifesto’ in two subsequent letters.

May 19, 1970

“First, I want to thank all of you who gave extensively of your time last week to help us work through to an answer for the Committee for the Black

Community in order to have it ready on Sunday. According to the newspaper, it was not acceptable to them, but I have not been given a copy of their reply. At any rate, we have made our answer and will proceed now to be honest about it.

The Executive Committee will meet to form a committee of six representatives from the church to discover how we can help meet needs in all of the minority communities and to formulate administrative procedures for implementing that help. Those who want to give to the CCBC may leave their checks in the office and we will see that they are forwarded. After the 11 o service this Sunday, there will be an informal discussion in Fellowship Hall to glean any ideas any of you may have which might prove helpful to the newly formed committee.”

September 29, 1970

A detailed proposal concerning the restructuring of the Teen Lounge as a recreation center open weekday afternoons and Saturdays was passed at the last meeting of the Commission on Education. The general purpose of the Lounge is to provide well-designed programming for youth who need a place to go to establish sound relationships with adults and young adults who are interested in relating to them on both a personal and an activity level. Copies of the proposal are available in the north hallway on the sermon table. It is vital to the youth who use this service to have a wide variety of people with whom to identify. It is therefore crucial that church adults volunteer to serve as a Lounge Sponsor. Details of what this would involve can be obtained from either me or Sally Hoffman of the Youth Committee.

Cordially,
Stuart Herrick

October 6, 1970

The Teen Lounge project is making rapid strides in staff development. Approximately 20 KU young adults have volunteered to work weekday afternoons and Saturdays. The tentative opening date is October 14th. On Tuesday, the 13th there will be an extensive orientation session for the entire staff to prepare them for the highlights and responsibilities of supervising the Lounge activities.

October 13, 1970

Next Sunday evening, two new youth groups will be initiated. The one for Junior Highs will meet in Ecke Hall from 7:00 to 8:30. The sponsors are Mr. and Mrs. Benji Wyatt. The Senior High group will be sponsored by Rev.

Sundbye, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Young, Maribeth Blich and Steve Langhofer and will meet at the Parsonage at 7:00 p.m.

The Teen Lounge will open on this Saturday the 17th and will be open from 1 to 5 and 7 to 11. Weekday hours are 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The chaperones had a 6 hour orientation session on Tuesday of this week.

October 19, 1970

“The Committee of six [Charles Saunders, Russell Mosser, Lee Lohrenz, Norman Yetman, Nancy Bengel and Carmen Cabrero]. worked long and hard all summer to come up with suggestions as to ways we can provide help for minority groups in this city. Their final recommendation is for \$10,000 to be divided three ways:

St. Luke’s AME Church: \$3,000

This is one of the oldest Black institutions in Lawrence. Needs are very great. They lack critical facilities and supplies.

Concerned Black Parents \$3,000

This will help a new organization composed of responsible, concerned parents from the Black community initiate programs they feel will effect the well being of our entire city.

Education: \$4,000

The largest sum of money is reserved for programs to help people learn skills and trades through which they could secure better jobs.

Because of budget problems two staff positions will be eliminated. These include the Associate Pastor and one full-time secretary. There is money for additional help but only on a part-time basis. This decision becomes effective Dec. 31 for the secretary and May 31 for our Associate.”

October 6, 1970- --from REPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD

“It was voted that the United Child Care Center be asked to contribute \$50 per month to help pay for utilities.

It was reported that at the last Trustees meeting they approved a policy that there will be no smoking in the church.”

In early summer 1970 Nita Wyatt, Professor of Education at the University of Kansas, and Rev. Ron Sundbye announced their engagement. Their wedding on August 9, 1970 was held in First Church sanctuary with Rev. Neal Malicky, dean of the college at Baker University, officiating. Among the wedding participants were Dan and Carol Abrahamson and Dennis Moore [now U.S. Congressman].



The Wedding of Nita Wyatt and Ron Sundbye – August 9, 1970

In August 1972 after ten years as Director of Christian Education, Bonnie Miller resigned to accept a position with the UMC of Nichols Hills in Oklahoma City.

The death of Edwin Price in 1972 marked the end of a long and distinguished career of service. It was reported in the church newsletter as follows:

November 22, 1972

“Our church was saddened this week by the death of Dr. Edwin Price. He spent most of his adult life as director of the Wesley Foundation at KU. He touched thousands of young lives in his ministry there. He served on our staff as part-time Financial Secretary and deeply enriched the ministry of our church. His loving way of dealing with people gave him a special place in many hearts. He helped me in many ways, and I truly feel I have lost a very good friend.

-Ron Sundbye”

Rev. Price's family donated the library of Rev. Price to the church and it was dedicated on November 6, 1974. The Library Committee "wishes to announce that Rev. Price's library is now ready for your use." For a while his library was cataloged as a separate unit from the main library. This was a temporary arrangement to afford members "an opportunity to browse through and to check out books from his collection before it is incorporated into the main library at a later date." Hilda Koehler and Pam Joyce were credited with "cataloging this great collection."

Mr. & Mrs. Allen Vick and the United Methodist Women donated the picture of Dr. and Mrs. Price, shown here.



Lena and Edwin Price

January 9, 1973

"The first meeting of the Planning and Steering Committee for the formation of the new women's unit, United Methodist Women, will be held Sunday, January 14, at 10:30 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. The committee includes 5 women from Wesleyan Service Guild, 6 from Women's Society of Christian Service, and 6 church members not currently holding membership in either group. A permanent chair and secretary will be elected during this meeting."

June 19, 1974

"A memorial service will be held in our sanctuary at 3 p.m. on June 23 for Lena Price. The family will be in Fellowship Hall to meet friends after the service. Mrs. Price died in Jonesboro, Arkansas, June 11 after a long illness. In lieu of flowers the family requests memorial contributions to the Chapel Fund."

During Ron Sundbye's era there were numerous support staff changes due in part to the transient nature of student population experienced in college towns. Rowena Pine became a full-time staff member as Director of Evangelism in 1966. Rev. Dennis Maack was hired as part-time minister responsible for the teen lounge and for the ACT and TAG youth groups. In 1970 Mrs. Zella Ingerson resigned to move to Nebraska after serving 16 years as church secretary. She was replaced by Sonia Rodriguez, a native of Chile. She had previously been office supervisor in the northern part of Chili for forty-five Peace Corp workers. In 1972 she moved to Chicago and was replaced by Karen Gordon. Other secretarial staff mentioned in church notes included Rozana Leak, Carolyn Gaddis, Janet Vaughan, and Maxine Bascom. Bob Brotsman was custodian.

Memorial gifts to the church during Ron Sundbye's pastorate included a \$10,000 gift to FUMC by Grace Emmett in memory of her husband, Mr. L.H. Emmett. The money was used to buy new carpeting for the sanctuary, new entrance doors on tenth street and renovation of the south and west halls. Donald Roberts, presented four altar frontals, with liturgical colors appropriate to the church year, in memory of his mother, Mrs. Clara Roberts. A new sound system in the sanctuary was purchased and installed with money given by the estate of Mrs. Cynthia Mock. Two banners in memory of Ron Casteel were donated by the Casteel family.

The last few years of Ron Sundbye's pastorate at First Church were marred by periods of illness as he struggled with his manic-depressive disorder. The Church at that time had limited support mechanisms for pastors with such an illness. Church leaders struggled to find ways to help with little success. In the Spring of 1974 the Staff-Parish Relations Committee asked the church conference to reassign Rev. Sundbye to another church.

Of those times Nita Sundbye Sewell writes the following:

“He asked the conference for a sabbatical leave to complete a Master's degree in Speech Communication and Human Relations (SCHR) at KU. His goal was to be a speech teacher at a junior college. He finished the Master's degree in October of 1975. When he finished, there were no jobs available in the junior colleges unless the applicant had a doctoral degree. He was accepted into the doctoral program in SCHR and completed most of the coursework required. When he got to the statistics course, he dropped out of the program.

He then asked the conference to give him another church assignment. They sent him to Meriden, Kansas, a church in a small country town north of Topeka similar to the Moran church at which Ron had begun his career many years earlier. He left that church in January of 1979 after a stay of about a year. It was a mismatch from the beginning.”

April 30, 1974 NEXUS

“A reception for Nita and Ron Sundbye will be held after the worship service on Sunday, May 19 in Fellowship Hall. Members of UMW will be hostesses. This will be an opportunity for all of us to show appreciation for Ron's eight years of ministry, which have enriched the lives of all of us. His last Sunday in the pulpit will be May 26, before taking his sabbatical to study at KU.”

This marked the end of an extraordinary and tumultuous period for First Church. It had been both energizing and agonizing.

At the invitation of Rev. Virgil Brady, Ron did return to First Church as guest preacher one Sunday in August 1990. In an oral history taken in 2002 Nita Sundbye Sewell recalled that Ron agonized over whether his sermon had been good enough on that occasion. As a member of the congregation that day hearing Rev. Sundbye for the first time, this author found it to be inspiring.

Ron Sundbye died suddenly of a heart attack on September 14, 1994, one day before his 63rd birthday. Funeral services were held at First Church with Rev. Virgil Brady officiating. Ron and Nita had been married 24 years at the time of his death.

The following are remarks given by Ron Sundbye's sister, Jean Sundbye Hines, at the memorial service on September 17, 1994:

“Ron was remarkable in his career as a Methodist minister in achieving in such a short time what many take years to accomplish. He was truly gifted in his ability to preach to people about meaningful, real issues in their lives, and was able to touch the lives of young and old alike.

I took great comfort and inspiration the other night, listening to some of the sermons he had recorded when he was in his prime, and was struck by how prophetic some of his comments were regarding life's adversities and the meaning of love, given the adversities he lived with in his later years. I have ached remembering the Ron I grew up with and seeing the Ron who endured so much pain and suffering. It is true that it sometimes takes more courage to live than to die and Ron's courage surpassed the limits. I want to remember his courage.

I have two hopes today: one is that we can all remember Ron when he was able to live life to its fullest and secondly that he has found peace.”



Caricature of Ron Sundbye done at Disneyland

Times for Decision
Wayne Castle, 1974 - 1976
Richard "Dick" Johnson, 1976 - 1983

In the spring of 1974 Rev. Ron Sundbye decided to take sabbatical from the ministry and return to studies at the University of Kansas. On April 9, 1974 it was reported that Bishop Dixon had appointed Rev. Wayne Castle to replace him in June, the traditional time for Methodist pastor changes.



Wayne Castle

Wayne Castle, a native of Holton, Kansas, attended Baker University and later graduated from Kansas State University. His Master of Divinity degree was from St. Paul's School of Theology in Kansas City. Prior to joining First Church he served pastorates in Tecumseh, Topeka First Church (as associate), Kansas City (Kansas) Central Avenue, and Hiawatha. His first Sunday at Lawrence FUMC was June 16, 1974.

One very significant development during Wayne's ministry was the creation in the fall of 1975 of the Happy Friends class "for adults with special needs" led by Lynette Rapp, Millie Peters, and Carol Abrahamson. This class for mentally challenged adults has been an integral part of our church program now for more than 25 years. Dedicated leadership for it is still provided by Carol Abrahamson. In announcing the new class on September 10, 1975 the church newsletter article said, "We are excited about this fellowship and hope our entire congregation will support it in every way possible."

A church newsletter of July 1974 asks, "Where did we get the beautiful silver chalices and flagon used in our communion service a week ago? Answer: There were used in the German Methodist Church until it disbanded in 1918 and then were given to the keeping of Mrs. Augusta Schaake, who presented them to our church."

Early in 1975 Rev. Castle announced to the congregation that he and his wife of 13 years were separating and that he had moved out of the parsonage at 1527 Massachusetts. This followed the very difficult separation and divorce of his predecessor in ministry, Ron Sundbye. In his public announcement to the congregation in February 1975 Wayne Castle wrote, "Through this type of announcement you may be pained to know what I have known about myself for a long time, and that is my own humanness. I sometimes think that I should be without problems and difficulties, and when I have them, to be able to solve them easily. But it is not that way. And you at this time have to share with me in that human frailty. But rather than to apologize for what I cannot be, nor in any rational way expect myself to be, let us face the reality of what is, and work in every way possible to celebrate whatever joy and beauty can be found in life."

In March 1976 Wayne announced that he had requested to be assigned to a new pastorate and would be moving to Wichita to serve the West Heights United Methodist Church. He wrote, "Although my ministry here has been brief, and in many ways difficult, the relationships that

I have developed with you are extremely meaningful and important to me. To leave these working relationships and friendships is a hard thing to do. ...Thanks for your cooperation in the past two years, and may you give the same kind of support to your new pastor, the Reverend Richard Johnson, who will be coming to serve with you in June. I am personally pleased with his appointment to this church. He has been a friend for a number of years, and I know that he will effectively serve this church as pastor.”



Marking the bicentennial of our country in 1976, celebrations were held throughout the year, but Independence Day was the high point. Gerald Ford was President with Nelson A. Rockefeller as his appointed Vice President. Ford was the first person to become President without having been elected President or Vice President. The summer political campaign and fall election pitted Gerald Ford against Jimmy Carter.

At the age of 56 Dick Johnson entered service as senior pastor at First Church just prior to the July celebrations. July 4, 1976 was on Sunday and church members were invited to dress in costume of colonial times. There was only one service that day and Dick came in costume as John Wesley.



Ken and Rowena Pine in costume - 1976



Richard "Dick" Johnson

Dick Johnson was born in Rockford, Illinois on November 28, 1919. He attended public schools in Rockford and from there went on to earn an A.B. degree from Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin, in the midst of World War II in 1942. Well before graduation in February 1941 he married Gladys M. Eliason. At the time of this writing they have just celebrated their 62nd anniversary of marriage.

Dick earned his Bachelor of Divinity degree from Drew University School of Theology in Madison, New Jersey, and went from there to serve as missionary to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic for the next 12 years. In 1959 he returned from missionary work to a mission of a new kind as campus minister at Kansas State College of Pittsburg (now Pittsburg State University), where he served for 7 years. Following pastorates in Fort Scott and Yates Center he became Superintendent of the Parsons District, a position he held for 5 years until 1976 when he came to Lawrence.

In May 1976 First Church purchased a parsonage at 3507 W. 5th Terrace into which the Johnsons moved in early June. Rev. Dick Johnson delivered his first FUMC sermon titled "The Needle Points North" on Sunday, June 8. The church held "Hello" sessions following each of the two Sunday services for members to "come to the back of the sanctuary to greet the Johnsons and have some punch and cookies with your fellowship worshipers." The Membership and Evangelism Commission held a series of neighborhood get-togethers with about 20 members each invited to meet the new minister.

In the fall of Dick Johnson's first year of ministry at First Church our choir director, Hubert Carson, died unexpectedly. Writing about his death in the church newsletter in March 1977 Dick wrote:

"Beginning May 1 Don Frueh will be our Director of Choral Music, and we believe he will be a stimulating and helpful influence on the life of our congregation. I can't help but remember our shock and grief when Hubert Carson died so suddenly, and I also want to share my real amazement at the way in which Ann Carson [his wife] took over for Hubert and has led the choir through a difficult time of transition so beautifully. Her courage and skill have been a real witness to all of us as we have been led in worship by a superbly disciplined and responsive choir director under her leadership. I know that you will want to thank Ann for this ministry which she has performed."



Special men's chorus in 1977

In November of that year the

“Worship Commission announces that the friends and family of Hubert Carson, our former choir director, have purchased a new seven-foot grand piano for the sanctuary. This will be dedicated on the anniversary of his death, Nov. 20, the Sunday before Thanksgiving. We want to express our appreciation to the many participants and would like to give those of you who have not contributed one final opportunity to be a part of this memorial. There is still a balance to be paid on the piano – the Carson family will take care of any amount remaining at the end of this month. Ann Carson, Dan Abrahamson, and Robert Vaughan have tried out many instruments in the Lawrence, Topeka, Kansas City area and have chosen the one they feel is the best for our situation. A piano of this quality was the dream of Hubert during his ministry here. It is a marvelous tribute to his work and his place in our Christian community to have this dream come true. Praise the Lord!”

In reflecting on his first half-year at First Church in January 1977 Dick wrote:

“Looking back on 1976, one thing that jumps out of the records at me is the work of volunteers in our church. There is no way to calculate the number of persons and hours contributed in twelve months. Teachers, leaders, counselors, ushers, greeters, choir members are the first to come to mind because they are highly visible. Then we have people who give a number of hours every week to the keeping of financial records, attendance records, library circulation and records, calling on membership prospects and shut-ins, keeping small children involved in meaningful activity during worship, changing altar cloths and paraments, getting flowers for the altar, making and sorting name tags, getting others to volunteer for jobs, making meals, cookies,

and refreshments, painting, plumbing, and repairing. Need I go on? A hearty thanks to every volunteer from us all...but, best of all, we know you do it because it is an offering of love.”

Like the congregation that Dick Johnson inherited, Lawrence was growing. City boundaries continued their march westward and there was talk of a new Methodist church for west Lawrence. There were fears that a new church “out west” might dilute the size of the congregation of the downtown church. Even though First Church had been a fixture in downtown Lawrence since its beginnings in 1854, discussion began about the future of our church and its location. Parking was and is a perennial problem for downtown churches. During the week the churches compete with business customers, and on Sundays the churches compete with each other for parking space. The education wing built in the early 1960s was used to capacity and choices for further expansion on the existing site were very limited. The adjacent Ecke Building, which had been church property for several decades, was in need of renovation.

After about a year of discussion and deliberation a long range planning committee, chaired by Russ Mosser, made their report to the Annual Charge Conference in December 1977. The committee assignment included the following:

“The Long Range Planning Committee is charged with examining the goals of First United Methodist Church, with evaluating the resources of the church – both human and physical, and with bringing recommendations to the Administrative Board as to ways to achieve these goals.” Other members on this committee were Gerald Pearson, Joanne Wise, Ruth Ann Paddock, Jack Porter, and Dick Johnson.

