A History of the Ada United Methodist Church

Celebrating a Century: Reflections of Faith

1899-1999

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

1 Corinthians 14:40

J.I. Wexler, Former Pastor

Wm. H. Brackney, Pastor
Cover photograph of the Ada First United Methodist Church is taken from Cliff Landon's photograph collection, *Ada and the O.N.U.*, published in 1902. The sketch of the first Ada Methodist Church at the corner of Highland Avenue and Gilbert Street was drawn by Ruth Roider from a sketch found in *The Ada Record* at the time the new church was built.
Preludes and Contexts

In the approximate 2000 years of Christian history and in its world-wide expansion, a local church existing for a bit over 100 years in a small Ohio town is a small item in the grand ecclesial scheme of things. And as is evident in this writing, the context of this one small-town church is set against another grand scheme of national and world political, economic, and cultural changes.

Yet, this church is also set in the life of a small town and in the lives of individuals who, one by one, and in their uniqueness influence its worship and ministry. And, the church is also the context for the life of the town and all those individuals whose lives it touched briefly or intimately and regularly for a lifetime. It is hard to describe all that a church does and all that shapes its being and doing. For beyond the myriad details of history, town, and individual lives, the church is propelled by a Spirit that Scripture tells us “blows where it will.”

And, the Spirit still is a-blowin’. All that has been its context to now is its own context for the future—a prelude to the next period of worship and witness, ministry, fellowship, and service. The First United Methodist Church of Ada will respond to the world and the church beyond itself; it will still touch the lives of one Ohio town and its people with the intimacy and power of the risen Christ in whose name is our redemption and our service. Praise be to God who dwells among us. Amen.

Rev. Wayne Albertson,
Minister, Ada First United Methodist Church
Foreword

One source for the Centennial History Committee, the newspaper copy of the 1898 church history, was a real find for it traced Methodism in Ada from 1852 until the dedication of the stone church on the corner of Main and Highland. It gave the committee a list of preachers, pastors, and historical facts we did not know. The leather-bound church record books brought from the old wooden church to the new stone church were a wonderful source for understanding the need for a new church.

Our mission was to write the 100-year history of the stone church, and we concentrated on that research during the year. The leather-bound handwritten records from the old Methodist Church on the corner of Gilbert and Highland were rediscovered by Rev. Wayne Albertson toward the end of our mission and deserve a history of their own.

Following the Bible’s admonition printed on the first page of the old records to “Let all things be done decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:40), the pastors listed church officials, trustees of the parsonage on Gilbert Street, the stewards, and the church members. After each member’s name was his residence, his date of baptism (“sprinkled” or “immersed”), sometimes a marriage date, and often the date of his death. Listed beside each member’s name was his membership status, “by confession of faith,” “by transfer of letter” or “probation.” The signature of Rev. DeLisle, who helped build the wooden church, was in the record book. The early pastor making the entry often added a personal notation: “She died at 85 years a peaceful death” or perhaps a brief, “Gone to the Baptists.”

Even though some of the handwritten entries are faded and difficult to read, the “class lists” were written down in 1886 by the class leaders. Samuel Arbuthnot listed 25 members in his class; J. T. Cunningham, 37 members; A. A. Thomas, 33 members; William Gardner, 30 members; John Davenport, 40 members; J.C. McDowell, 31 members; John Keckler, 32 members, and Elmer Helms, 20 members. These were listed as members of the Ada Society. The little church was expanding.

In addition, 32 or more class members were listed at Sugar Grove and others at the Ames Chapel outside the village of Ada. Until they had their own churches, leaders from the Ada Methodist Society or circuit preachers led the congregations in worship. Some worshipers attended the
wooden church in Ada, but country Methodists often found it easier to drive a horse and buggy to the Scott's Crossing schoolhouse to the east on State Rt. 81 where the Sugar Grove class met, or the Wood schoolhouse to the west on County Rd. 20 where the Ames Chapel class met.

