

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 42<sup>nd</sup> 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 congregation's 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:

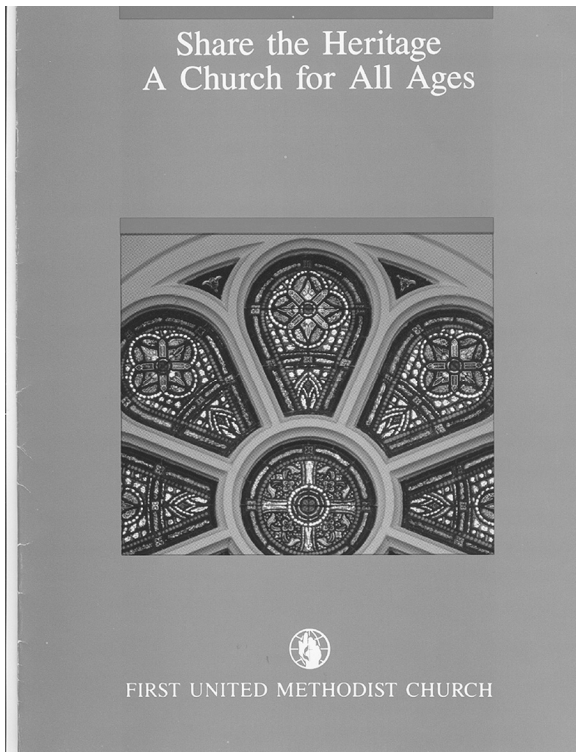
“Approximately 100 years ago Methodists in Lawrence were considering the look and feel of their church house. As they contemplated building the kind and size of structure which we presently enjoy, I’m sure they asked, ‘Do we need all we’re thinking about building? Can we afford it?’ As we enjoy their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

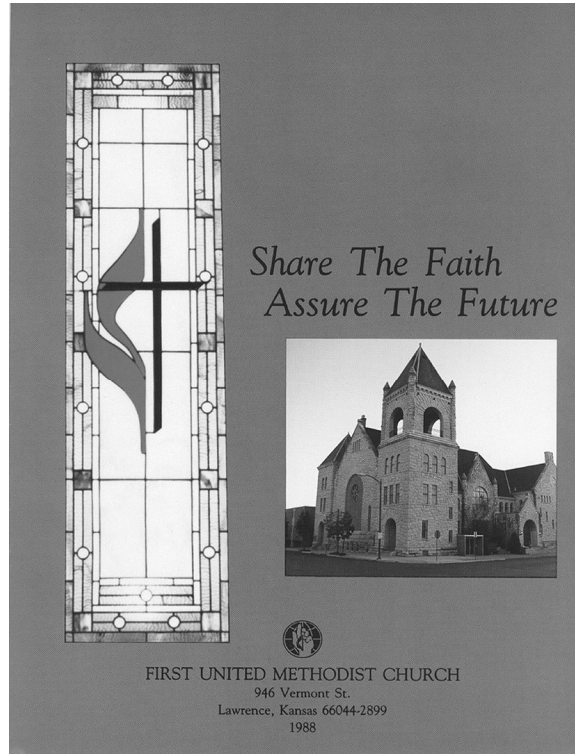
The funding was sought for major renovation of our church facility including:

- 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

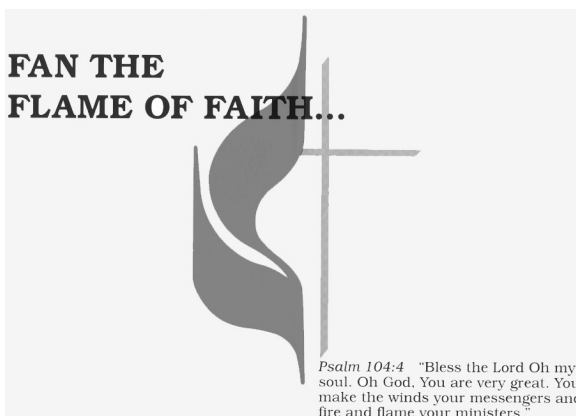
Each of the capital campaigns had a formal structure, a theme, and a paid professional fundraiser/director to guide the process. The brochure covers, dates, and amounts pledged are shown here.



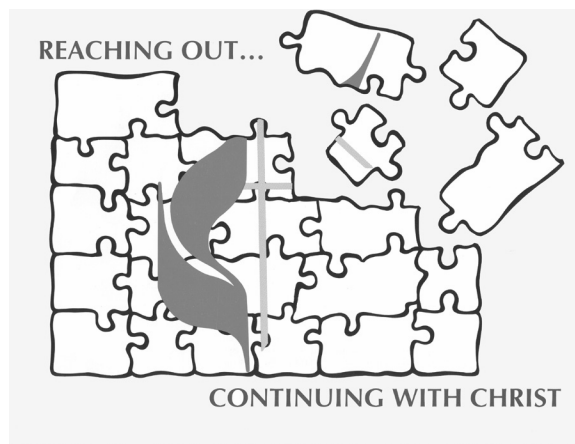
Share The Heritage – A Church For All Ages  
 1985-1988 Prof. Director: Colin Gormon  
 3-year pledges: \$680,000 actual: \$653,700