Observations in the committee report included these:

“First, there is a definite feeling that it is time for the Church to remove itself from the position of landlord. The [Ecke] building continually requires repairs and in its present arrangement does not serve the needs of the congregation. Our present physical plant has many problems. It is expensive to maintain and will become increasingly so with the cost of energy continuing to rise. We have great need for a large assembly room that can be utilized for church gatherings other than worship. We need adequate kitchen facilities to serve our needs. Present church office space is badly organized and makes for inefficient staff operation. Unfortunately, the educational building was not properly designed to permit adaptation for changing programs. When we consider the costs of building additional facilities on land we have, remodeling as best we can the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall, it seems a very difficult and unrewarding project, with the result largely a make-shift solution after a great deal of effort and money has been expended.

...We believe there is a need for an active, vigorous church, designed to serve the congregation of the next 20 to 30 years. We recognize that there will be the need of a Methodist Church somewhere in the southwest or west area of this community. We know that the bulk of our present congregation now resides in this area and with the contemplated growth many more members

and potential members will live in this part of Lawrence. We believe that the same amount of money can be better utilized in building a new church plant designed for the needs of tomorrow, than trying to renovate a church plant which means a great deal to all of us, but has outlived its day. We have not explored specifics, but believe it is the consensus that we would recommend building a very functional kind of facility, hopefully well planned for serving immediate needs, but designed in such a way that it would be flexible for the future. It certainly should be designed to be energy efficient, and we hope that it would be beautiful but avoid falling in the category of an 'edifice complex.' We believe this congregation is capable of accomplishing such a project—in fact, it may need such a challenge to serve us all.”

The controversial recommendation from the committee read as follows:

“After long study and debate the Long Range Planning Committee of First United Methodist Church recommends to the Administrative Board that the Ecke-Merwin Building be sold and funds be re-invested immediately in land, with the goal of re-locating First United Methodist Church. The [committee] vote was unanimous.”

The committee’s recommendation was not well received by a large segment of the congregation. Following several weeks of meetings and intense discussion our church held a Church Conference on March 29, 1978 to act on the decision of the committee.

Writing about that conference the following week Dick Johnson observed that

“I learned some things from last week’s special Church Conference on the future of our congregation. First, I found out that many people really care what happens to their church, including some who could not be at the meeting and others who made heroic efforts to get their views incorporated into the decision by registering their opinions early. Second, I discovered that the two-month process of study and discussion has been a valuable and helpful experience for many people who needed to sort out the facts before they felt they could make a decision. Third, I found that such an emotionally charged subject could be discussed and voted on in an atmosphere of calm openness. Thanks to all who helped make that possible.

Congratulations to the LRP Committee, who had to take some abuse, answer countless questions, spend extra hours and days of meetings and who felt very lonely a few times since January. Now they have been given some direction to continue the process of looking ahead for our church by a decision made, through the vote of an overwhelming majority, to stay in our present location and to keep our property for the use of the church. Again, the committee has asked for input from you; give it to them – help them. There is much we need to do to make our property a fit instrument to carry out the mission God has given us in downtown Lawrence. We’ll need everyone’s help – and that means moral support, time and talent, leadership and money. Our church has been strengthened and renewed by this experience and I thank God for it.”

In January 1980 the church reaffirmed intent to sell the Ecke-Merwin building. Subsequently, in April 1980 the Board of Trustees approved the sale of the building to Thompson Furniture Company for \$150,000 with \$25,000 down and monthly installments for a period of five years. The following April 1981 a fund raising program was begun “for the purpose of building renovation, energy efficiency, and new construction.” A building committee recommended a goal of \$800,000 to \$1,000,000. By September the church had received pledges from 172 giving units totaling \$176,000.

In October 1981 while the Johnsons were on vacation in Asheville, North Carolina, Dick suffered a heart attack. The following month he wrote: “It is good to be home again. I am on a schedule of gradually increasing physical activity (just walking indoors now), and after next week I’ll have a better idea of what the doctor says I’ll be able to do and when. Meanwhile, your continued love, prayers, and support have made me highly motivated to get well soon.” Dick returned to our pulpit on December 13, 1981.

Even in Dick’s absence the work on plans for building renovation continued, and a charge conference on December 7, 1981 approved sanctuary renovations and other improvements estimated to cost about \$235,000. The plans included removal of the balcony in the sanctuary and creation of a Youth Lounge to be located in the space where the balcony had been. Other improvements included rebuilding of the organ console for \$31,213 and the covering of the Sanctuary stained glass windows with Lexon for \$36,955.

In addition to the grand piano in our sanctuary there were other memorial gifts during Dick Johnson’s tenure. The church newsletter records in November 1976 that

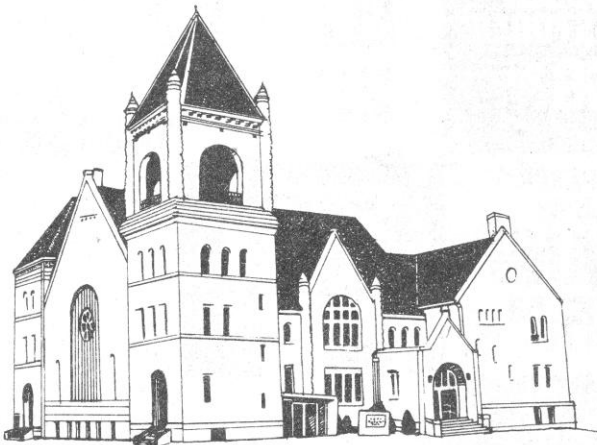
“The ‘symbolic guiding light of God in times of darkness’ has finally brought to pass a long time dream of Eleanor Gilchrist with the night lighting of our beautiful rose window. Drive by the West Side after dusk and see it. Thanks to the interest and expertise of John Kohl, besides the time-controlled lighting of the rose window, we also have the badly needed lighting of the altar and choir area. Gerald Pearson is treasurer of the effort to raise funds for the project, which is sponsored by the Adult Fellowship Class and approved by the Trustees.”

The following year with a memorial established in memory of Faye Orelup the organ chimes were rebuilt “with a new activator mechanism.” Recognition of the memorial included “specially selected music to demonstrate their use in enhancing our worship” played by Dan Abrahamson.

Family tragedy for church members, Gary and Nancy Bjorge, when their 6-year old son, Benjamin, was struck and killed by a car on Kasold, led to another memorial gift in late 1982. “On Sunday, Dec. 19th at 11 o’clock we had the privilege of dedicating another octave of handbells in memory of Benjamin Bjorge. This gift was made possible by the many people who contributed memorial gifts and by the Bjorge family. This new octave of bells, comprising the six largest and the six smallest bells, makes our three octaves complete for a total of thirty-seven bells.”

Don Frueh was Director of Music for about two years until 1979. Don was employed by Reuter Organ Company and had been a director for a Presbyterian Church in Topeka. The church newsletter reported that he is "leaving to go back to California..." He was replaced by Phil and Pat Orlando [now Pat Lorenz]. The newsletter reported that "Phil is a doctoral candidate in Choral Conducting at KU and he has had a great deal of experience in the field, both in church and school music. Pat will be involved with him; working with the children's choirs, and Phil will lead the youth choir."

Music is Alive and Glorious
at
First United Methodist Church



HODIE ('This Day') A Christmas Contata

CONDUCTOR—Philip Michael Orlando
ORGANIST—Daniel Abrahamson
SOLOISTS—Norman Yetman, Orville Voth, John Clyatt,
Carol Abrahamson, Diana Ice, Martha Ice,
Mona Hargadine, Janice Hough, Eric Shank

CHANCEL CHOIR, YOUTH CHOIR, ANGELUS CHOIR, CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Sunday, December 16th at 8:45 and 11:00 a.m.
CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE — Dec. 24 at 7:00 p.m.
A Service of Scripture and Choral Music

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC—Philip Michael Orlando
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S CHOIR—Patricia K. Orlando
ORGANIST—Daniel Abrahamson
ACCOMPANISTS—Diana Ice, Children's Choirs, Margaret Sanford, Youth Choir

First United Methodist Church

946 Vermont Pastor, Richard Johnson, Assoc. Pastor, Robert Kendall
The Public Is Invited To Attend

12/15/79

Advertisement in the Lawrence Journal World on December 15, 1979

The

newspaper ad here is shown slightly smaller than the ad as it appeared in the paper. After completing his doctoral program at KU, Phil left in 1982 and was replaced by a member of the choir, Professor Perry White of the Department of Music Education at KU. Perry had a Ph.D. in Choral Literature and directed one of the choral ensembles at KU. Patricia Sink was appointed Director of youth choir and bell choirs. She held Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the University of North Carolina and was a doctoral candidate in Music Education at KU.

From 1978 through the rest of his pastorate at First Church, Dick was assisted by Rev. Robert B. Kendall, who “was just old enough to take the retired relation with the Annual Conference. . . His work will be in the areas of pastoral work of all kinds, worship and Christian Education.”

Dick was a strong proponent for equal rights for women and also a bit of a prophet for women in clergy. In a church newsletter of March 9, 1981 he wrote: “Recently, our Charge Conference recommended one of our members, Beverly Streightiff, for Candidacy Studies for Ordained Ministry. Right now, Shelley Saferite, a Baker University senior, is doing special work in our congregation, under the guidance of the staff, to implement her future plans for ordained ministry. She is a UM pastor’s daughter. I am Supervising Pastor for Candidacy Studies in the Ottawa District, and have just seen one of my candidates, Jan Rhind, be accepted by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry as a Certified Candidate. I am also ready to present another candidate, Cynthia Meyer, to her District Committee in April. Women in Theological School are a greater percentage of the student body than before, reaching a third in many cases. What does this mean for the church? I think it means good things, and in jest I might add that since we have always had more women in churches with male pastors, maybe we shall finally get more males into churches with female pastors. Join me in encouraging the people God calls for ordained ministry, women and men.”

Later that same year he wrote: “Rowena Pine will be consecrated Diaconal Minister by Bishop Oliphint at the ordination and consecration service on Wednesday. She has fulfilled all the requirements, and she will now join the ranks of a few people who are so distinguished. Diaconal Ministry is not ordination, with emphasis on the preaching; rather it is concerned with the sacramental work of working with people in many different areas. Rowena has chosen Evangelism, and her work with prospective members, the aged and infirm, concern for fellowship activities in the church, being a friend and counselor are now to be given a final touch of recognition, and authorization she has not had before. I know you want to join me in congratulating her and wishing her well.”

After seven years and at the age of 63 Rev. Dick Johnson did not move into retirement. Instead, he was assigned to a new pastorate. In April 1983 a special Charge Conference was held to “authorize the sale of the present parsonage; income from this sale would be used to provide a housing allowance for the new pastor, Virgil Brady, who prefers to live in his own house.”

In his final departing pastor's letter on May 24, 1983 to the First Church congregation Dick wrote:

“Gladys and I have been literally overwhelmed by your conversations, calls, notes and cards to express your feelings about our leaving. Last Sunday's dinner after the 11 o'clock service was an event we shall remember for a long time to come; so many people, so much food, and so much fun. We wish we had a videotape of the skits, especially the legitimizing of our 42-year-old marriage by a ceremony in Swedish. Thanks to all of you for the generous gifts; they will help us to remember our good years with you. One of the good things about our United Methodist system is the passing of the torch from one pastor to another, and as of June 6th, Virgil Brady will have assumed his new role, and I shall be Senior Pastor at St. Mark's [Overland Park], with no interim period of uncertainty. Although I shall always be your friend, as of that date I shall no longer be your pastor, and I know that you will find ways to welcome Virgil and enable him and his family to feel at home. Grace and Peace to you all; we didn't really know how much we love you until now.”

Times for Building
Virgil Brady, 1983 - 1999

In 1983 Ronald Reagan was in his third year as President with George Bush as Vice President. The University of Kansas enrollment was at 24,400 and the city of Lawrence boasted at least 52,738 residents [1980 census]. First Church membership was at 1374 and the annual operating budget was nearly \$200,000.

In the Spring of 1983 the District Superintendent decided to move Rev. Virgil Brady to First Church, Lawrence. Staff-Parish had not requested a change, as Rev. Dick Johnson had served us very well and he was well liked. None of the Staff-Parish knew Virgil and wanted some review of his preaching style. They requested volunteers from the Staff-Parish committee. Committee members, Marceil Laupee and Judy Niebaum, agreed to visit Indian Heights Methodist Church on a Sunday morning with their husbands, George and Jerry. Jerry writes, "After the service members of the congregation greeted us warmly, asking where we were from and how we happened to be there. We were a little coy in responding when suddenly one of them had a realization of why we might be there. She was immediately and deeply saddened. Rev. Brady had served them well for 9 years." With a very positive report from the scout team the District Superintendent proceeded with the appointment.

According to church secretary, Diane Stiles, forty-three year old Virgil Brady came into the church office for the first time as Senior Pastor of First Church declaring, "Boy, are we going to have fun!" With a winning smile and devoted energy Rev. Brady began a pastorate of sixteen years, the longest in First Church history to date.



Virgil Brady

Virgil Brady was born in Kansas City, Kansas, but spent his boyhood mostly in Leavenworth and Independence. As the son of a Methodist Minister the Brady's moved many times as Virgil was growing up. He graduated from Highland Park High School in Topeka in 1957 and then accepted a basketball scholarship at Wichita State University. Virgil excelled at basketball and was the starting guard all three years of eligibility under coach, Ralph Miller. While at Wichita State, Virgil met Elaine Woodman, a varsity cheerleader from Wichita. Elaine and Virgil married in 1962 and at this writing have celebrated their 42nd wedding anniversary.

Following in the footsteps of his father and older brother, Merris, Virgil was led to ministry in the Methodist Church. He attended Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, graduating in 1964. His first church appointment was at Tecumseh Methodist 1964-68 followed by six years at Grace United Methodist Church in Winfield. Before coming to Lawrence he served as Senior Pastor at Indian Heights Methodist in Overland Park from 1974-83.

Although by his own admission he was a reluctant fund raiser, Rev. Virgil Brady was destined to lead First Church in four consecutive successful 3-year capital fund drives without negatively impacting the general operating budget, a truly remarkable accomplishment! In 1999 when Virgil retired, the annual operating budget was nearly

\$700,000 an increase of a half million dollars per year in his 16 years as pastor. The four capital campaigns would eventually raise more than \$2.4 million.

At the beginning of the first campaign in his pastor's letter of February 18, 1985 Virgil writes:

“The spirit and direction of our church was reflected at the recent Administrative Board's discussion and unanimous approval of an approximately \$1 million building/renovation project. There were, in my judgment, several reasons for approving such an ambitious program:

- 1) ‘Fellowship’ –the building committee and architect's concept will ‘open up’ the facility, especially the area north of the sanctuary.
- 2) ‘Full accessibility’ is planned (elevator and ramp) for elderly and handicapped.
- 3) ‘Stewardship’ – attention to the mechanical and roof concerns will not only preserve our historic structure, but will conserve energy, eliminate continual repairs on deteriorating pipes, and make optimum use of existing space.
- 4) ‘Enthusiasm’ – evidently the ‘feel’ of our church is: now is the time to do what is needed and we are ready to use the resources, which are present in our church family.
- 5) ‘Trust’ – although final plans for the building and financing have not been set, the Board was willing to trust the staff, building and finance committees to do what makes sense in light of our needs and resources.

I affirm the Board's decision. My evaluation of this congregations' spirit is that we are ready to move, have the resources that it will take, and at the same time not sacrifice any of our present programs including our mission beyond our four walls. The building committee is meeting and will keep you fully informed. Feel free to call and discuss our future plans.”

Early cost estimates were overly optimistic and the eventual cost of the renovation, including interest, was more than \$2.2 million.

In April 1985 with professional fund raising assistance from Colon Gorman, First Church began a capital campaign with Phil Godwin as General Chair and Bill Paddock as his assistant. The theme for the campaign was ‘Share the Heritage – A Church for All Ages.’ In the campaign brochure Phil Godwin writes:

“As members of this congregation we enjoy a rich heritage begun by the early settlers of Lawrence in 1855 ... a heritage both spiritual and structural. Their sacrifices have been built upon by the generations which

followed as the congregation expanded and successive buildings were constructed to meet their needs.

Today we enjoy a thriving congregation and a sturdy building whose foundation was laid in 1889. The only major project since was the education wing added in 1960. Once again our generation has needs no longer fully met by the existing structure.

We have need of access for the handicapped, a new fellowship hall, renovation of an antiquated heating system and better use of existing space.

Most of us have enjoyed what others have provided for us without much sacrifice on our part. Now we have the opportunity to build upon that heritage and provide for the generations which will follow us.

Truly this is a church for all ages. Join in the excitement as we share in its heritage!”