According to Anna Mary Shanks, the church historian, the Sugar Grove United Methodist Church was built in 1898 by the congregation. It has remained an active church serving a wide community. According to Ruth Ferguson, the Ames Chapel, where Ruth’s family attended, was located a mile and a half west from State Rt. 235 on County Rd. 20. When its congregation disbanded in the 1920s, the church building became part of a farm until it was torn down six or seven years ago. According to the 1883 History of Hardin Country, Rev. Samuel Hagerman helped the Ames Chapel class reorganize and John Peltier was the leader in 1875. John Peltier is the great-grandfather of David Peltier, a current member of the Ada First United Methodist Church. History has come full circle.

Betty Miller, Ada First United Methodist historian
CELEBRATING A CENTURY: REFLECTIONS OF FAITH

Introduction

On June 18, 1899, Ada, Ohio, Methodists realized a dream of many years and dedicated the new stone church on Main Street. It replaced the two-story wooden church on the corner of Gilbert and Hoosier Streets (Highland Avenue) built in 1868.

The congregation had grown to 400, and Ohio Northern University had two buildings with over 2,000 students. The village was also growing and needed a large building where community youth and adults could gather for social and cultural events. With the support of Ohio Methodists, the eight other Ada churches, village businesses, area farmers, the college, and community leaders, the cornerstone was laid and building began in 1898.

On Sunday June 18, 1899, other pastors in Ada dismissed their congregations so they could gather with the Methodists for the dedication. Distinguished guests from all over the state joined the large crowd as Bishop C. C. McCabe, The Reverend Dr. D. H. Moore, editor of The Western Christian Advocate, and Reverend John Wean, the pastor, presided.

The M.E. Church in Ada - A Retrospect

This record begins with a copy of the history of early Methodism in Ada placed in the cornerstone of the new stone church on Sunday, May 29, 1898. Printed later in the June 23, 1898, issue of The University Herald it did not include an author’s name.

“At the laying of the cornerstone Sunday, May 29, 1898, the following brief history of the church was deposited in the stone.

God’s call has always triumphed. His promises have ever been fulfilled. His servants have continually been blessed. The development of his church on earth forms the true world history. Men have failed of their duty, the enemy has made fierce warfare all down through the ages, the progress of right has oft been hidden by the clouds of gloom and misfortune, but out of the defeat has come victory, out of darkness has Jehovah’s banner come triumphant.

Today, as Methodism plants this beautiful stone temple, a legacy from the Ada of 1898 to the greater Ada of the future, we can look back to the church’s beginnings a half century ago, and we can truly say that God’s hand has shaped our history, and his approbation and blessing have rested upon our work. Small beginnings they were, indeed, but little by little the tender plant took root, grew and has borne greater fruit at each succeeding harvest.

The spirit of Methodism began to manifest itself when the hardy pioneers first blazed the way for civilization through these primeval forests. In 1852 and 1853 a few settlers banded together in a “class,” holding meetings in the old school house which stood at the corner of what is now Main and Montfort Streets [the original spelling of Montford Avenue]. Ada was then composed of a few log cabins and other primitive buildings, some of them separated from each
other by standing timber, and forests surrounding all. Much of the land upon which the present town stands was low and swampy. The name of the settlement was Johnstown, by which it was known until 1868, when it was changed to Ada. [The post office in Washington officially changed the name to Ada in 1855, but the depot name was not changed to Ada until 1867 according to Agnew Welsh in his *History of the Ada Community.*]

Rev. Samuel Hagerman, a local preacher residing at Huntersville, assisted in organizing this first ‘class’ which proved to be the beginning of Methodism in Ada. He was an earnest, consecrated worker, a powerful speaker, and was loved and respected throughout this sparsely settled region. Our church is probably more deeply indebted to him than to any other man for her existence. He passed to his reward August 30, 1884, but his work abides.

Among the pioneer members were Mr. Jacob Slechter, J. B. Tyler, Eliza Tyler, Margaret Johnson, Harmon Gilbert and wife, Daniel Oyer and wife, Mrs. Brundage and daughter, Eli Newman, wife and daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson, and a brother by the name of Hinkle. The society first was a part of the Huntersville circuit, and Rev. Unity helped to build it up. The circuit in those days included a very large area, so the pastor could rarely visit one point more than once a month, and his journeying around this circuit often covered hundreds of miles through wild, unsettled country and across bridgeless streams. Heroes indeed were those pioneer men of God who spent their life in the saddle to carry the unsearchable riches of the gospel through the wilderness.