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



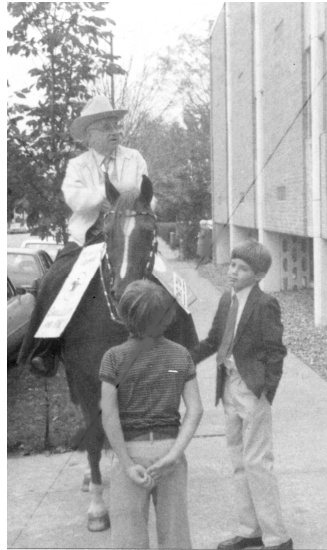
Reaching Out ... Continuing With Christ  
 1994 -1997 Prof. Director: Frances Manson  
 3-year pledges: \$ 814,000 actual: \$395,780

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
	Roberta 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 8<sup>th</sup> Festival of Praise. On February 12<sup>th</sup> the youth sponsored a Sunday evening Valentine Box Supper, reminiscent of another era. The February 26<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup>, 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 communitywide 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. 17<sup>th</sup> [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 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 fulltime 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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:

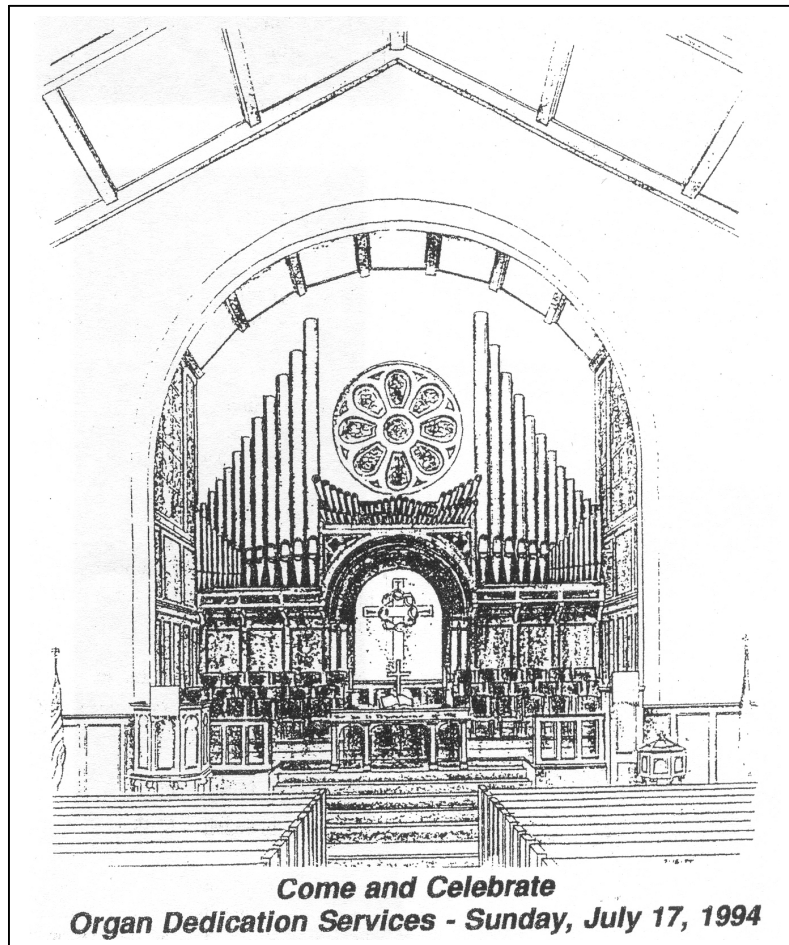
“I would like for you to think about four things. First, go back to about 1985 and recall the condition of our church house, e.g. the vulnerable heating/AC system, the water in our very small old Fellowship Hall, and don’t forget the asbestos. Second, think about the addition of the elevator, the Gathering 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 membervolunteer. 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 MidMorning 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 MidMorning 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 13<sup>th</sup> year as Senior Pastor at First Church. The Church was growing in programs and participation. Some members became concerned that Virgil might be reassigned. Pastorate 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.”

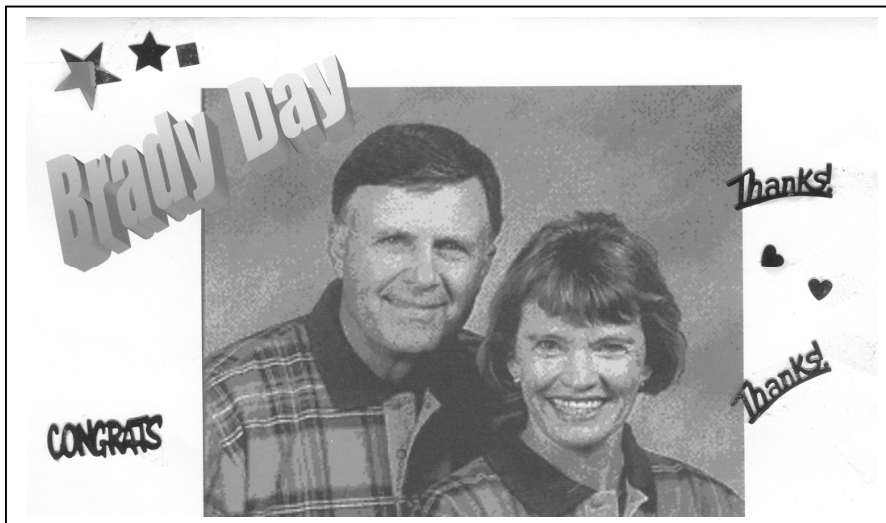
Virgil’s last Sunday in the pulpit as senior pastor was June 6, 1999, and a reception for Virgil and Elaine was held on Monday, June 7. Writing about that event a week later he observed the following.

“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