Writing in the same campaign brochure Virgil Brady offered the following:

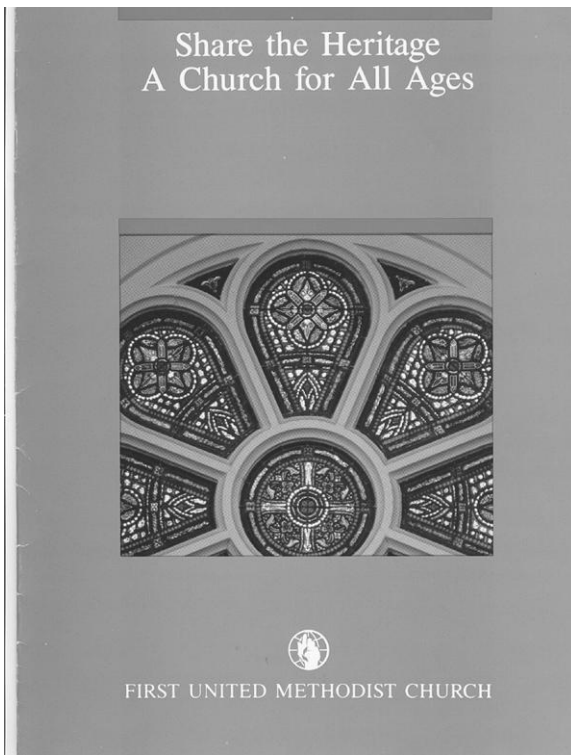
“Approximately 100 years ago Methodists in Lawrence were considering the look and feel of their church house. As they contemplated building the kind and size of structure which we presently enjoy, I’m sure they asked, ‘Do we need all we’re thinking about building? Can we afford it?’ As we enjoy their gift and sacrifice and contemplate our needs, we are asking the same questions.

Our answer is the same as theirs. We will reach our goal as we keep in mind the gift they gave to us and commit ourselves to ‘share the heritage’ with those in 2085 and beyond for as with those of the past it will not be done with business/giving as usual. There are no large or small gifts, since amounts are, of course, relative to individual income and assets. There is a need for us to enlarge our vision and give more than many of us thought would be asked of us. Aware of the gift of this beautiful church house, many like myself have more than doubled what we originally thought we should/could/would give. I sincerely believe now is the time in this church’s history to do what we are doing not for ourselves, but as an expression of gratitude to those of our past, and a commitment to those in our church’s future who will carry on the work of Jesus Christ.”

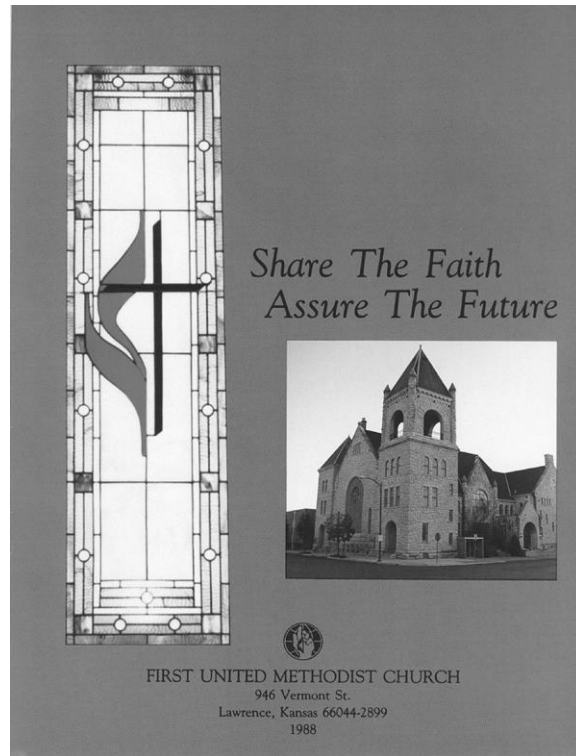
The funding was sought for major renovation of our church facility including:

- Creation of a new Fellowship Hall and rooftop playground
- Repair and replacement of the heating system and roof
- Installing an elevator and ramp for handicapped access
- Renovation of the existing Fellowship Hall for classrooms
- Creation of new office space and public restrooms

Each of the capital campaigns had a formal structure, a theme, and a paid professional fundraiser/director to guide the process. The brochure covers, dates, and amounts pledged are shown here.



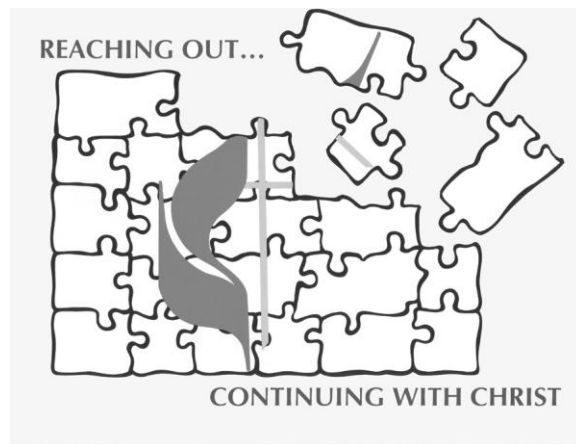
Share The Heritage – A Church For All Ages
1985-1988 Prof. Director: Colin Gormon
3-year pledges: \$680,000 actual: \$653,700



Share The Faith – Assure The Future
1988-1991 Prof. Director: Elizabeth Howard
3-year pledges: \$690,000 actual: \$606,500



Fan The Flame Of Faith
1991-1994 Prof. Director: Bill Nace
3-year pledges: \$760,000 actual: \$761,250



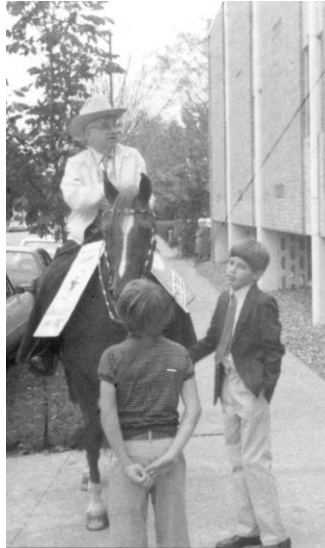
Reaching Out ... Continuing With Christ
1994-1997 Prof. Director: Frances Manson
3-year pledges: \$ 814,000 actual: \$395,780

Successful financial campaigns require good work by laypersons in addition to a hard working church staff. These are some of the First Church faithful who provided leadership for the capital campaigns.

General Chair		Advance Leadership Commitments	
'85	Phil Godwin	'85	Russ Mosser
	Bill Paddock		John Tacha
'88	Deanell Tacha	'88	Jerry Magnuson
	Bud Jacobs		Bill Kukuk
'91	Jerry Niebaum	'91	Chet Vanatta
	Judy Niebaum		Jim Martin
'94	Lynn O'Neal	'94	Gary Hall
	Judy O'Neal		Wayne Whitney
Visitation		Publicity	
'85	Mary Margaret Rowen	'85	John Myers
	Bob Carlson		Bob Candlin
'88	Stitt Robinson	'88	Jim Chappell
	Emma Garrett		Jerry Niebaum
'91	Dudley Crow	'91	Jim Henry
	Susan Sigler		Joanna Bosko
'94	Carolyn Madaus	'94	Craig Penzler
	Gary Bjorge		Clay Comfort
Spiritual Emphasis		Fellowship	
'85	Mary Edna Doud	'85	Connie Walters
	Orville Voth		Carolyn Shelton
'88	Ruth Ann Paddock	'88	Jimmie Kraft
	Robertta Gingerich		Bev Bartscher
'91	Karen Van Blaricum	'91	Bev Burrows
	Judy Niebaum		Rosy Elmore
		'94	Cindy Rivera
			Peggy Bell
Production Secretary			
'85	Gerda Harris		
	Margaret Swafford		
'88	Linda Davis		
	Claude Geiger		
'91	Vicki Reeves		
	Vickie Otten		
'94	Theresa Dillon		
	Rhonda Vincent		

Added to funds available in the building fund from the sale of the Ecke building, the money raised from the first three campaigns was sufficient to fully cover the renovation cost and the

interest. The fourth campaign was for new growth. The campaign brochure says, “Led by the Holy Spirit, we look to the future to discover new ways to grow by increasing our recognition of the diversity and uniqueness of all of God’s children, by affirming and utilizing each of our gifts and graces to their fullest benefit, and by promoting a deeper understanding of our Christian heritage that will inspire us to new levels of service.”



Russ Mosser
Pony Express Financial Drive

One of the first staff vacancies in Virgil’s pastorate was for Music Director when Dr. Perry White left for Oklahoma. After a brief search, Rob Reid was hired in August 1983 to direct the “adult, youth, and bell choirs.” Rob came to Lawrence from Minnesota to pursue his master’s degree in choral conducting at KU. After two marvelous years of growing the music ministry at First Church he completed his degree and returned to Minnesota. Rob made the first concentrated effort in building the bell choirs. His second tenure at First Church came a few years later and is described elsewhere in this section.

Writing in the 1983 Charge Conference Report Virgil says:

“Faithful Leadership” is what comes to mind as I sit down to write a paragraph for the 1983 Charge Conference. The effective leadership, initiative, and work of the staff and lay leadership of this church are reflected in these reports. They speak of folks who love their church and are faithful in their giving and serving so that the Church will fulfill the high calling we have as Christ’s Body. In addition to pastoral care, getting to know folks and they to know me, and providing meaningful worship, much of my time has been spent in supporting and encouraging the fine leadership of this church, as well as providing ideas and leadership where needed. The church has reached out to me and my family as if we were the first pastor they have had. This is a humbling and strengthening experience. Thank you. In many ways, as indicated in these reports, I see our church excited about the opportunities to be ministers for Jesus Christ. I see our church steadily moving forward, continually looking for

ways to be more faithful to our Lord, and more effective in our mission. For example, I see much evidence that the church wants to re-establish itself as leaders in the Annual Conference by paying our World Service and Conference Benevolences in full. I'm finding this church an exciting church family to serve. Let us continue to work, pray, give and serve so indeed we will fulfill God's will.

In Fall 1983 FUMC sold its last parsonage for a net amount of \$51,630. At his request Rev. Virgil Brady was provided a housing allowance instead of a parsonage.

In the 1983 Charge Conference Report Bill Bartscher reported the following on United Methodist Men:

“A small, but doggedly persistent group of Methodist men continue to meet on the last Monday of the month. We generally cater our own meals and are constantly amazed by our own resourcefulness in this regard. Those who have not shared our table are missing a great opportunity for self discovery! Our president for this year, Roger Williams, moved away during the summer leaving the task of leadership in my reluctant hands. He is sorely missed (no one ever washed dishes with such a spirit of willingness as Roger did!)”

On May 6, 1984 First Church hosted the premiere of “Many Streams – One River,” an original musical by Baldwin composer, Don Mueller, written in celebration of the bicentennial of the founding of Methodism in the United States. The musical featured the First Church Chancel Choir directed by Rob Reid. The creation of the Methodist Church in the United States, which motivated the writing of the musical is noted in the following. “The first denomination to organize itself as an American church after the achievement of independence [from England] was the Methodist Episcopal Church, which was founded in Baltimore, Maryland, at the close of 1784.” Excerpt from *200 Years of United Methodism - An Illustrated History* by John G. McEllhenney.

Ruth Ann Paddock chaired the FUMC American Methodism Bicentennial Committee. In the 1984 Charge Conference Report she writes:

“We have considered it a privilege to serve on this once in a lifetime committee. We planned a variety of events and although none had large numbers in attendance each seemed to reach a different part of the congregation.

We started the year by taking thirty of our church family to share with Kansas City Methodists in their January 8th Festival of Praise. On February 12th the youth sponsored a Sunday evening Valentine Box Supper, reminiscent of another era. The February 26th Wesley Hymn Festival, with all words and music those of John, Charles, and Samuel Wesley, was an inspiration. That was also the day our Bicentennial Banner was placed in the sanctuary.

Heritage Sunday, June 10th, acknowledged local history with special music, an exhibit of memorabilia, and restoration and completion of the photographic record of the 38 pastors who have served this church. An intergenerational trip to Lane University Museum, a Methodist historic site, was a July event attended by 25 people.

A Wesleyan Heritage Committee, with representatives from seven local churches, was formed to plan for an exhibit at Watkins Museum and a community-wide praise service on Reformation Sunday. This committee proved to be an instrument of ecumenical enrichment and Christian fellowship and we are grateful for the experience.

This congregation has Claimed the Past, Celebrated the Present, and now stands expectantly ready to Challenge the Future.”

In August 1984 a First Church Building Committee was selected including Pam Joyce, Chairperson; Carol Abrahamson, Virgil Brady, Steve Glass, Phoebe Godwin, Betty Jo Miller, Glen Paden, and Ken Rowen. In March 1985 at an all church conference the “concept design” presented by the Building Committee was approved by a vote of 84 to 9. They also authorized the committee to proceed with the architectural firm of Gould-Evans to develop a schematic design for presentation to a Charge Conference following the financial drive completion in May. With the successful completion of the first fund drive, the administrative board in June 1985 authorized expenditures of \$1,768,000 with the details of financing left to the Building Committee. Renovation work began in the fall of 1985.

In October 1984 the Council on Ministries held a planning retreat and established priorities for 1985 in areas of need which were not being adequately met. They were:

1. Small groups as vital to the church and individuals
2. Greater evangelism role for/by/with members
3. Increased expectations of church for members
4. Outreach in the world (Advanced Specials) and local community
5. Effective use of member’s talents
6. Emphasis on Church School, including need for full time Director of Christian Education
7. Leadership recruitment and training
8. Functional church building
9. Increased training for giving
10. Affirmation of staff’s role in counseling
11. Increased communication about church program

In 1984 with the help of the United Child Development Center, the Memorials Committee, and proceeds from an introductory computer class taught by Jerry Niebaum and Bill Bartscher, the computer committee was able to purchase a Zenith Z150 microcomputer, a letter quality printer, software, furniture, and supplies. Glen Paden built a very secure enclosure in Room 203 to house the computer and provide shelf space.

Also, in 1984 the Long Range Planning Committee reported that “the committee continued discussion with the District Superintendent during the year regarding the plans for the development of a new church site in Lawrence. At some point in this development, our Church will need to be brought into a discussion of our relationship to a new Methodist Church in our community.”

With Virgil’s leadership First Church was indeed moving – quite literally. In the October 28, 1985 pastor’s letter he writes:

“Let me share a concern about our ‘Adventure’ during the next month. To save money, we will move from the educational building while renovations are completed. Our temporary ‘educational annex’ [south of South Park in a county-owned building that had formerly been a church] is about 5 blocks away. This will require extra effort and sensitivity by each one of us, especially in the area of transportation. The move will take place on Nov. 17th [1985].”

The mid to late 1980’s saw the comings and goings of many support staff. In July 1984 Vicki Reeves replaced Arla Clyatt as bookkeeper/secretary and Isaiah Aldridge became custodian. A new youth Director, Judy Anderson, was completing a law degree at KU. In March 1985 Kay Metzger replaced Bev Bartscher as Director of Christian Education. Kay resigned a year later to pursue her Masters degree. Shortly thereafter Missy Black was hired to that position. Missy had experience in comparable positions in Arkansas and Oklahoma and held a Masters degree in counseling. Missy continued on staff until Summer of 2000.

For the Missions Work Area in 1985 Virginia Pearson wrote that “In early Spring the United Methodist Men, the United Methodist Women and the work area raised \$6294.55 to buy medical supplies and a windmill for Glen Paden, Drs. Paul and Charles Kincaid and Brad West’s trip to La Gonave [Haiti] where they gave dental, medical and engineering skills. The raising of the money was accomplished by a letter to all members and visits to all church school classes.”

In April 1985 Steve Schneeberger was hired as Youth Director. Steve was near completion of his degree at Baker University. Three years later Steve moved on to youth work in Florida and was replaced by Andy Martin in June 1988. Andy had a degree from Kansas State and was a second year law student at KU.

In 1985 after Rob Reid’s return to Minnesota, Beth Brabant was hired as Director of Music. Beth was studying for a Doctorate in Vocal Performance. Kevin Shull, a senior in Music Education at KU, joined us as Director of Handbell Choirs. Kevin expanded the bell choir program begun by Rob Reid. Beth Brabant completed her doctorate in 1989 and was replaced by Joel Panciera, a music doctoral student at KU.

In 1985 Ann Herold writing for Social and Minority Concerns notes that “In September the minister and his wife from the Indian Methodist Church, Jacob and Virginia McGilbray, discussed with us ways our two churches might serve together. As a result members from

both congregations helped serve a meal for LINK. When a number of Good News Bibles were discovered we offered them to the Indian Church which accepted 100 of them.”

June 2, 1986 was Heritage Sunday along with a celebration of new construction. Church news announced the celebration as follows:

“A portion of the worship celebration will be held outside (weather permitting) around the construction site of our future Fellowship Hall. 50-year members will be honored. We will be observing, in an official way, the beginning of our building project. Wear your ‘Share the Heritage’ button.”

Writing in the 1986 Charge Conference Report Virgil notes that

“...the building project has received a lot of time and attention from us all, be it those directly involved or those who are being faithful in their financial support. We have had several points throughout the year when the church family dealt with some difficult and potentially dividing issues. I feel we met them head on, openly and honestly, and moved on. Whenever you do a project of this magnitude, in terms of dollars, plus trying to combine new construction with renovation, plus having so many members of the family with so many needs and ideas, a church often loses some folks. I believe we have avoided this to any great degree – a real commendable record for us all. We saw the need of this 100 year-old building. We saw the need to enhance and enlarge our ministry as a congregation. We intelligently, sensitively, and energetically went about doing what we knew needed to be done. And we have and will enjoy ‘sharing the heritage’.”

Steve Schneeberger, Assistant in Youth Ministry, wrote in 1986:

“Our youth program is still progressing at a rate faster than I expected. Our numbers are up and they are consistent for our main core groups, UMYF [United Methodist Youth Fellowship] and Sunday School. We average 35-45 in both areas.

...

The main cog in the youth ministry machine is the youth. They are involved in the leadership of many of the different UMYF and COYM [Council on Youth Ministries] activities. Their excitement for their program has enabled growth and allows me to develop other programs to meet their needs. In fact, at a recent leadership and development workshop our youth intended on just participating but instead were consultants to other youth leaders on issues of involvement and organization.”

With leadership from Phil Godwin an endowment fund was established for FUMC in 1986 with about \$5600. The purpose of the fund “is to establish a permanent principal, the interest from which can be used by the church, primarily for capital improvements.”