It was customary to have two preachers for these large circuits, a “senior” and “junior” preacher. Rev. Jacob Holmes and Rev. William Gardner were in charge of Huntersville circuit when the Johnstown class was first admitted, in 1855, and consequently were the first regular pastors of the Ada church. The next year Rev. Holmes and probably Samuel Hagerman were in charge. In 1854 Jason Wilcox, Philip Wareham and J. K. Ford, super-numerary, served the work. Rev. Henry M. Close followed, being pastor in 1855 and 1856. Rev. Edward Williams served one year, 1857, and the late revered Joseph Good the succeeding two years. In 1860 Joshua A. Smith was pastor.

The church at this time consisted of but a handful of members, but they were brave, devoted, consecrated workers, and their children who today plant this grand new edifice have inherited these same qualities.

It was in the year 1861 that Johnstown was attached to the Patterson circuit, with Rev. Joseph Wykes and Rev. J. C. Castor as senior and junior preachers. This year the first church structure in Ada was begun, the old frame Presbyterian
church, which was replaced on the same site by the present brick church in
1890. We are told the Methodists assisted the Presbyterians in building this ini-
tial house of worship. After its completion the Methodists forsook the school
house and for a time worshiped with the Presbyterians. This was a time of rapid
growth, and soon the membership began to long for a permanent home of their
own.

During the pastorate of Rev. James S. DeLisle in 1866, the work of building
was undertaken. There were no cornerstone laying ceremonies as the first Meth-
odoxist church was begun, but the membership came together and put up the frame
as in an old-fashioned “barn raising,” the women cooking for the “raisers” as
they continued to do while the building was in progress. There were deeds of
heroic self-sacrifice then as now—it requires sacrifice, self-denial, devotion to
build a church. But it is this self-sacrifice that makes the sanctuary dearer to us.
The old church is a massive wooden frame. The older members fondly recall
how Rev. DeLisle toiled mentally and physically to aid the building, and how he
cut his foot quite seriously while at work. He hobbled to conference and re-
marked that he had become one of the hewed pillars of the church.

But there was a division of opinion as to the location and plan of the church.
The people began to lose heart in the enterprise and when the lower story of the
church was completed it was used for meetings, but the upper story was left
unfinished. For seventeen years the church stood in this unfinished condition,
not being completed until the pastorate of Rev. A. C. Barnes in 1883.

The year 1862 was spent under the ministry of Rev. Joseph Wykes and Rev.
Silas B. Maltsie. The following year was made memorable by the first great
revival when eighty conversions were recorded. Rev. Wm. J. Peck and Rev. H.
J. Bigley were the pastors, the former continuing three years, but Rev. Bigley
was followed in 1864 by Rev. Thomas J. Mather. From that time on there was
but one pastor.

The year 1866 is marked by the organization of Johnstown circuit, and by its
building movement. Rev. J. M. DeLisle was pastor this year and the following
year. The venerable record-book of the church, still in use though nearly filled,
was first used at the quarterly conference held December 22, 1866, and the min-
utes from that time to the present show the growth and development of the church.
On its title page is the characteristic admonition of Rev. DeLisle in his own
handwriting, “Keep a Clean Record.”

The years 1870, 1871 and 1872 formed the pastorate of Rev. J. W. Hill, who
with Sister Hill in 1895 returned to Ada as a superannuate to spend his declining
years in blessed fellowship with his former flock. Rev. Isaac N. Smith served
the circuit the next three years, and Rev. Philip A. Drown, now in Louisiana,
was his successor in 1876 and 1877.

Rev. Dwight R. Cook came to Ada for 1878, and returned in 1880 and 1881
for a second pastorate. The year 1879 was begun by Rev. Fitzgerald and fin-
ished by Rev. Jesse Carr. Through the untiring efforts of Rev. Cook the present
parsonage beside the old church was built in 1879. It is a convenient and pleas-
ant ministerial home.

The three years 1885-87 were filled by that valiant soldier of Christ, Rev.
Gershom Lease, a man among men, formerly our presiding elder. Rev. Daniel
Carter succeeded in 1888, remaining one year.
Rev. M. M. Figley began his pastorate in 1889 and bears the distinction of being the only pastor of Ada who remained the full Methodist itinerant limit, five years. This was a period of peace and good fellowship and of Christian and temporal growth.