By the spring of 1987 the construction and renovation project was completed. In her report for the Board of Trustees, Ann Bakerink reported that “Much of the year was spent following up on problems that occurred as a result of the project. Numerous leaks on the east side of the building and above the front entrance had to be fixed. Also valves were replaced in the cooling units because of continued leakage. A contract was signed with Reuter Organ Company in April to repair the organ, which was damaged by dust during construction. Since the organ was only covered for two thirds of its value, the insurance company would agree to cover only that percentage of the repair bill. A law suit was filed against the construction company to recover the amount of damages. The organ repair was completed in October.”

Over the Memorial Day weekend in 1987 about 50 members of FUMC gathered at Camp Chippewa for a Saturday-Monday Intergenerational Camp. Participants ranged in ages from toddlers to grandparents and “enjoyed horseback riding, singing, swimming, cooking and eating.” Bill and Bev Barscher were chairs of the planning committee for this event.

The United Methodist Men program calendar for 1988 included these:

- Hazards of Being Male: Virgil Brady
- The New Methodist Hymnal: Dan Abrahamson
- Music and Sing Along: FUMC Male Quartet
- Understanding Islam, Iran and the Middle East: Bob Minor (KU)
- KU Football: Coach Glen Mason (KU)
- Methodism in Kansas (with UMW as guests): Bishop Holter

1988 marked the 25th year of operation of the United Child Development Center. The extent of the UCDC program is reflected in the annual report by Barbara Bell and Shirley Phillips. “Based on 10 months actual operation and 2 months budget, it looks as if our 1988 income will total approximately \$308,000 with \$252,000 of that being spent on wages for the 15 full-time and 20 part-time staff members.”

Writing in 1989 Associate Pastor, Bob Kendall wrote that “1990 should offer two opportunities for celebration. It will mark fifty years of married life for Marian and me. It will also mark the fiftieth year of my professional ministry in the Methodist – United Methodist Church.” Bob also chose 1990 to fully retire from the ministry.

1989 also initiated a new approach to Methodist campus ministry at the University of Kansas. Jay Henderson, the campus minister started his appointment on August 1. The new ministry was described in the Charge Conference Report as follows:

“U.M.C.M. [United Methodist Campus Ministry] is part of a new approach to campus ministry in the state of Kansas. The East and West Annual Conferences of The United Methodist Church in Kansas voted to discontinue their involvement in an ecumenical approach to campus ministry as of June 1989. Although three campuses will retain some type of ecumenical approach, the four state colleges and universities in the Kansas East Conference will have a United Methodist, denominational approach to campus ministry. In Lawrence, at the University of Kansas, this means an intentional ministry for

United Methodist students. There are two important elements to this new ministry. First, it is a ministry that is closely connected to the local United Methodist churches. This means that ministry to KU students is shared by First, Central, and Centenary United Methodist churches in Lawrence. First Church provides space for a student center, an office, and a classroom. These are located in the south tower area of the church. Second, the ministry involves intentional peer ministry. Four student associates have been hired at 10 hours per week to work with the campus minister in resourcing programs and activities and in reaching out to students.”

By 1990 the music ministry led by Joel Panciera had grown to ten regularly rehearsing choirs (four vocal, six bell) that involved over 170 persons each week. A new college vocal group was in the early formative stages.

The Long Range Planning Committee, chaired by Bruce Bublitz, sought to “ask the Church to do some thinking about the physical plant. Given the great issues of the Church, consideration of the building and parking needs may seem trivial or even frivolous. It isn’t that the Long Range Planning Committee has not tried to take on more important issues. We have studied staffing needs, needs of the elderly, how to act as a big church, the need for and effects of a West Lawrence Church, membership growth, financing, the music program and more. The truth of the matter is that there is a lot of planning occurring in the Church. The one issue that no one really wants to talk about is building improvement.” The Committee noted that “an organization either grows or it declines. There is no middle ground.” Their report continues with “One concern frequently expressed at LRPC meetings is that we will need more land.”

In September 1990 Diane Stiles was honored as she retired as church secretary following 12 years of continuous service. Diane had also worked in the church office 1966-1972 as assistant secretary.

Following the end of the third fund drive and reaching the goal for fully funding the renovation Virgil wrote the following in the NEXUS for May 20, 1991:

“I’m sure that neither my voice nor my words will adequately express the joy that I feel about making the following announcement. Probably only Elaine knows fully my feelings when I was told the status of our Building Fund Drive. I appreciate many of you who did not make a pledge to the Building Fund , and who told your church that you wanted to but you were doing all you could with your pledge to the annual budget. I hope you feel good about your decision. When we began the building fund six years ago we tried to be clear that our annual budget must not suffer, and that pledges to the building fund must be for those who had the capabilities to extend their giving. The director of our campaign, Rev. Nace, told us that he did not know of a church who has ventured to hold three consecutive major fund drives for a building project. Many churches have done back-to-back ‘drives’ but have not

continued into a third. They have instead, knowing that a third campaign would be very difficult, opted to place the debt in their budget. Skeptics questioned whether a third drive was a wise decision and whether it would be successful. I know you join me in celebrating the completion and success of our building program. To complete a \$1.7 million building/renovation project, pay over \$500,000 in interest, and complete it all in nine years, is outstanding. It reflects the vision on the part of this congregation and an abiding faithfulness to Christ and His Church.”

By March 1991 preparation for the church stand at the Farmer’s Market had begun again by the Missions Work Area. They reported that “Marceil Lauppe, Pam Cooper, and Don & Eppie Jorn provided very capable leadership for each Saturday morning, rising early to prepare the coffee and set up the display equipment. Church circles, Sunday School classes, people who were contacted by us because of their Commitment to Ministry responses and other contributors provide garden produce, flowers, plants, baked goods, jams and Jellies, iris roots, and hot doughnuts, cinnamon rolls and muffins. We raised \$3,034.98. Of this amount, \$2,534.98 will be used for Kansas East Conference World Service and Apportionments, and we will be presenting our suggestions for donation of the remaining funds to the Administrative Board in December.”

One passionate concern of Rev. Brady was racial inequality in Lawrence. In February 1993 he wrote:

“I entered the pastoral ministry in the mid-60’s. During that time in our nation’s history, I participated, as did many of you, in many workshops and projects which were designed to facilitate better racial harmony. Through recent experiences in Lawrence, I have become painfully aware that racial equality has been put on the back burner for all too many of us. What is happening around us (or not happening) is not healthy to our community, to say nothing of our personal lives and relationships. I hope church folks have not become apathetic to the wonderful possibilities for building a more inclusive community and world. Let us work to affirm the diversity which God has offered through a rainbow of peoples of many colors.”

May 30, 1993 was a ‘Day of Appreciation’ for Rowena Pine to celebrate her retirement after more than 30 years of ministry at FUMC. About her retirement Virgil Brady said, “ Rowena’s retirement is a major transition for this congregation. We will adjust, and we realize it will not be without a lot of emotion. Indeed we will miss being able to draw upon the resource, ‘ask Rowena,’ but one consolation is that she said we could phone her in times of need.” More about Rowena Pine may be found in a special section about her in this publication.

Two new staff, Mitch Todd, Youth Coordinator, and Rob Reid, Music Director joined First Church staff in July 1993. Both provided great leadership for their areas for several years before leaving for other opportunities.

Relationships with other United Methodist churches in Lawrence have generally been cordial and friendly, but the opportunities to share in worship or fellowship have been few. One exception was Thanksgiving Sunday, November 21st 1993 when “Rev. Jim McKinney and our friends from the Lawrence Indian United Methodist Church” shared in worship services and then were honored guests at the Thanksgiving Dinner.

1993 marked the beginning of a rather radical approach to church administration at First Church. At the request of Rev. Brady and with his guidance an Organizational Task Force was created to study our organizational structure and make recommendations. The Task Force recommended the elimination of the Council on Ministries and the creation of an 8 person “Leadership Team” chosen by the Nominating Committee to serve a continuous 3-year term. The Leadership Team were to deal with goals and priorities for the Church and to determine which decisions should be made by the Work Groups and which by the Administrative Board. The report of the Task Force was received and its recommendations adopted by the Administrative Board. The first Leadership Team began their 3-year terms in January 1994.

Church renovation and the creation of a beautiful professional kitchen gave rise to the need for more formal management of that facility. In January 1994 the NEXUS reported that “Our kitchen is sure to be ‘ship shape’ now that Mary Margaret Rowen has taken the newest First United Methodist staff position: Kitchen Coordinator. We welcome Mary Margaret and wish her the best as she coordinates the Kitchen Calendar, keeps track of inventory, and works with our Kitchen Committee to insure a well-run kitchen.”

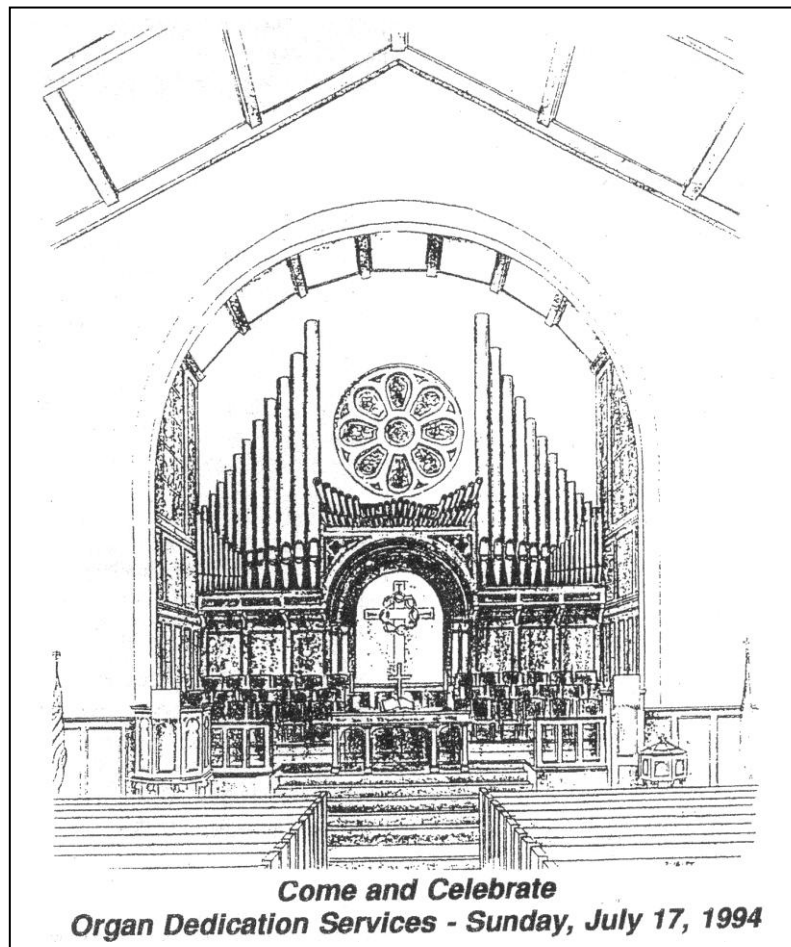
Speaking of the church renovation Virgil Brady had the following to say:

“I would like for you to think about four things. First, go back to about 1985 and recall the condition of our church house, e.g. the vulnerable heating/AC system, the water in our very small old Fellowship Hall, and don’t forget the asbestos. Second, think about the addition of the elevator, the Gathering Area, the new Fellowship Hall, and the Nursery. Third, contemplate the fact that in nine years (three 3-year building fund drives), our congregation will have raised over \$2 million and our debt will be completed in four more months. Many of you have joined our church since we entered this challenging project and have not participated. Your support is needed as we move toward burning the mortgage...If in 1985 someone would have told me that we would be at this point in 1994, I would have been skeptical. Surely the Spirit of God has been working in our midst.”

Our worship services on Easter Sunday April 3, 1994 were held in the new Lied Center on KU campus with a near capacity congregation. It was the first and only time a denominational Sunday service was held at the Lied Center. Attempts to lease the space the following year were unsuccessful. Writing about the Easter Sunday in the April 11 NEXUS Virgil Brady says:

“The Lied Center was completely full for our Easter worship with approximately 2200 in attendance. This fulfills one of the purposes for celebrating at that facility: to reach some who, for whatever reason, might not have come to our Sanctuary. What we experienced was the result of many people pulling together to provide an uplifting worship experience. A special thanks to Rob Reid and all the choirs.”

After months of work and planning by the summer of 1994 an expanded and renovated pipe organ was ready for dedication and use. The vision for the changes was from the creative mind of Dan Abrahamson. From the NEXUS: “Dan has served with five pastors during his tenure at FUMC, has provided much of the maintenance for the organ himself, and has worked for Reuter Organ Company of Lawrence since 1961.”



The new parts of the organ added were all visible to the congregation. They were the Principal Pipes, the tallest, lowest foundational support for the organ, made of flamed copper and the Trumpet Enchamade, a set of 'Fanfare' pipes, which extend horizontally from the wall. The organ expansion was funded as a memorial for Arlene Schaake by her family.

Volunteers in our Church have made remarkable contributions to our structure and our programs. Ed Bracken has been one such member volunteer. An accomplished woodworker, Ed built the backdrop for our banner at the Easter Lied Center service. He also built the mailboxes in the office and the devotional literature rack. As a special project Ed completely rebuilt and refinished the beautiful pulpit used in our sanctuary prior to 1938. From a 1994 NEXUS, "A BIG thank you to Ed Bracken for sharing his talents and time to make our church more efficient and beautiful!"

By fall 1994 our congregation was ready to embrace a whole different kind of worship experience. The inaugural midmorning worship service was announced this way:

October 9th 9:45-10:30AM
Come Join Us!



**Contemporary and Traditional Music • Relaxed Atmosphere • Drama •
Dance • Creative Worship • Group Singing • An emphasis on Community**

All Are Welcome

Writing in 1995 Virgil Brady said, “The Mid-Morning Worship Service was an idea originating from the Leadership Team. The service has fulfilled my expectations through an increase in worship attendance and introduced our church to people who respond to a more informal worship style. The Mid-Morning service has lessened the attendance at the 11:00 worship thereby enabling people to feel there is space for them.”

Work by the History and Records Committee was noted in the Charge Conference Report for 1995 by Judy Patch, Minister of Congregational Development. She said

“Diane Stiles has spent many hours going through stacks and stacks of records and other treasures... This committee was responsible for moving the “Pastors” out of obscurity and into the office hallway where more of us can appreciate the pictures. Our church has a glorious history and I’m glad the History and Records Committee was re-formed to help all of us become more aware of it.”

In mid 1995 Virgil Brady entered his 13th year as Senior Pastor at First Church. The Church was growing in programs and participation. Some members became concerned that Virgil might be reassigned. Pastorates as long as his were a bit unusual in the itinerant ministry common in Methodism. The Staff-Parish Relations Committee arranged for a meeting about long pastorates with our District Superintendent, H. Sharon Howell. “. . . the subject of long term pastorate was reviewed as it applies to our church and conference.” The committee also spent time discussing the Alban Institute’s book, Visions for the Long Pastorate. There was great consensus that a long pastorate was serving First Church very well.

By 1996 the Leadership team was already discussing how First Church might expand facilities and services. Lawrence was expanding to the west and there was no United Methodist Church west of Iowa Street. There was some concern among members about the impact on First Church if the East Kansas Conference started a new United Methodist Church in west Lawrence. The new Leadership Team formed in 1997 took up the topic almost immediately after formation. Informational meetings on such expansion were held in 1997 and Leadership Team minutes from 1998 report that:

“The Annual Conference Committee (Congregational Growth and Development) has requested and received an appointment of a person (Frank Dorsey) who will give close attention to the development and redevelopment of congregations within our Kansas East Conference. Frank will be working with our church and others in the Conference. Secondly, the Annual Conference is currently seeking to locate and purchase approximately 20 acres of land in West Lawrence. This may not manifest itself, (sometime in the future) in an autonomous separate local United Methodist Church in this area. But for now, there are no plans to start a new local church but rather to develop an extension of our church’s

ministry and programs in this growing area of our city. The Leadership Team has on record its rationale and plans for a ‘satellite’ church concept.”

In the process of re-examining itself members of First Church created a ‘Mission Statement’ which was published in the 1997 Charge Conference Report. It says:

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

“Lawrence First United Methodist Church is a community of faith experiencing a relationship with God and one another through Jesus Christ. We strive to build a supportive fellowship that seeks a deeper relationship with God through study, worship, and prayer. Empowered by this relationship, we work together to meet human needs in our congregation, community, and world.

Let by the Holy Spirit, we look to the future to discover new ways to grow: by increasing our recognition of the diversity and uniqueness of all of God’s children, by affirming and utilizing each of our gifts and graces to their fullest benefit, and by promoting a deeper understanding of our Christian heritage that will inspire us to new levels of service.”

In the Charge Conference Report for 1998 Virgil Brady wrote that he feels “very fortunate to have served in this church for 16 years. Where has the time gone? May God continue to challenge us to be faithful members of Christ’s Body, the Church.”

In an ‘open letter to the Church family’ in February 1999 Virgil wrote:

“I have informed Bishop Fritz Mutti and our District Superintendent, Steve Hughes, of my decision to retire at the June 1999 session of the Annual Conference.

I have already shared this with the church staff. I wanted them to hear it first hand from me. My reasons are many. Elaine and I have given our decision prayerful and lengthy consideration. The time is right, right for the church and right for myself.

I am choosing this time to inform you in order to respond to the schedule of the Kansas East Conference Cabinet. They are beginning to make appointments for the upcoming conference year. I have asked the Leadership Team and Staff Parish Committee to begin meeting together to discuss plans for making a healthy transition to a new pastor.

May God guide all of us through this important time in our church’s rich history.

Grace and Peace,
Virgil”

The District Superintendent and Bishop moved quickly to appoint a senior pastor to First Church so that Virgil was able to announce on March 3, 1999 that:

“Some of you may not understand the appointment process of pastors in the UMC. It is the responsibility of the District Superintendent to know the churches and pastors in their district. Because the Bishop and cabinet know our church, when I announced my retirement, the cabinet had a vision of the needs and characteristics of our church and the qualifications necessary for whoever might pastor this congregation. Our District Superintendent, Steve Hughes, met with our staff and the combined Leadership Team and Staff Parish Relations Committee and received feedback/input from them as to what characteristics and gifts we need in a pastor.

In addition, the District Superintendent asked my opinion. I am excited about the appointment of Sharon Howell as your new pastor.

I say this for the following reasons: First, when I informed the Bishop in December of my decision, he asked me if I had any suggestions as to who might follow me. I said that I was sure there were some who could do the job, but the only person I knew of was Sharon Howell. Second, I have heard Sharon preach several times and she is, in my judgment, a very good preacher. Third, Sharon understands the church, both the general church and our local church. She has insights into where the church needs to head as we move into the 21st century. When Sharon was the Ottawa District Superintendent, she played a significant role in helping me identify and articulate some of the vision I have shared with our church over the past several years. Fourth, Sharon will work well with our present staff, and this is crucial. We have a great staff. When they learned of my retirement, some informal conversation took place about the future. Several staff people mentioned Sharon’s name as being the right person. When I announced to the staff Monday that Sharon was coming, they were pleased and excited. Sharon knows how to work with and enable staff to fulfill their potential. Finally, Sharon will bring a level of energy to this congregation which is needed. She knows our church is one of the strongest in the Annual Conference.

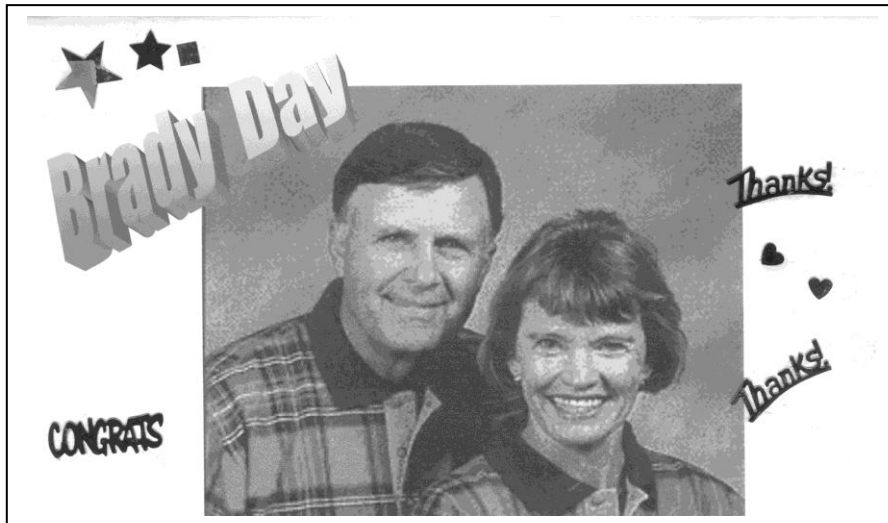
There is no greater gift I could receive from this congregation than to retire and have the church continue without missing a beat. I feel confident this will happen with Sharon’s leadership/gifts and graces. I am working with the Leadership Team and Staff Parish Relations to prepare for her arrival. If I was coming to this church, I know some things the church could do that would feel good and welcoming.”

Virgil’s last Sunday in the pulpit as senior pastor was June 6, 1999, and a reception for Virgil and Elaine was held on Monday, June 7. Writing about that event a week later he observed the following.

“The farewell last Monday evening would make an excellent funeral/memorial service. The only difference is that we got to be there to enjoy it. So, if tomorrow we die, there is no need to make any arrangements. Just put in a tape of the retirement celebration, press ‘play’ and go out and live life to the fullest.”

Virgil was very active in leading the Youth Institute in Baldwin for about 25 years. Shortly after his retirement Virgil was recognized with an honorary doctorate degree from Baker University.

A few years later, April 13, 2003 was lovingly dubbed ‘Brady Day.’ It was an idea initiated by Sharon Howell to honor Virgil Brady for his long pastorate at First Church and to honor Virgil and Elaine for their service and contributions for renovating our church. (The Brady’s donated the round tables for fellowship hall as a memorial to Virgil’s mother, Marie Brady.) Also, that day, Virgil was installed as Pastor Emeritus. In the installation service Sharon Howell said, “This congregation of faithful disciples of Jesus Christ has been witnessing by word and deed for almost 150 years. There have been pastors who served a few months, a couple of years, some five, others eight. Only one pastor has served sixteen years. Today we honor Virgil L. Brady for those faithful years of ministry and name him the first Pastor Emeritus of Lawrence First United Methodist Church.” The biggest surprise for Virgil and Elaine was announced by Lee Hedrick, representing the Board of Trustees, at a celebration luncheon following the 11:00a.m. service. The Trustees designated our fellowship hall, ‘Brady Hall.’ At this writing Virgil Brady continues to do God’s work as Pastor Emeritus for First Church.



Virgil & Elaine Brady – table decoration for Brady Day

Times for New Vision
H. Sharon Howell, 1999 – present

In 1999 our nation was preparing for a new millennium. Many persons predicted dire events to accompany the coming of the new year. Bill Clinton was in his fourth year of his second term as President with Al Gore as Vice President. Rev. Sharon Howell was about to become the first female Senior Pastor at First Church in its 145 year history.



Sharon Howell

Sharon Howell is a Texan by birth, by education, and by accent. Though she was born in Seguin in south Texas, her family moved to Arp in east Texas when Sharon was about six. Arp was home for five generations of her mother's family. Sharon was the only child of Elizabeth, an elementary school teacher, and Joe Howell, an oil field worker.

Following her graduation from Arp High School she attended Tyler Junior College and then Austin College in Sherman, Texas where she earned her B.A. degree. She received a Master of Divinity with Honors from Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City in 1973.

Women clergy were not granted full clergy rights in the Methodist Church until 1956. When Sharon entered seminary in 1970 there were only three women in her class. 1976 was the first year that clergy women were elected as delegates to the General Conference. Sharon was one of 10 women clergy elected that year and the only female delegate from the South Central Jurisdiction.

Because Sharon was a pioneer in breaking gender barriers in the United Methodist Church, her career includes quite a number of firsts and onlys, including:

First clergy woman to serve as President of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

First female delegate of the Kansas East Conference to General Conference, and in 1996 she was the head of the Delegation.

Currently, the only clergy woman in the Kansas East Conference to serve as senior pastor of a church with over 1000 members.

First woman to serve: as pastor of Edwardsville UMC, as senior pastor of St. Mark's UMC, and as senior pastor of Lawrence FUMC.



She began her formal ministry by serving 3 years at the Edwardsville (Kansas) United Methodist Church. From 1975 to 1980 she was Associate Council Director for the Kansas East Conference. In 1980 became Director and then Vice-President of Student Recruitment and Alumni Development at Saint Paul School of Theology. She returned to Kansas to serve as Senior Pastor at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Overland Park. In 1987 she began 12 years in administrative positions within the East Kansas Conference as Director of Council on Ministries and District Superintendent for both the Ottawa District and the Kansas City District.

Sharon was no stranger to First Church having served as our District Superintendent for five years. In that role she had led Charge Conferences and preached at First Church on several occasions. She inherited a very active Church with membership ranging between 1600 and 1700 and with an annual budget of \$717,033 and no outstanding debt.

Early in her ministry in Lawrence, Rev. Howell made clear her vision for our Church when she wrote:

“My personal passion is mission beyond our doors. I have a dream that FUMC will become a mission leadership church of the Kansas East Conference. We have a history to inform us. We organized a Negro Sunday School for black refugees of the Civil War. We have welcomed Native Americans from our beginning. We converted the church to a morgue for victims of Quantrill's raid. In recent years we have initiated the Chippewa Swimming Pool Project and saw the annual conference churches match our challenge. The 'Rebekah at the Well Project' in Haiti is a vivid reminder that we are connected to the whole world. My prayer is that we prayerfully consider claiming at least one national mission and one global mission as 'ours.'”

Sharon Howell was welcomed to First Church with flowers and song. The flowers were sent to her at the Kansas City District Parsonage in early April with a card that read, “From your new church family, Lawrence First.” The Leadership Team commissioned Mitch Todd to compose a welcome song, which he titled “All God's Children.”

Shortly after Sharon arrived, the roof fell in – quite literally! Cracks appeared in the ceiling plaster in the sanctuary and on inspection workers discovered major structural damage requiring extensive repair. A very tolerant congregation found new joy in worshiping in fellowship hall while the damage was repaired. To the surprise and thrill of all, the repair and remodeling of the roof and ceiling revealed some formerly hidden stained glass windows, including the dove of peace window on the south wall of the sanctuary.

In her report to Charge Conference in 1999 Sharon reported that her “first five months have been filled with active listening and immense learning.” She proposed that,

“During 2000 the Staff Parish Relations Committee and I will be evaluating our staffing number and ministry areas in concert with the goals and priorities for the next three to five years. We will be asking

- What ministry areas need more volunteer or staff time?
- Are we staffed for growth or maintenance?
- Are the number of support staff sufficient for the number of program and administrative staff?
- What program areas could be added with additional volunteer or staff time? For example, youth, adult, and young families.

In addition to the above mentioned mission and ministry goals, we are called to reaffirm our commitment to being a ‘downtown church.’ As we claim our presence at Tenth and Vermont for the next 150 years, we must begin to understand urban ministry and embrace our unique location and all the opportunities it provides. What does it mean to be a ‘good neighbor’ to the businesses, churches, and people who live all around us?”

The Leadership Team was completing its 3-year term at the end of 1999. At that time Sharon was still uncertain about the future of the administrative structure for First Church and asked the Leadership Team to continue a fourth year through 2000. All were agreeable to do so. At the end of 2000 the Leadership Team was dissolved, ending a seven year experiment in alternative church governance at First Church.

Sharon named her newsletter column for the NEXUS, “Let’s Talk.” She frequently relinquished that column for items from staff or laity. In the January 12, 2000 NEXUS, Rev. Gustav K. Van Tassel offered “A thought to consider: A new year, century, and millennium have given all of us a chance to be reflective about our own gift of time that God has granted us – whatever its quantity – or quality.”

On Saturday, February 12, Methodist Men presented the First Annual Valentine Gala in Fellowship Hall. Tickets were “\$12 each (limited seating).” A reception was followed by dinner and entertainment.

In April 2000 our congregation was blessed with “A Perfect Love,” a musical presentation of the Gospel of John, directed by Mitch Todd and written by Greg Hildenbrand. This special musical grew out of the Mid-Morning worship service. Two evening performances were presented on April 16 and 20.

Easter Sunday, April 23, 2000, new timpani drums made their debut. “Given to the church in loving memory of Earl J. and Evelyn G. Wilson by son, Jim, of College Station, Texas, the drums were scheduled to be dedicated in January. The ceiling repairs have delayed this service, but Mr. Wilson wanted them to be used for Easter, and so we present them to the Glory of God – Hallelujah!”

May and June held rich musical experiences for members of our congregation. On May 14 the Chancel Choir joined with the choir of Plymouth Congregational Church and the

Lawrence Civic Choir to present Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis" at the University of Kansas Lied Center. Rob Reid directed the production. In mid June the Celebration Ringers played in the National Handbell Festival in Topeka ringing "The Nutcracker." On June 25 the Civic Choir for Hiratsuka, Japan sang for the 11:00a.m. worship service. Hiratsuka is one of the Sister Cities of Lawrence.

May 2000 marks a sad note in our church history. After more than 35 years of continuous operation, the United Child Development Center (UCDC) was closed. The Leadership Team minutes of May 16 reported that:

"Sharon Howell and Jerry Niebaum updated the Leadership Team concerning the decision to close UCDC. UCDC has lost several teachers over a period of time and were in danger of losing more, so that the quality of care being given to our children was being seriously compromised. Several efforts to replace teachers lost and to hire a new director who was qualified were fruitless. The UCDC Board and the church staff found it impossible to meet expectations for licensure from the state and decided it was unwise to continue. Initially, it was hoped that the center could remain open until the end of May. However, additional staff losses necessitated closing immediately. The church then made serious efforts to inform parents about where there were other daycare openings in town. The Leadership Team and Administrative Board were informed by letter from Francois Henriquez [chair of Administrative Board] shortly after the decision was made by the UCDC Board and Church representatives."

More about the history of UCDC may be found in a special section near the end of this publication.

In the NEXUS for June 28, Sharon Howell writes:

"Happy Anniversary! We are completing our first year of shared ministry together. As we begin year two, I'd like to offer some reflections and give thanks to God for the absolute honor and privilege of serving as your pastor.

You are a people of HOSPITALITY. Your welcome as I arrived and throughout the year has been overwhelming, inspiring and touching. Thank you for receiving me with openness and acceptance. We have moved from introductions to conversations about your lives, families, work, and hopes for this congregation. I am immensely BLESSED to share ministry with you.

You are a people of FAITHFULNESS. Your attendance in worship each Sunday is an impressive witness. Your participation in the educational ministries, programs, and mission outreach is a powerful testimony. Your financial steadfastness in love makes mission and ministry happen in Lawrence and around the world. Thanks be to God for you and the myriad expressions of faith you make each day.

You are a people of VISION. In 1855 twelve folks (just like you) formed the Methodist Episcopal Church. They had a dream of ‘growing’ a church in the new community called Lawrence. A church grew and moved from location to location. The current facility was opened in 1891, added to, updated and maintained by our forebears. Today you are updating and maintaining it again. You are also responding to God’s invitation to ‘grow’ programs so that more people can experience the life changing love of God through Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for you and your vision of who FUMC can become.”

The June 13 minutes of the Leadership Team reported that the “Kansas East Conference Commission on Congregational Growth and Development has recently made a firm commitment of \$750,000 for the purchase of land on which a program facility under the direction of our church could be built. ... We will suggest to the Administrative Board that a Site Acquisition Committee be formed as soon as possible. A group separate from the trustees who will concentrate only on finding land will probably be necessary.”

On July 1, 2000 Wayne Turner, who had just retired from Bristol Hill, became our Pastor of Children’s Ministries. Wayne is certified in Christian Education.

On July 23 the Administrative Board unanimously adopted the following Program Facilities Committee recommendations:

FIRST IN THE FUTURE

1. That we as a church significantly increase program and service offerings in four areas.
 - A. Children and youth
 - B. Persons in need
 - C. People without a church home
 - D. Members of First United Methodist Church
2. To continue to update and maintain the current downtown facility for current and future programs and services.
3. To buy land now and build a new program facility for many new programs and services, to host meetings and classes, and to provide parking and easy access.
4. To conduct a capital campaign to raise the funds for the downtown facility renovation, the land purchase (with the financial help of the conference), the construction of a new program facility, and the establishment of a deferred maintenance fund.
5. To establish a Congregational Development Committee to oversee specific planning.

The adoption of these recommendations set the direction for First Church for the next several years.

“It wasn’t quite like the beginning of Dickens’ A Tale of Two Cities – 2001 in the life of First Church was in many ways the best of times.” wrote Francois Henriquez in his report for the Annual Charge Conference 2001: The Year in Review. Excerpts from his report follow:

- The Congregational Development Team led us through the development and adoption of a strategic plan, that sets forth our mission priorities – including ministries to our older adult members, to children and youth, to the unchurched, and to our neighbors downtown (especially those in need); ...
- Following our strategic plan, and after dreaming about it for at least a decade, we purchased 65 acres [actually 67] on the western edge of Lawrence that will be the home to a new Celebration Center, and other facilities that will help us do more in reaching out to our seniors, our youth, and to the unchurched;
- We continued our new partnership with the Kansas East Conference, under which they contributed \$750,000 toward our land purchase, and continued to subsidize the salary of our new Pastor of Congregational Growth and Development, Lee Johnson, who completed his first full year on our staff;
- We saw a complete restructuring of our children’s Sunday School program, with a resulting explosion in both excitement and attendance;
- We saw our small group ministries blossom, with creation of two new Disciple Bible Study Classes, a Young Adult Group, a Steward Study class, the Good Grief support group, Dinners for Eight, Advent Study groups, and other study and fellowship opportunities.

2001 saw significant changes in children’s ministry as mentioned in Francois’ report. These are described in portions of Jane Rock’s report to the Charge Conference:

The Children’s Council adopted five visions for the immediate future for children’s ministries at First Church. After 12 months of hard work and dedication from committee members and church leaders, we have begun the ‘Touchstone Journey’ that we hope will bring all of our children closer to God and our church. Specifically our visions included:

1. Begin an alternative time Christian Learning Experience. In September 2001, Clues Club began serving the Christian Education needs of our elementary age children.
2. Strengthen our Sunday School Program. ...our Sunday School rooms have been updated and equipped to best meet the needs of children in a Rotation Style Sunday School Program.
3. The Bible and Children: Third Grade children received six weeks of Bible instruction before they were given a very ‘kid friendly’ Bible on Children’s Sabbath. ... One Sunday School rotation room concentrates on learning scripture, stories, and lessons of the Bible
4. An introduction to Church Camping. ... Several of our children spent a week at Camp Chippewa in the summer.
5. The nursery – the Nursery Room and care givers continue to meet the needs of our youngest members.”

To the Charge Conference for 2001 Rev. Sharon Howell reported:

“We have completed our ‘first’ capital campaign together. The total raised was \$1,145,000. What a faithful response to God’s call for us to ‘name disciples in the name of Jesus Christ.’ As the capital campaign drew to a close, the Congregational Development Team, convened by Ann Keizer and the Site Exploration Team, convened by Rick Short, continued their intensive and intentional work. Their reports during the year lead to the adoption of a Strategic Ministry Plan for First Church that includes the program section: ‘Touchstones of Faith’ and a financial proposal.”