When the old frame church was built, it was asked why build such a large church here in the woods? It will never be needed. But the prophetic vision seemed to be given to the brave pioneer Methodist who responded, "Why some day the whole conference will sit in this church." That prediction was verified in September, 1894, when the Central Ohio Conference held its annual session here, Bishop Goodsell presiding.

Rev. R. W. Wallace, now superintendent of the Blind Asylum in Columbus, was pastor here in 1895 and Rev. Peter Biggs in 1896. These worthy brethren were followed in 1897 by Rev. S. L. Boyers, "the indefatigable," through whose generalship the new stone church was begun. The building movement started as far back as 1892, but the members were divided on the location, part of the church insisting that the new church be erected on South Main street and others urging a site on North Main. The controversy delayed the building for several years, but now it is settled, and the church, unified and enthusiastic, is building a grand temple for God. Today the Methodist church of Ada throws off her swaddling clothes. With God's blessing she has become a great power for good, and we tremble at the possibilities of the future. May these walls live to see the world taken for Christ."

**A History of the Ada United Methodist Church**

The 1898 Ada newspaper accounts of the laying of the cornerstone for the new Ada Methodist Episcopal Church included a list of items placed in the stone "from this generation to the next century."

Copies of a Bible, the early church history, a Methodist hymnal, national Christian publications, letters from Bishops, a history of the Ladies Aid Society, a work by John Wesley, and Central Ohio Conference minutes left a spiritual legacy.

To give us a sense of their time in history, the 1898 congregation also included "the declaration of war with Spain," the call for troops, a list of ships of the Navy, an account of Dewey's victory at Manila, an account of Gladstone's death, and "a souvenir of the World's Fair."

So that we might know something of their smaller world in Ada, Ohio, they left a catalogue of the Ohio Normal University, a program of the Eisteddfod [the Welsh name for a competition among choral groups organized for Ada by Hugh Owens who taught music at ONU] and current copies of the two Ada newspapers, *The University Herald* and *The Ada Record*.

As the 1998 Centennial Committee began to record the history of the first 100 years in the present stone church, we used old church records. As the earlier congregation had done, we also included social and world events that affected the people who lived and worshiped in a century of wars and change.
1897-1899

The United States annexes the Hawaiian Islands in 1897. Discovery of gold in the Klondike starts a new gold rush. John Philip Sousa writes "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

Ada Methodists organize on March 5, 1897, electing Mr. Keckler president. The discussion topic is "building a new church." and a committee is appointed to investigate sites: Mr. Fess, Mr. McDowell, Mr. Maglott, Mr. Cunningham, and Rev. Boyers. On June 4, they adopt a purchase order for the Montgomery property, and in July they take out a bank loan to pay for the property.

In 1898, the United States battleship Maine blows up in Havana harbor killing 260 men. Two months later Congress declares war on Spain. Leonard Wood and Teddy Roosevelt form the "Rough Riders." Gideons International has its beginnings in Wisconsin when two traveling salesman resolve to "put the Word of God into the hands of the unconverted." Expanding their program, by 1908 they place 25 bibles in a Montana hotel. Campbell soups, cornflakes and Pepsi are introduced to the U. S.

Frederick Maglott is elected Ada Methodist trustee president in 1898. The trustees incorporate and reorganize as The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Ada. [see Appendix I for official names of the church]. In April, they sign a contract with George Kratt to begin the building of the new church and make plans to lay the cornerstone on May 29, 1898. The cost of the church is estimated at $26,800 and that cost includes an organ. In July, Rev. Boyers asks for a release and Rev. J. W. Hill is appointed to fill Rev. Boyers' unexpired term as pastor. In June and July, the trustees borrow $14,400 in loans from the Ada Savings Bank and individuals. In September, they take out a first mortgage on the new church. The contractor tells them it will cost $3,500 to install the glass and furnace before winter. The trustees vote to move ahead. In October, the trustees meet with Rev. Wean, the new pastor, to file a request for funds from the Philadelphia church extension office. They authorize the sale of the old seats and of property given to them by church members. In November, they pay H. M. Hooker & Co. $1,000 for glass.
In 1899, H. S. Lehr relinquishes ownership and presidency of the Ohio Normal University (Ohio Northern University) when the Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church buys it for $24,000. In January 1899 local church trustees accept a $1,000 loan from L. D. McMillen, a $300 loan from J. T. Wean, and borrow $1,500 from the bank. They sign a contract “for organ bought of John Brown” of Wilmington, Delaware.