September 2001 gave us the first edition of First Edition, the newly named newsletter for First Church, designed by Candice Ranney. “Let’s Talk,” the pastor’s column, became “First Word.”

On November 11, 2001 First Church held “A Blessing of the Land and its People” on West Campus. The event is described in some detail in the section following this one.

Advent 2001 brought a new tradition to First Church, the Christmas Memory Tree. The Christmas Tree in the sanctuary is decorated with ornaments brought by members of the congregation in memory of a friend or family member who has died. In a special service the name of the person remembered is read as the ornament is placed on the tree.

Our congregation has long been aware of the opportunities and obligations for having our church in an urban location. In December 2001 the Administrative Board took a step towards embracing new ones. In the “First Word” Sharon writes about it this way:

“We are stepping out in faith as we grow and strengthen each touchstone ministry. We took a faithful step in mid-December when we extended an invitation to the Jubilee Café to move its mission outreach to our Fellowship Hall on Tuesday and Friday mornings. This seven-year mission of meal and conversation for persons in need of a healthy start meal and a safe place for a few minutes each week is staffed by volunteers primarily from KU student groups and organizations. Our very own youth have served at Jubilee Café on several occasions. Welcome Jubilee Café to THE FIRST PLACE in late January”

Jubilee Café outgrew its prior home, Parish Hall of Trinity Episcopal Church, and needed a bigger home. The Café, a fully licensed restaurant, serves from 80 to 100 meals each Tuesday and Friday morning to its guests, who are homeless and in-need neighbors. It has been operating continuously for ten years.

The Children’s Ministry Council, chaired by Jane Rock, and Rev. Wayne Turner, pastor of Children’s Ministries introduced TOUCHSTONE JOURNEYS, a “rotational method” of ministry to children. The program has proven extraordinarily popular with children and their parents. In two short years attendance in children’s Sunday School quadrupled. On Sunday, October 10, 2004, there were 117 children in attendance.

Anticipating our celebration of 150 years of service, Sharon Howell wrote in 2002 that:

“Our 150th Anniversary celebration will be in 2004-2005. Can you believe that our Lawrence community and our faith community will both be 150 years old? The Sesquicentennial Committee (it’s official name that I’m still learning how to pronounce) is co-chaired by Jerry and Judy Niebaum. The members are Dan & Carol Abrahamson, Judy Dailey, Phil & Phoebe Godwin, Sharon Howell, Ruth Ann Paddock, Ken & Rowena Pine, and Phil & Diane Stiles. You can expect a year of fun and celebration. One of the unexpected connections that has been made is with William Griffing, the great-great-grandson of the founding/first pastor of First Church, James Griffing. The Sesquicentennial Committee is hopeful that William Griffing will be able to join us as we gratefully remember those who took those giant ‘leaps of faith’ by offering their neighbors and friends an opportunity to experience God’s unconditional love through mission and ministry of First Church. Our theme is ‘Faithful Past, Prayerful Present, Promising Future.’ Thank you Sesquicentennial Committee for your leadership as we prepare to remember those who have been faithful with God’s future for 150 years.”

On Tuesday, June 18, 2002, Prairie Worship began on West Campus. A cross on the worship site was built by Kent Ely and Ben Mugridge. “Bring a lawn chair or a blanket, as well as a hat or an umbrella for shade. Our prayer is that through this casual half hour worship you will again experience God’s powerful presence.” A year later Prairie Worship was moved to Saturdays at 5:30p.m. with the same service repeated at 7:00p.m. on Sundays.

At the January 12, 2003, annual church conference a decision was made to request an associate pastor for First Church beginning July 1. A compensation package was also approved. Subsequently the Staff-Parish Relations Committee “submitted to the District Superintendent a detailed profile of the needs for an associate pastor.” On March 5 the First Edition was able to report that

“David L. Livingston has been named by Bishop Fritz Mutti as the associate pastor of Lawrence First United Methodist Church... David is a graduate of Baker University with a degree in political science and philosophy. He is a graduate of Saint Paul School of Theology and worked with youth ministry at Leawood United Methodist Church, as well as serving as the Kansas East Conference Youth Worker... David and Tracy will be moving to Lawrence in June with their cat named Tom. Tracy will be able to continue her work for the Northeast Educational Coop specializing in autism and assistive technology.”

David preached his first sermon at First Church on July 20, 2003.

Following a recommendation by Rev. Sharon Howell, in April 2003 Rev. Virgil Brady was installed as Pastor Emeritus of First United Methodist Church. Some of the details of ‘Brady Day’ are described in the section on Virgil’s pastorate at First Church.



Installation of Virgil Brady as Pastor Emeritus
Sharon Howell, Virgil Brady, Elaine Brady, Jerry Niebaum, Bill Paddock

In his ‘Thank You’ later that month Virgil wrote:

The Pastor Emeritus luncheon was going great. Greg Hildenbrand’s gift of song was perfect. Jerry Niebaum gave me two wonderful gifts: 1) my own parking spot accompanied by a couple rolls of quarters to cover the expense of the meters 2) my own personalized pastor emeritus business cards. At that point if Carol Abrahamson had sung her special ‘tribute song’ we could have gone home and that event would have been an A plus.

But at that point Lee Hedrick went to the podium to announce that Fellowship Hall was to be renamed, ‘Brady Hall.’ I lost it. For the next several minutes I have no recollection of what I did or said. I was overwhelmed. ...this honor tops the list. Elaine and I say thank you.”

WELCOME HOME!
By Greg Hildenbrand

1. We come to this gathering from all walks of life,
From every persuasion and role
Many the voices that join in the song
On this joyous day as we welcome you home!

Refrain:

And we welcome you back to our family,
And open our hands and our hearts to your needs
We pray for God’s blessing on all that you do,
May this fellowship be a family to you, welcome home!

2. Sometimes we’re called to serve others in need,
Sometimes we need to be served;
Sometimes our call leads us far from what’s known
Sometimes we’re called to serve right here at home.
refrain

3. At times we get angry, we disagree,
At times we don’t live peacefully;
But we spring from one God, from one Life on one earth,
United in purpose as one family.
refrain

Good ideas happen often. Finding the right leadership to implement them is often more challenging. Stephen Ministry was created in 1975 by pastor and clinical psychologist, Dr. Kenneth Haugyk. 'Christ caring for people through people,' is the motto of Stephen Ministry. In 2003 after much discussion by the Discipleship Council and with the leadership of Sharon Howell and Sara Wentz, First Church decided to move forward with our own local Stephen Ministry by sending volunteers to workshops.

In July 2003 Sara Wentz, Carol Abrahamson, and Linda Penny attended a seven-day Stephen Series Leader's Training Course in Ontario, California. Following this, a group of laypeople of our congregation undertook 50 hours of training in Christian caring skills under the guidance of these three leaders. Upon completion of Stephen Series training, our lay Stephen Ministers were commissioned into active caring ministries. They will work under supervision and will be available to care for people experiencing challenges in their lives such as hospitalization, grief over the loss of a loved one, loneliness, divorce, loss of a job, birth of a child, and many other life events. By September a first call for Stephen Ministry volunteers was given. Twelve laypersons answered that call and they were commissioned on May 9, 2004.

As First Church entered 2004 the excitement about new ministry on West Campus continued to grow. Writing in First Word, Sharon Howell noted that about two years ago,

“we purchased what we now affectionately call the ‘West Campus. It is an unbelievably gorgeous site with a stunningly beautiful view of Lawrence and Douglas County. The desire to develop the site to honor God’s creation known as the Kansas Prairie has taken many hours of consultation, planning, and praying. The design for the first building, The Celebration Center, is taking shape and you should see drawings, designs, even blueprints this fall. You will also begin to hear about the next capital campaign. ...

The early circuit riders came to the unsettled Kansas-Nebraska Territory without a clear vision of what God’s ministry would look like. Those circuit riders became the guiding pastors of this faithful congregation. Their ‘leap of faith’ in the name of Jesus Christ is the touchstone for our ‘leap of faith’ into God’s ministry on the West Campus. ... Jesus Christ never promised an easy path...he did promise to walk with us all the way.”

At this writing Rev. Sharon Howell is in her sixth year of ministry at First Church. She has committed us to our mission as an urban church. In our community Sharon is a member of the Cottonwood Board, the Housing Trust Fund Board, the Lawrence Ministerial Alliance, and the Senior Pastor’s Forum. She was a member of the Chamber of Commerce Lawrence Leadership class of 2004. In past years she has served on the Board of Trustees for Baker University, for Bethany Hospital [K.C. Ks.], and for Youthville in Newton.



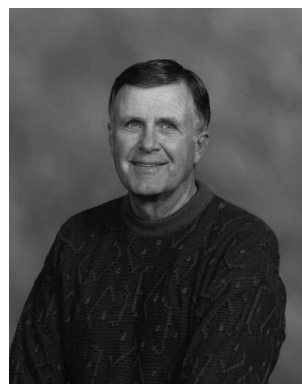
Sharon Howell
Senior Pastor



David Livingston
Associate Pastor



Barb Clinger
Pastor of Senior Adult Ministries



Virgil Brady
Pastor Emeritus



Sara Wentz
Dir. of Discipleship Ministries



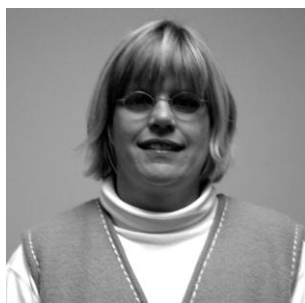
Rowena Pine
Diaconal Minister Emerita



O. Wayne Turner
Pastor of Children's Ministries



Sean Atchley
Dir. of Youth Ministries



Pam Pechal
Director of Childcare Ministries



Jill Ice
Parish Nurse



Dan Abrahamson
Organist



John Paul Johnson
Director of Music Ministries

First Church Staff (page 1) - 2004



Marie Clyatt
Children's Music Associate



Candice Ranney
Communications Assistant



Rachel Wegener
Administrative Assistant



Susan Martin
Office Assistant



Tracy Kihm
Business Administrator



Bob Greenwood
Financial Assistant



Roger Bain
Facilities Coordinator



Darrell Vann
Maint. & Custodial Coord.

First Church Staff (page two) - 2004

Conclusion – A Beginning

In September 2001 First Church completed an agreement with the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City for the purchase from them of 67 acres of prairie at the corner of 6th Street and K-10 bypass about 3 miles north of Clinton Lake west of Lawrence. The purchase price of \$1,700,000 was funded in part by a gift of \$750,000 from the Kansas East Conference of the United Methodist Church. This purchase culminated more than a decade of thinking, planning, and praying about the concept of one church – two campuses. Our connectional church, the Kansas East Conference, not only provided a large part of the down payment, but also helped fund a Pastor of Congregational Development, Rev. Lee Johnson. Writing in the NEXUS, Sharon Howell said, “I’ve known and worked with Lee since 1984. He is an elder, full member of the Kansas East Conference, and has been on the staff at Valley View UMC in Overland Park for 13 years. His current position [there] is Associate Pastor.” Lee began his pastorate with First Church on July1, 2000.

On Sunday, November 11, 2001 at 3:00 p.m. over 200 of First Church faithful gathered under a large temporary tent on the new property to dedicate the land.



The Kansas Brass Quintet played prelude music followed by Songs of Celebration led by the Mid-Morning Worship Team. The service included a ‘Litany of Creation for the Blessing of the Land and Its People.’ Dr. Rob Reid led the choir accompanied by Dan Abrahamson on electronic keyboard. The choir and congregation sang, “Upon This Rock” by John Ness Beck. Bishop Fritz Mutti, Resident Bishop of the United Methodist Church, State of Kansas, delivered a dedication sermon. The service concluded with remarks by Rev. Sharon Howell, Senior Pastor of First Church. It was a beautiful day and an uplifting service! The future for First Church is indeed a bright one.

Chancel Cross
By Sharon Howell

"Beneath the cross of Jesus
I fain would take my stand,
The shadow of a mighty rock
within a weary land;
a home within the wilderness,
a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat,
and the burden of the day."

from the hymn "Beneath the Cross of Jesus", verse 1.

It was Dan Abrahamson's idea. He suggested that the chancel needed a cross suspended above the altar so that on the occasions when the altar was moved there would always be the visual reminder that this is the "house of the Lord."

Psalm 122:1

I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"

The idea was presented to the Sesquicentennial Committee for consideration. There were a variety of opinions to be prayerfully considered. The decision was to move forward by sending a prospectus of the project to eight local artists and inviting each to submit a proposal for a chancel cross to be suspended above the altar. Three Lawrence artists responded and submitted a drawing and a small model of their cross. The artist selected for the project was Walt Hull.

Funding the project was easy. Russell Finch and Clifford Howe were members of First Church until their deaths. Cliff died November 12, 2001 at the age of 97. Russell died January 9, 2002 at the age of 94. They met when they both moved into the same retirement facility. They began to attend worship together and could be found every Sunday at the 8:30 am service in the same pew. Russell and Cliff were men of faith, who loved to worship their creator God and live their faith every day. Their families were asked about combining their memorial funds for the chancel cross project. They readily agreed and added to the total so that the project was fully funded.

During the summer of 2003, Dr. Norman Yetman, member of First Church and professor American Studies and Sociology at the University of Kansas, called senior pastor Sharon Howell, to see if the church would be interested in hosting the Rust College A Cappella Choir from Holly Springs, Mississippi on Sunday, March 14, 2004 when they were in Lawrence to kick-off "The Legacies and Unfinished Business of Brown v. Board of Education" fiftieth anniversary event at KU with a concert, "Our Nation's Diverse Musical Heritage." They would stay with members of First Church and then sing at the 11:00am worship service. (Notes: Dr. Yetman was serving on the Planning Committee for "The

Legacies....event". Rust College is the oldest of the eleven historically Black Colleges and Universities related to the United Methodist Church, the second oldest private college in Mississippi, the oldest historically Black College in the State, and one of the remaining five historically Black Colleges in America founded before 1867.) The response was an immediate "Yes!"

It was then decided to invite the Rev. Joyce Harris Scott to preach at the 11:00am service. Rev. Scott is currently the pastor of Central United Methodist Church in Kansas City, Kansas and founding director of Shalom U-PLAN (Urban People Living Abundantly Now). Rev. Scott is the longest tenured African-American clergywoman in the Kansas East Conference of the United Methodist Church and was the inaugural recipient of the Bishop Leontine T. Kelly Justice Award by the National Organization of African-American United Methodist clergywomen. Rev. Scott is married to Charles Scott who is the grandson and son of two of the attorneys who filed the Brown v. Board of Education lawsuit. Charles is an attorney in the Kansas City area. He was invited to speak at the Sunday Night Live! Program on the evening of March 14, 2004.

The Finch and Howe families chose March 14, 2004 as the day of dedication of the Chancel Cross. Members of the families came from all across the United States and filled three rows of pews. They provided a reception for the congregation after the conclusion of the worship service. Rev. Scott's sermon was "The Gift of the Cross" and her scripture text was Luke 2:32-43. The Rust College A Cappella Choir under the direction of Zebbedee Reynolds Jones touched every heart and sang with passion and spirit. The cross was dedicated and the lives of Clifford Howe and Russell Finch were remembered with thanksgiving and gratitude. Jerry Niebaum read the following in the dedication liturgy,

"We dedicate this chancel cross in their memory. May it always be a symbol of God's unconditional love for each of us."

Lori Heasty, member of the Board of Trustees, responded

"We graciously accept this memorial gift from the families and friends of Russell Finch and Clifford Howe."

The cross hangs in the center of the chancel above the altar because it is the centerpiece of our faith in Jesus Christ. The cross is empty because Jesus was buried and raised from the dead. We are people of resurrection faith." It was a day of remembrance and celebration. The chancel cross dedication was a day when history and future met and God declared that it was good.

**Chancel Cross Dedication
in memory of
Russell Finch and Clifford Howe**

March 14, 2004

*"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

I Corinthians 1:18



Happy Friends Adult Fellowship
by Millie Peters and Carol Abrahamson

In the early sixties, Millie Peters was a member of the WSCS and served as the chairperson for Christian Social Concerns. One of the books at the School of Mission in Baldwin that year was "Persons of Special Needs." Millie went to Baldwin and studied that book. She decided to make the church-wide study that year, "Persons of Special Needs." At that time, the church was holding the church-wide studies in the evening with a covered dish supper. Millie planned a panel discussion for the program and asked several of the local "helping" organizations to be on the panel.

Previous to this study, an article appeared in the Lawrence Daily Journal World about a new facility being opened for the developmentally disabled. The facility was being started by mothers of disabled children. One of the mothers was Bess Stone, a member of First United Methodist Church. One day when Bess was driving around Lawrence on behalf of this facility, she was killed in an automobile accident. When the center opened it became known as the Bess Stone Activity Center in her memory. (This center later became Cottonwood Inc. when a new expanded facility was built.)

Knowing this, Millie added Bess Stone Activity Center to the panel for the mission study and was so impressed with that project that she became a volunteer there. (Virginia Pearson, long time member of FUMC and UMW also volunteered for a while.)

Bonnie Miller was Director of Christian Education at FUMC at that time. She had formed a committee that started several new missions for the church. One of those things was an ecumenical Sunday School class for developmentally disabled people. The first class was held at the First Christian Church with about five members. Among them were Ricky Rice from Baldwin, Sammy Branson from Trinity Episcopal, Phylis Brockman from our church, and later, Gracie Preyer from the community. That class lasted until Cherry McCabria retired. Nancy Hardman, member of our church, helped with the class for a while. Then there was a lapse of time when Bonnie Miller left the church for Oklahoma, and Bert Potts became our Director of Christian Education. The class had not been meeting.