The new church is dedicated on June 18, 1899.

On June 23, 1899, the trustees accept D. G. Hall’s offer to buy the old church and 60 feet of grounds for $800. They vote to rent the new church to Prof. Owens for an oratorio performance for $12, to the school for a musical and elocutionary program for $12, and to a group for an oratorical contest for $6. At this meeting, the trustees decide “to draft rules governing the use of the church.”

1900-1914

The 1900 U. S. Census shows there are 76 million Americans, of whom 6 million are Methodists. Farmers comprise 42 percent of the U. S. population, and the average farm has 147 acres. Life expectancy for men is 46 years and 48 years for women. The average household has 4.8 people. One in three U. S. homes has a telephone. Eastman Kodak introduces the Brownie box camera for $1.00. Wheat sells for 70 cents a bushel and corn for 33 cents a bushel.

For the Methodists, 1900 is a busy year paying off loans, renewing bank notes, hiring janitors, buying coal instead of wood for the new furnace, making parsonage repairs, and building a fence between the church and Dr. Montgomery’s house on Highland. The Ada Union School holds its baccalaureate at the church. The pastor’s salary is $1,110 and total yearly expenses are $2,000. At the quarterly conference October 1, 1900, presided over by Dr. W. W. Lance, the following church leaders are present: Rev. Wean, Rev. Wilson, J. W. Keckler, H. Rothenrock, James Mathews, C. L. Cole, Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. McDowell, Mrs. Povenmire, and M. E. Cunningham. E. E. McCoppin and S. D. Fess are confirmed as class leaders.

President William McKinley is assassinated September 6, 1901, and Theodore Roosevelt, at 42, becomes the youngest president in U. S. history. The first Nobel Prize for Medicine is awarded to Emil von Behring for his diphtheria antitoxin. Baseball’s American League is organized.

All churches in Ada hold memorial services for President McKinley. In 1891, McKinley and Ohio Governor Campbell had been in Ada at the invitation of H. S. Lehr to debate ‘free trade’ at the fairgrounds. Methodist trustees buy a lawn mower for $4.50 and repair the church roof. They rent the organ for 25 cents per practice to three young ladies in the village. Hattie Atkinson is confirmed as president of the Epworth League and also as a member of the official board. Maggie Davenport and Hollis Scott take their places as church board members.

Cuba gains independence from Spain and U. S. troops withdraw in 1902. The Rose Bowl football game has its beginnings when Michigan defeats Stanford at the Tournament of Roses. United Mine Workers begin a five-month strike
that cripples the country. George Baker, a coal company owner, says the laboring man will be protected "not by labor agitators but by the Christian men to who God in His infinite wisdom has given control of the property interests of this country."

The Methodist trustees give permission for the Anti-Saloon League of Ohio to hold a temperance meeting at the church in 1902. Pastor Brackney announces a series of revival services. The services are open to anyone in the village. The trustees vote to add $2,500 more insurance for the church. The total budget is $2,080. At an official board meeting, S.D. Fess moves that a boy be employed "to assist in pumping the organ."

The U. S. Supreme Court upholds the Alabama State Constitution denying blacks the right to vote in 1903. Two-thirds of U. S. motorcars sell below $1,375 but still don't present any competition for the horse and buggy or the railroad. Ada streets are paved with brick. In February, the Hon. William Jennings Bryan speaks to a large crowd on "A Conquering Nation" at the Ada Methodist Episcopal Church. His thesis: "Government may be a blessing or a curse." The Wright brothers of Dayton make a 59-second flight of 852 feet at a 15-foot altitude in "Flyer I."