One Sunday Phylis Brockman, who had been coming to church with Millie, went to Bert Potts and said, "I want my Sunday School Class back." Bert came to Millie to ask her about teaching the class, and we began what became the Happy Friends Class. Millie taught the class for many years with help from other volunteers. Carol Abrahamson was among those who came to help, and she shortly began teaching the lesson while Millie designed the craft activity. Carol's daughter Emily started helping when she was graduated from high school. Emily and Carol have taught the class up to this day (summer of 2003). Millie retired in the late 1980's. Patty Hart joined the teaching staff in the late 1990's. Most recent volunteers included Jane Campbell and KU student Jessica Brown. Others have helped for short periods of time: Jackie Maninger, Jeannie Miller, and others who have been lost to our memory.

Happy Friends Class grew from its original five students to an average attendance of 20-25. Cottonwood Inc. always viewed the class as a wonderful opportunity to get its clients into normal community activities; so they have been consistent in providing transportation for the sheltered homes they run. Having this guaranteed transportation and having teaching continuity has helped to keep the class a stable and ongoing activity. During the 1990's the class underwent a name change to Happy Friends Adult Fellowship. The reason for the change was to make it obvious to church members and to the community that the class was indeed an adult activity; this name would seem less patronizing.

Over the years the class has become thoroughly integrated into church services. Members sit with their friends and have learned the traditions. For a time, we were annual acolytes for the 11 o'clock service until the middle service made it too difficult for us to practice. One activity that the church seems to really appreciate is having the class sing during the 11 o'clock service, about twice a year. We share songs related to our studies and even have class members who can read introduce some songs. Recently, a class member helped read scripture in church. When Emily's children were small, we used to have an end of the year picnic in South Park. Now there is an occasional party at the church. We love participating in the annual Thanksgiving Dinner and have helped the committee by making favors when we are asked. In recent years, the youth group has invited Happy Friends Adult Fellowship to join them for a Christmas party.

In more recent years we began to ask the congregation to collect their pennies for us to designate to some area of mission. We have donated in this way to Rebecca at the Well (the Haiti well project), Heifer Project International, and Mountain Top (the youth mission trip to Appalachia). We ask resource people to come to our class to help us understand what the mission does.

Our class is currently meeting on the third floor. One year when there were many other adult classes meeting there, we invited them to come visit us and supplied cookies and punch to greet them. In the spring of 2003, members of the church staff came to our class to do a lesson on marriage, funerals, baptism, communion, and confirmation. It is important to us to have those other adults and staff feel that they know who we are so they can be our friends and understand us better. We try to wear nametags so that folks will know our names, but they do tend to get lost by the end of the year.

The teachers at the present time are Carol Abrahamson, who acts as lead teacher and leads the singing and prayer time; Emily Cates, who acts as secretary, makes notes to go home, and puts notes in the newsletter when necessary; Patty Hart, who acts as liaison with Cottonwood, Inc.; and Jessica Brown who is a conversation friend. The teachers take turns planning and delivering the lesson. The lesson usually includes some kind of table activity (hands-on) at the end of the session. Among other Christian themes, the class has studied famous people of the Bible, the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, the Parables of Jesus, and opposites in the Bible--a vocabulary development series. We have also had series of lessons about hygiene and we always remind members frequently about behavior in church and around children. We do not meet in the summer. We have decided that the break is what helps the teachers come back year after year.

The structure of our class has remained fairly consistent over the years. We always begin with sharing and singing simple repetitive songs from our extensive repertoire. During our prayer time, class members offer prayers of thanksgiving or concern followed by the Lord's Prayer. Then follows the lesson and usually the table activity related to it. Sometimes we do a page on the Sunday's theme for a booklet that we assemble at the end of the series of lessons.

Friendship is the theme for our class. We love each other. Occasionally there will be problems between class members but not often. Some members will stop coming for a while, just like adults in the church at large. Some are very dependable. Occasionally, some of the more "able" members will move into apartments and stop coming. Either transportation is more of a problem then, or they have grown away from us in developmental level. We have frequent couples. Several couples over the years have married. Robert and Connie Cropper are our current married couple. Some have come from FUMC families. Theresa Brown, daughter of Richard and Justyn Brown used to come before Alzheimers caught up with her. Currently, Jennifer Spoon, daughter of Marylou and Robert Vaughan is a member. Laura Bell, daughter of Peggy Bell, moved away a few years ago.

Other younger developmentally disabled children have been included in Sunday School and Youth Group. That is handled independent of us. For a number of years there was a hand-chime choir led by Shannon Bowles, who used working with the class as her KU internship project. She was paid for a while and then moved on. No volunteer was found to keep up with Happy Chimers after it was taken out of the budget. Carole Peters, daughter of Millie Peters who was the first teacher, is convening a UMW Circle called Phyllis Circle, in honor of Phyllis Brockman. The name honors the first Happy Friend, whose comment started the class. Several class members and a few others from Cottonwood participate in the Circle. They have fundraisers to raise mission funds and take retreat trips from time to time.

We hope that Happy Friends Adult Fellowship and activities for the developmentally delayed continue for many years to come.

United Child Development Center (UCDC)
By Janet Mody

Early in 1968, the Outreach Commission of First United Methodist Church began studying the need for a child care center for preschool children of working parents. They discovered only two full-time facilities existed for group care in Lawrence except in a few homes. One center was only for children from welfare families, and the other had places for only 12 children. In May, the Commission presented a proposal to the Official Board to establish a child care center accommodating 30 children. The projected budget would be \$2164 per month, including salaries.

The Day Care Center opened September 3, 1968, with 14 children, two teachers, and a cook. Judy Bencivengo was director-teacher, and the Board of Directors included chair Glenn Kappelman, Phyllis Wilson, Anne Yetman, Lucille Beamer, David Hough, Joan Kanet, Bob Sanders, Barbara Bell, Phyllis Sapp, Janet Mody, Lucille Paden, and church staff members Bonnie Miller and Dennis Bowers. Joe Langhofer helped with finance and Andy Anderson with publicity.

From the beginning, the Board hoped to serve a diverse population. By February, 1969, the Center served 16 three year olds and 14 four year olds. Included were Black children and White children as well as four from foreign countries. Most were from low- income homes, including K.U. students. Thirty-two children participated in the summer program. The Board also began consideration of a half-day enrichment program for children in kindergarten.

By March of 1970 the Board had 14 members plus three ex-officio representatives, and the staff consisted of the director, head teacher, kindergarten teacher, naproom assistant (Marietta Martin), and three aides. To increase diversity and financial stability, the Center included children from both middle income and low income families with 16 of 32 from single parent homes. Carolyn Thomson served as chair and Carol Abrahamson as secretary.

By 1971, the United Child Development Center had enrolled 46 children including 10 kindergartners. An evaluation reported, "In summary, the strength of any day care center is its staff. This group of people is dedicated, talented, diverse, and hard working." In October, 1971, the Commission on Outreach transferred responsibility of UCDC to the Commission on Education. At the May 1972 meeting of the Administrative Board, a resolution passed that the governing boards and the administrations of UCDC and the Nursery School be combined. On May II, 1972, Judy Bencivengo submitted her resignation to become Director of Hilltop Child Care Center, effective August I; the Board accepted the resignation with thanks for her excellent work as UCDC's first Director.

Barbara Bell joined the staff as Administrator-teacher on August I, 1972, and Carol Abrahamson also taught. Shirley Phillips became a part-time Administrator-accountant. By July 1980 enrollment had grown to 163. In 1979 the total income was \$175,235.02, and expenses, \$173,009.82 (a net gain of \$2,225.20). Music and drama activities added to the program's effectiveness.

In 1992, Bev Bartscher served as Board chair. Lucy Paden, chair of the Personnel Committee, wrote a report for the Staff Parish Committee with positive evaluations of Barbara Bell and Shirley Phillips. However, by March, philosophical differences with the minister led to the resignations of both Barbara and Shirley and of Bev Bartscher as chair. Eventually, Judy Burget became director and Vicki Reeves, part-time accountant. By 1994 Mary Ann Dean served as Director. In January 1996, 95 children were enrolled, 30 of whom were funded by SRS, allowing for a diversity of the student population, one of UCDC's goals. Staff turnover was high, but Mary Ann and Vicki remained. Vicki continued a practice started by Shirley Phillips of counseling many families in financial planning, enabling them to achieve more stability. UCDC enrollment began to slip, causing some budget problems, but in 1999 UCDC celebrated its 31st year serving children and families.

In 2000 Mary Ann Dean resigned; Angela Grimes, who had served many years as an excellent Lead Teacher, agreed to be the Interim Director with the Board conducting a search for the permanent Director. Numerous teacher changes also occurred, and these changes with new staff led to problems in supervising children. The church staff and Leadership Team determined that UCDC should be closed immediately. UCDC Board members strongly objected, presenting alternatives to keep at least one or two programs going. Parents also met with the Leadership Team chair and protested the decision. However, in May of 2000, UCDC closed.

The financial assets and some equipment of UCDC are still available. Both the Children's Dream Team and Downtown Ministries Committee have named establishment of a Child Care Center a priority for FUMC's future.

The United Child Development Center was a pioneer in providing excellent child care for a diverse population in Lawrence. It brought together children of different economic levels, ethnic backgrounds, and nationalities, and it represented an important ministry for a downtown church. At the time of its closing, it served Black, White, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian children. Just before UCDC closed, a Japanese family ready to return to Japan sent a check for \$100 in gratitude for the joy and care their child experienced. The loss of this program has saddened many FUMC members who hope UCDC will be resurrected in the future.

Rowena Pine
Diaconal Minister Emerita

It was 1976 when the office of Diaconal Minister was created and adopted by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church. Soon after, Rowena Pine, Parish Visitor for several years for First Church began the disciplinary process and study to become a consecrated Diaconal Minister.

In 1981 at the Annual Conference of the Kansas East Conference, Rowena was consecrate by Bishop Benjamin Oliphint for the office of Diaconal Minister with a certification in Evangelism. Rowena's title became Parish Minister and her position on the First Church staff was approved by Bishop Oliphint.

Rowena began her long affiliation with First Church staff in 1954 when Al Bramble was pastor. Rowena served as Junior High Choir Director.

Rowena served on several Conference Boards and committees: Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry, the State Ecumenical Body on Campus Ministry, the Board of Evangelism, the Board of Discipleship, and the Board of Camping Ministries. She was elected twice as an alternate delegate to the South Central Jurisdictional Conference.

Rowena retired from First Church staff in 1993 after 40 years of service. She served on the staff of six pastors in her long tenure. In 2003 First Church honored her with the title Diaconal Minister Emerita.

Writing about her retirement in 1993 in the May 3 NEXUS Rev. Virgil Brady says:

“When I think of all Rowena has given to the ministry of this church through study, prayer, care, phone calls, visitation, programs, etc., I find it difficult to express what I want to say in words of appreciation. I take my hat off to this woman who has remained on the staff of our church for 30+ years and has continued to remain vital and relevant. It is a tribute to her calling that over the years she has sustained the highest admiration of this congregation. She has worked hard, and stayed up-to-date with current trends in the church and world. I always felt her spirit of cooperation with me. For all of this, I am deeply grateful.”

On Sunday, October 19, 2003, Rowena was installed as Diaconal Minister Emerita. Of her Rev. Sharon Howell said, “During her 39 years on the First Church staff Rowena literally defined the role of Minister of Evangelism. She was one one the first consecrated diaconal ministers in the Kansas East Conference. Diaconal Ministers are consecrated to the ministries of love, justice, and service. I am thrilled that we have the pleasure of honoring Rowena with this special recognition.

In 1996 Rowena began a part time position as Chaplain at Lawrence Presbyterian Manor, a retirement community in Lawrence, which she still holds at the time of this writing.

Dan Abrahamson
Church Organist 1963 - present

Two persons have been on staff through most of the past 50 year period. One of them is Rowena Pine, Diaconal Minister, described elsewhere. The other is Dan Abrahamson, our organist, bell ringer, and choir pianist. Judy Niebaum wrote the following for the church newsletter, the NEXUS, for July 19, 1999.



Dan Abrahamson has been our organist here at First United Methodist Church since 1963. When I asked him how this came to be he told me that he first became interested in music because of his parents. His father, with no formal lessons, played the piano using only the black keys so that his large fingers avoided getting caught between the keys. His mother insisted that Dan and his brother and sister have musical training, so at the age of seven, he began piano lessons.

He learned and played all through grade school and high school. Then one Sunday, in his hometown of Appleton, Minnesota, the regular organist didn't show up for their Presbyterian Church service! He had never played the organ before, but was well known for his fine piano playing. The minister asked him to substitute for them that day on the organ. He did and ENJOYED it!

After high school he headed to the university to study music education but soon discovered that even though he loved music, he didn't want to be a teacher of music. He dropped out of school and began to work for the Wick's Organ Co. in Illinois. While there he realized that to create the kind of music he loved, he did need more training so he went to Illinois Wesleyan in Bloomington, Illinois and graduated with a Bachelor of Sacred Music degree in 1959. The next two years were in the military serving as the chaplain's assistant and playing tuba in the band.

On July 22, 1961, he and his high school sweetheart, Carol, were married. They came to Lawrence, Kansas then where Dan would begin work with Reuter's Organ Company and play organ for the Presbyterian Church. In August of 1963, the organist across the street at First United Methodist Church left suddenly. Dan's boss at Reuter, a member at the Methodist Church, asked him to come to substitute in this church. With an eye to less travel for the organ company, and more time playing the organ, Dan agreed to become the permanent organist in September of 1963. And, as Dan puts it, "The rest is history!"

Happily and thankfully Dan Abrahamson IS part of the history of our church! These 36 years have seen Dan and Carol's four children, Emily, Heather, Jennifer, and Rik all baptized in this church and we do appreciate the beauty and grace in service that Dan and Carol and their family have given us here at FUMC!

On September 7, 2003 First Church celebrated the 40th Anniversary of Dan's tenure as organist. The litany of celebration included these words "Thanks be to God for the worship and music ministry of this church and the servant leadership of Dan Abrahamson. We are awed by the 40-year commitment, loving loyalty, and heart-felt music that you have shared with us. With gratitude we say, Thank you, Dan! It is with joy that we anticipate 'more and more' of God's delicious music that comes through you. Happy Anniversary!"

Carol Abrahamson retired from teaching in May 2001 and Dan retired from Reuter Organ in December 2001. Dan continues as our Church organist, and Carol continues to bless us in choir with her beautiful voice.

The Russell Memorial Pipe Organ
Compiled by Carol Abrahamson

First United Methodist Church of Lawrence, Kansas, had a free-standing pipe organ that sat in the northwest corner of its chancel for many years at the beginning of the twentieth century. As is the case with many cultural items, as time went by, the church felt the need for a change. Even today, musical instruments go “out-of-fashion” and begin to deteriorate beyond the ability to repair them to current standards. This happened to the pipe organ in the 1930’s at First Church.

The vice-president of the Reuter Organ Company, Mr. C.B. Russell, and his brother Mr. Lloyd E. Russell gave a new “state-of-the-art” pipe organ to the church as a memorial to their parents in 1938. It was later dedicated on March 20, 1939, by Dr. William H. Barnes, Mus. Doc., self-described organ architect, and recitalist. At the time of its installation, it was featured in an editorial by the same Dr. William H. Barnes in *The American Organist* and described as a “Reuter four-manual of unusual merit.” (*The American Organist*, 1938, p.233). Of course, the fact that Dr. Barnes helped design the organ may have colored his evaluation. Nonetheless, this organ was conceived at a time when organ designers were changing from a thick Romantic sound to one of more clarity. Dr. Barnes played a part in adjusting scales in its organ specification in order to reach that goal. According to Dr. Barnes, “the organ under discussion is certainly in my mind an excellent example of the blending of the older and newer ideals of tonal design. Such an organ has my most cordial approval.” (*The American Organist*, 1939, p. 233). The new organ was well-received by the church and the general public.

This auspicious beginning provided a 44 rank instrument that served First United Methodist Church well for many years and through several organists: Dorothy Enloe Miller; Franklin Mitchell; and Robert Schaf. In 1963, Robert Schaf left Kansas suddenly, and the church needed a substitute organist. Alan Fisher was Chairman of the Official Board at the time and also personnel manager for the Reuter Organ Company. In 1961, Alan had hired a young man named Dan Abrahamson to work as an organ technician. Alan knew that Dan had experience playing the organ for church services and asked Dan to substitute a few Sundays while the church figured out what to do about hiring a permanent organist. It seems that Dan filled the bill and within weeks he was hired as the church’s official organist, beginning September 1, 1963.

As it turns out, Dan had been tinkering with organs for a number of years and knew quite a bit about organ mechanics. It didn’t take long for him to see that the Russell Organ had fallen into serious disrepair and was now quite difficult to play because of dead notes, water damage, and other mechanical problems. Ken Pine was chairman of the Music Committee at that time and listened intently to Dan’s description of problems with the organ. Together they decided to invite the Administrative Board to listen to an organ demonstration that would highlight its problems and then ask them to authorize repairs. It didn’t take long for the Administrative Board to agree that mechanical problems were indeed interfering with the use of the organ. By November, 1965, fixing mechanical defects had been accomplished using Dan's expertise and church funds, the organ had been re-tuned, and a rededication

scheduled. This began a period of rebuilding and tonal modernization. Dan had since become a Reuter voicer and knew what was required. He and his organ friends were able to fix mechanical problems as they occurred, and Dan began improving the organ's sound.