The February 18, 1903, issue of The Ada Record gives an account of a fire at the Ada Methodist Episcopal Church: "A blaze was burning on the south side, near the big chimney, under the roof." The fire reaches the tower and "it was feared for a few minutes the church would be doomed." The volunteer fire department is called at 4:00 p.m. A crowd soon gathers on Main Street, and the firemen and volunteers from the crowd are able to put out the fire. The loss is estimated at $5,000 to $7,000 damage, fully covered by insurance. Water has damaged the carpets and seats below; part of the roof and some rafters will have to be replaced; and the plaster and frescoing will need repair. Because it is situated in an alcove, the organ escapes water damage. The Record reports the cause may have been in the electric wiring.

The church trustees meet immediately to further assess the damage and begin repair of the church. By April, they are paying bills for carpet cleaning, taking down lamp globes for cleaning, "allowing Mr. Cunningham $3.00 for new carpet," and paying carpenters for materials. In October, The Record reports, "The Methodist Church people showed appreciation for the heroic efforts of the firemen in saving their church by serving them an elegant supper." The grateful members also take up a collection and give the firemen $66 for their fund.

Marie Curie discovers radium and polonium in 1904. President Teddy Roosevelt

Postcard photo of evangelist Billy Sunday who held a revival that many from the community attended in Lima, Ohio. Postcard: Betty Park Miller.
wins the election. His opponent is Judge Alton B. Parker, the nominee in preference to William Jennings Bryan who campaigned in Ada. The first African-American is admitted to Ohio Northern University.

In 1904, Rev. J. W. Hill begins a series in The Ada Record on his 50 years in the Methodist ministry. In the account of his Ada Charge, he tells of his decision to be a Presbyterian “half the time” when they have no leader for evening services. He combines the two church groups and meets every other week at each church. One of his Sunday sermons is titled, “The Ox That Rushed With His Horns.”

A San Francisco earthquake kills 2,500 people and causes more than $400 million in property damage in 1906. Congress appropriates $2.5 million for relief, and New York bankers make large loans to rebuild San Francisco. The U.S. War department begins excavation of the Panama Canal. The forward pass is legalized in football.

The church trustees pay a bill for $28.72 to Ada Heat and Light Co. for 1904-05 and purchase “new lights for the galleries on either side of the auditorium.” They borrow money from parishioners for walks to meet the new Ada street level. They also have to borrow money for organ repairs in 1906.

The Boy Scouts of America are founded by Daniel Beard in 1910. The Camp Fire Girls of America are founded the same year. President William Howard Taft comes to Ada on June 3, 1910, to give the Ohio Northern University commencement address. Ada Wesleyan Church, on the corner of College and Gilbert [see Appendix II for a history of the Wesleyan Church], is sold to the university for a music building.

In 1911, the Ladies Aid Society of Ada Methodist Episcopal Church advertises one of its many ways of making money for its missions, “A Feast of Days.” On Monday, a washday dinner starts the week of special meals. The cost is 25 cents.

In 1913, U.S. Suffragettes (5,000 of them) march in Washington. The men watching the parade spit on them, slap them, and poke them with lighted cigars. Clergyman George Bennard writes “The Old Rugged Cross.”

Old Normal building on the ONU campus is razed for the construction of the new Lehr building. In November 1913, the administration building is nearly destroyed by fire. Ada churches and businesses provide space for classrooms, and President A. E. Smith begins plans to complete Lehr and rebuild the administration building that will be renamed in honor of Rev. John Wesley Hill Sr. Methodist churches in the state and members of the Ada community help President Smith raise funds.
1912: Ada Methodist Church Fenwick Sunday School Class. Photo: Ada Methodist Church Collection.
1914-1918 World War I

World War I begins after the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Bosnia. President Wilson proclaims the first Mothers’ Day. A popular song is “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to be a Soldier.” America seems more interested in events at home than in the war in Europe. President Wilson sends a fleet to Tampico, and U. S. forces occupy Vera Cruz in April 1914 to deal with hostile acts by Mexicans. Pancho Villa raids Columbus, New Mexico, killing 17 Americans, and U. S. forces under General John Pershing try to “capture Villa dead or alive.” Ada men in the National Guard leave for the border. Villa evades the forces and they are later withdrawn.