The church thought the organ was fixed for good, until August 1966 when water poured into parts of the organ through a leaky roof during a heavy rainstorm. Parts of the previous years' restoration were ruined. Unfortunately, water damage recurred for the next several years. In 1971, Reuter had to be contracted to build new wind chests to replace those damaged by water over the years. While the wind chests were being replaced, Dan took advantage of the chest removal to enlarge and renovate other parts of the organ. Many church people as well as some Reuter employees, who were Dan's friends, contributed hours of labor to accomplish this renovation. The organ increased from 44 to 54 ranks by the time this work was complete.

Unfortunately, this was not the end of the "water saga". On December 16 1972, Dan wrote in his organ log, "Found that the roof is leaking on the bass end of the Oboe-Tierce-Geigen chest in the Sw. Pulled # 1-12 of 4' Oboe as they were ciphering. Chest was full of water, which blew out when organ was turned on. Immediately called Steve Sublett (Chairman of Trustees) to let him know and to have him investigate our insurance relative to the organ and water damage. Here we go again! D.F.A." This meant more work. Reuter was again contracted to make repairs to chests in the Swell and Choir organs to the tune of \$5,888, not too much considering that the organ by then had an estimated replacement value of \$100,000. When this work was complete, Dan looked back over his records and discovered that for the previous eight years, the work of 75 individuals, and 2,300 hours of labor had been donated toward the organ project. Then in November 1973, the organ was featured in recital again with Burton K. Tidwell playing an organ that had 4000 more pipes than it had in 1938.

Rainy years come in cycles, and if you don't take care of the underlying causes of water in the organ, you are likely to have problems again. In January 1974, water began to leak again. Dan discovered that the plastic he had installed on the ceiling of the Choir chamber was full of water, ready to fall on the organ. The organ did not get wet, thanks to the plastic. However, Dan did call Ken Pine, Steve Sublett, Bev Burrows, and John Kohl to explain the situation to them. His hopeful note shouts, "We should get some action now!" If memory serves, the roof finally got repaired.

During 1981-1983, the sanctuary was closed for renovation. The church had decided to remove the balcony to effect ceiling truss repair, revise the chancel arrangement, renew the sanctuary painting, renovate the youth area, weatherize windows, repair more water problems, and rebuild the organ console, the latter at a cost of \$27,000. The organ console exterior was retained because it matched the original 1938 chancel woodwork built by the Reuter Organ Co., which also included the pulpit, lectern, and communion table. The combination action, the pedal keyboard, the stop jambs and the draw-know units were replaced. The new combination action was state-of-the-art "Solid-State Duo-Set with Quad-Memory", every organists dream. Now Dan could use more presets to allow for quick registration changes, as is often required during any complicated service.

February 1985, brought heavy roof ice to FUMC forming an ice dam, which caused water to cascade into the choir organ chamber once again. This time Dan completely lined the choir chamber ceiling with sloped fiberglass connected with tubing to a drain in order to discharge any water that might fall over the organ at some future date. (As of 2003, the chamber is still dry!)

In April 1986, the Memorials Committee asked the congregation to dream about potential projects for future memorials. Dan started dreaming. He decided that it was finally time to complete the organ's specifications; this would mean adding two new exposed stops to the organ: a 16' Pedal Principal and an 16' Trompette en Chamade to achieve a more massive sound for festival occasions. Dan's letter to the Memorials Committee would set the wheels in motion; but his letter remained in the files of the memorials committee for many years, awaiting the time when an appropriate substantial memorial gifts might become available.

FUMC continued to improve its facilities for the future. Unfortunately, the next renovation proved to be costly to the organ. Before construction, Dan had alerted the pastor and the contractor about the need to protect the organ from construction dust. In spite of warnings, early in 1986, while in the process of improving office and education space and building a new fellowship hall, contractors allowed rock and plaster dust to filter into the sanctuary. During May of 1987, all of the pipes had to be removed, cleaned, and some re-voiced because of dust damage. This hard lesson cost both the insurance company and the church. The church discovered that the organ was insured only up to \$400,000. The current estimated replacement price of our organ at the time of the damage was \$631,085. Litigation determined that the church would have to pay one-third of the repair costs. This event caused the church to update its insurance plan to avoid future problems. There was a silver lining. Dan took this opportunity to paint all of the organ chambers and to consider re-scaling and re-voicing selected stops. There was a goal in his mind. John Walker, organist at Riverside Church in New York City, was going to play an American Guild of Organist's recital in October of 1987. By this time the organ had grown to 67 Stops and 103 Ranks and was a truly fine instrument for any recitalist to play.

Dan continued to work behind the scenes. By September of 1988, the organ specification showed 78 Stops, 118 Ranks, 6947 Pipes and had undergone a complete tonal refinishing. As a special gift to Dan, there was a second rededication in April of 1989. This also happened to be Dan's 25th anniversary as the church organist. The festivities included special music, a festive potluck, and a card shower for Dan. During 1990 Dan built a new tuba stop for the organ, something he had always wanted. By June 1990, the specification showed 80 Stops, 120 Ranks, and 7028 pipes. Recitals by Marie Rubis and Michael Bauer in April and June gave Dan additional incentive and positive feedback that his work was done well. Dan continued to build chests and pipes; he continued to do all of the accompanying work to install them as well. Bob Vaughan, church member and Reuter employee, continued to assist him with engineering. The church decided to set up an organ repair fund from which Dan could draw periodically. The Music Committee had become aware that an ongoing fund would be necessary for the future when Dan is no longer able to maintain the organ as it should be.

Meanwhile, the church had identified a substantial memorial from the estate of Arlene Schaake. Dan's proposal of 1986 was to finally be implemented: a 16' Pedal Principal and 16' Trompette en Chamade were to be installed on the rear wall of the chancel. Arlene had always loved the organ and the music of the church; she would have enjoyed the new additions tremendously. The pipes were built and the chancel revised by Reuter to accommodate them. A new rededication during church services was held on Sunday, July 17, 1994. With these additions, the organ now had a sound that had long been missing, the Pedal Principal, and a festival trumpet to make worship even more exciting than it already was. This was also a time to honor Dan for 30 years of service to the church. At least 163 volunteers had provided over 7,700 hours of work to maintain and develop the organ since 1964. Our organ now had 83 Stops, 122 Ranks, and 7114 Pipes and a completely new look. Another recital, this one by Thomas Murray of Yale University was scheduled by the American Guild of Organists for April 23, 1995 to showcase the improvements.

The improvements continued! A MSP 1000 combination action was added; re-voicing, rebuilding, replacing magnets, re-wiring--on and on the project progressed. In 1999, the façade pipes and the Trompette en Chamade were temporarily removed to accommodate chancel ceiling repair and painting. Removing pipes was done by Reuter to prevent damage to them. In 2000, a solid state switching system was delivered but not immediately installed. In 2003 Dan discovered that the Solo primary and tremolo needed to be re-leathered. The leather was over 60 years old and ready to be changed. Then in February Dan began wiring the new choir Peterson relay (the switching system), which had been waiting for his attention for three years.

Dan's goal of completing the specification is coming closer to fruition.

Music
By Carol Abrahamson

From the beginnings of the Methodist Church, music has always been an important element of worship. John and Charles Wesley were prodigious hymn writers, whose hymns inspire us to this day. The Methodist Hymnal was created long before First Church was established in Lawrence. As was the custom in those days, the Methodist Hymnal of 1854 had no music, only text. The congregation usually knew the hymn tunes that fit the meter of the text. In 2004, our church uses three different hymnals with many different styles of hymns. Occasionally, words without music will be projected on a screen...shades of 1854.

Over the years and as musicians were available, the organ, piano, and other instrumental music became part of the long tradition of Methodist music. More recently, drums, guitars, and bells began to augment music in worship. Different styles of music began to be associated with particular worship service. Currently, the first and third services use the pipe organ, piano, and bells. The middle, or mid-morning, service is planned by a worship team which consists of a "praise band" and designated singers to lead the congregation in singing.

Excellent musicians have served our church well in the last 50 years. Among them, many students and faculty of the University of Kansas music programs have participated in the planning and creation of our music worship. Some left our church for professional music careers. Others wrote or arranged music which our choirs were privileged to perform. Mitch and Jan Todd served First Church as youth directors during the 1990's but expanded their ministry to writing and singing their own lively contemporary songs during our services. We're grateful they shared their talents with us for a while before they graduated from seminary and took their own churches.

The music directors who have served First Church these past 50 years include:

1949-61	Gerald Carney (member of the KU faculty)
1961-62	John Hanson
1962-63	Robert Schaff
1963-67	Frank Purvis (now retired Junior High music teacher, current member of the Chancel Choir)
1967-69	David Bezona
1969-76	Hubert Carson (died during a church service, chancel piano was given in his memory)
1976-77	Ann Carson (wife of Hubert and public school music teacher)
1977-79	Don Frueh (employee of Reuter Organ)
1979-82	Phil Orlando (KU doctoral student at the time)
1982-83	Perry White (KU faculty member)
1983-85	Rob Reid (KU master's student)
1985-89	Beth Brabant-Norris (KU Ph.D. voice student)
1989-93	Joel Panciera (KU Ph.D. student, now at Boston Ave. UMC in Tulsa, Oklahoma)
1993-01	Rob Reid (back for a Ph.D. in choral conducting at KU)

2002-03 Sara Wentz (choir member, musician and FUMC staff), and Elizabeth Mulkey (choir member and public school music teacher)
2003-current John Paul Johnson (Director of Choral Music at KU)

Mid-morning worship music is currently led by Greg Hildenbrand and assisted by various musicians. Bennett Griffin has acted as percussionist consistently since the inception of the mid-morning contemporary service. Others assisting as of the Fall of 2003 include...

During the summer, as West Campus is being developed, outdoor worship has been conducted. Informal music, usually with guitar, has been an important part of these services.

For the last 40 years, Dan Abrahamson, church organist, has served as Chancel Choir accompanist for all but two of the directors and continues to serve in that way. His part in the development of our 4-manual Reuter pipe organ can be noted in the chapter entitled, "Our Pipe Organ". During 2004, an artistic series called "The First Annual Dan Abrahamson Concert Series at First United Methodist Church" will be conducted to honor Dan's 40 years of service.

In 2004, choir member Ken Pine celebrates 50 continuous years as a choir member. He was recognized with letters of celebration during the fall of 2003. Besides singing bass, Ken has chaired the music committee in the past and currently acts as choir librarian.

A variety and number of choirs and music programs have existed in First Church at various times during the last 50 years. Elementary age singers, have charmed us when a choir director for the age was available. The most long-lasting name for this age group was Angelus Choir; more recently XTreme Sound. There have been choirs for preschoolers as well. In decades past they were Cherubs; more recently Sunshine Singers. Currently, church music is taught children during Sunday Night Live sessions. Happy Chimers, a bell choir of developmentally disabled adults, performed under the direction of Shannon Renner, when she was a music therapy intern during the 1990's. Celebration Ringers, a bell choir of adults, has provided consistently high quality music for services since the bells were purchased in the 1980's. During the 1980's a flashy Youth Bell Choir astounded the church. Lady Belles, affectionately known as the Shady Ladies, older women with an interest in bells, still meet together to play just for fun and for an occasional performance. Happy Friends Adult Fellowship sings in church at least twice a year. These groups have been led by both volunteer and professional staff. Many names of volunteers are lost to memory; but their contributions were remarkable. All have contributed to the richness of worship music at First Church.

The Chancel Choir has shared a variety of major choral works through the years. Often that information has been lost from the written records. However, according to Dan Abrahamson's partial notes, major works have included the following:

Amahl & The Night Visitors	G.C. Menotti	1999 (with KU)
Cantata #150	J.S. Bach	
Ceremony of Carols	B. Britten	2002
Chichester Psalms	L. Bernstein	1982
Christmas Cantata	D. Pinkham	1992
Creation	F. Haydn	1993
Dona Nobis Pacem	R. Vaughn Williams	1997
Festival TeDeum	B. Britten	
Gloria	F. Foulenc	1978
Gloria	J. Rutter	1991
Gloria	A. Vivaldi	
Hodie	R. Vaughn Williams	1979
King David	A. Honegger	
Laud To The Nativity	O. Respighi	1987
Magnificat	J.S. Bach	1984
Mass in Ab	F. Schubert	1994
Messiah	G.F. Handel	1990
Missa Solemnes	L. vonBeethoven	2000
Peaceable Kingdom	R. Thompson	1969
Requiem	M. Durufle	1981/1989
Requiem	G. Faure	1992
Requiem	W.A. Mozart	1986
Seven Last Words	T. Dubois	2001

On June 7, 2004 some members of the First Church Chancel Choir will join more than 200 Civic Choir and KU Choral Department singers to perform the Durufle Requiem under the direction of John Paul Johnson at Carnegie Hall in New York City. During Rob Reid's second tenure, our choir performed the Mozart Requiem in Lied Center with the Plymouth Congregational choir and the Lawrence Civic Choir.

The music program is always evolving. Until Rob Reid's second tenure, the position was only part-time. The last half of Rob's time with us was as full-time Minister of Music. However, after Rob left, the transition period led the church to re-institute the part-time position. Our current part-time director of music leads the Chancel Choir and Celebration Ringers and assists with worship planning and other music projects in the church as they arise.



Dona Nobis Pacem – Rob Reid, conducting – April 20, 1997

Photo by Harold Jones

The Sesquicentennial Committee
By Jerry Niebaum

The Sesquicentennial Committee of First Church was appointed by Rev. Sharon Howell and organized in the Summer of 2001. One challenge Rev. Howell presented was to create a written history of First Church for the years 1954 to 2004. After much discussion, we decided to collectively do the research, compilation, and writing of the history, though none of us are formally trained in history or historical research. However, all members of the committee do have long affiliations with First Church, and have their own memories of the past five decades. Each story we shared stimulated new revelations and recollections. Members of our committee are:

- Jerry and Judy Niebaum (co-chairs)
- Phil and Diane Stiles
- Phil and Phoebe Godwin
- Ruth Ann Paddock
- Dan and Carol Abrahamson
- Judy Dailey
- Ken and Rowena Pine
- H. Sharon Howell

The first meeting of our committee was a dinner meeting at our home on September 11, 2001, my birthday. Minutes of our meeting record that “With heavy hearts and great sympathy for the victims of the terrorist tragedies against our country, our committee moved forward to consider the past and plan for the future.”

My own connection with First Church started in 1957 when I began attending as a KU student affiliate. Rev. Al Bramble, who served in the first pastor era included in this latest history, was my pastor. When my wife, Judy, and I joined First Church as a married couple in the Fall of 1961, Al Bramble was our pastor. We remember him as a compassionate caring minister.

One of my personal inspirations in this writing was having on loan from First Church a copy of the History of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Lawrence, Kansas written by Mary Patterson Clarke and published in 1915. Not only was her writing inspiring, but the particular copy I borrowed had once belonged to Dr. Edwin F. Price, who was affiliated with First Church from 1920 to 1972 and served as Director of Wesley Fellowship on the KU campus. First Church has two stained glass windows at the rear of the sanctuary honoring the work of Dr. Price and his wife, Lena. Edwin and I had at least a couple of things in common. We were both born and raised in Sumner County in South Central Kansas, and we shared a birthday, September 11. Edwin and Lena lived in a small basement apartment in the Wesley Foundation building on campus. Their ‘living room’ was a public space where a television was located. On several occasions while we were dating, Judy and I would share an evening of television and popcorn with the Prices in their very public living space. We were also guests in their new west Lawrence home at their retirement celebration in 1959. It was a very special time for the two of us, and we remember them fondly. It was personally moving to me to use his personal copy of our Church history in preparing this update.

These writings describe events, personalities, timetables, and some statistics. The real history of our Church is about spirit, about inspiration, about faith in things unseen, and about fellowship. It is about lives changed by moments of insight into our relationship with our God. The spirit of our history can be found in the support given us in the deep grief for loss of a loved one; in the uplift realized in times of personal depression; in the smile or handshake of those who have shared a meaningful worship experience; in the joy of new lives united in marriage; and, in the thrill of new life baptized into the faith.

The history presented here is a glimpse of some of the events and participants. We hope that it captures some of the spirit of what we have been and what we are as people of God. This booklet is offered as a companion to the first publication of another part of our Church history from 1915 to 1954 written by Mary Patterson Clarke.

Following purchase of the magnificent property we now call West Campus, we confirmed, as we expected, that we had purchased a small piece of the Oregon Trail. From the high point of the property the Kansas River Valley spreads wide to the north while the majestic Wakarusa River Valley lays to the south. One can easily envision the wagon trains headed west across this beautiful section of prairie. One can also envision our first minister, Rev. James Griffing, atop his Indian pony, Jacob, pausing on this high spot to enjoy the beauty of this untamed land as he rode out on his Wakarusa Circuit.



We owe much to the dedicated leaders of our church who have brought us this far, and pray for wisdom and guidance for the leaders who will follow. We thank our Lord for giving us “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!”

We conclude with a bit of poetry written by long time First Church member, Phyllis M. Jones, and published here with her permission. Her poem was the Judge’s Choice in the Art of the Ages, Poetry Festival, 2002 sponsored by the Kansas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.

VISTA

PHYLLIS M. JONES

LAWRENCE PRESBYTERIAN MANOR

Long ago, the snow
fell steadily, white upon white;
our footsteps marked fresh paths
and we dreamed of tomorrow, and tomorrow...

Children imprinted angel wings in the snow
and dashed inside for hot chocolate
before building their forts.
Snow geese winging southward reminded us
of a song grandmother sang,
“Hush my little one, wild geese are passing by.”

Radios threaded the airways with
“I’ll Be Home For Christmas;”
across the land families prayed
for young soldiers in the bitter
snow-covered woods of the Ardennes.

Now we know footprints in the snow
give clues to where we have been,
not always to where we are going.
We look out —
the snow is white and beautiful;
our window frames its whiteness
and our dreams of tomorrow, and tomorrow...