Ohio Governor Frank B. Willis, a former ONU teacher, appoints a committee “to prepare the argument in favor of the statewide prohibition amendment.” Prof. C. H. Freeman teaches the popular Students’ Sunday School class at the Methodist Church. Ada churches join the community at Ream’s Grove for the first Farmers and Merchants Picnic. As the war in Europe continues, Ada hears vigorous arguments for and against American participation in the war. Both peace and war rallies are held in the churches and at the university.

In April 1917, because of a growing threat of German submarines on American shipping, President Wilson sends General Pershing and an American Expeditionary Force to join the British and French in the “Great War for enduring peace.” By August, 25 or more Ada and ONU students graduate from Fort Benjamin Harrison and leave for France. The women of the Ada Methodist Episcopal Church join others in “war relief work, making quilts and comforts and garments for French orphans.”

An armistice is signed by Germany and the Allies on November 11, 1918. The war has cost America 115,000 lives and $22 billion. Tanks, airplanes, and poison gas have been introduced to warfare. The 1918 Farmers and Merchants Picnic welcomes home returning veterans. All Ada churches meet in Lehr auditorium for memorial services to honor those killed in the war and to hold an afternoon Patriotic Peace Mass. A new and intriguing ad appears in an Ada newspaper: “Mr. Edison’s wonderful Phonograph delivered for only a small payment down.”
1920-1929

The first radio station, KDKA in Pittsburgh, goes on air in November 1920 to announce results of the Harding-Cox election. Ada receives the news through crystal sets. Over three million Americans are out of work. One in every three families lives on a farm. Polio cripples former Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt.

Polio also strikes the infant son of Ada Methodist Episcopal Church members, Stewart and Eva Main, in 1921. The slogan for the Methodist Sunday School in 1921 is “An Easter Dollar by Every Scholar.” The Sunday School collection on Easter is $152. The Ada Herald runs a church news column giving an informal view of the life of the church during this period. In 1922, “The beautiful paintings given to the church by Aunt Maggie Davenport are now framed and grace the walls of the Ladies’ Parlor.” In 1923, “an old friend purchased 100 new song books for the Epworth League. The old books had been sung out.” In 1924, “106 new members of Ada Methodist are received by the pastor, Rev. Vorhis.” The Ada Herald announces the pastor’s sermon on the Sunday before the 1927 election: “Christian Use of the Ballot.”

Production of automobiles in 1922 leads to seven years of U. S. prosperity and “The Jazz Age” begins. The first full-length talking movie, “The Jazz Singer” is produced in 1927, but silent films have been in Ada before the “Odeon” was built in 1914. The Ada clergy begin to preach on the movies’ corruptive influence in the community. The National Football League is organized in 1920 although baseball is still the national sport. Golf becomes a popular sport for men. In 1929, Will Rogers has the whole country laughing with his Congressional slogans: “Be a Politician—no training necessary;” “Come to Washington and raise your own Pay;” “Join the Senate and investigate something.”

Events of the last half of the decade point to events in the future. Stalin becomes dictator in the Soviet Union; John Scopes is found guilty of teaching evolution in the public schools; Lindbergh completes a solo transatlantic flight in 33 hours; Chiang Kai-shek, a confirmed Methodist, becomes the military and political leader of China; penicillin is discovered in England; the stock market begins to rise and fall; signs of drought appear in the U. S. southwest and upper Great Plains; farm prices continue to drop. Kodak offers cameras for home movies; wind-up gramophones are electrified. Scotch Tape, broccoli, Hostess cupcakes, mobile home trailers and Mickey Mouse are introduced.

1922: Ada Methodist Church Senior Centenary Class. Photo: Ada Methodist Church Collection.
Despite these distractions, the Fenwick Class of the Ada Methodist Church increases its membership to 150. Consisting mostly of women, the class holds its social meetings in homes, with a Halloween party or with programs consisting of "duets by the Zickafoose girls' or recitations by "little Miss Tyson." They have Bible study classes, make home visits, and take care of someone in the community "in need of a mattress or bedding."

In minutes much briefer than the ladies' minutes, the men's Goodsell Club chooses for its Bible study "How to Secure Respect for Law" or "Why God Chose Abraham." Their church projects include "painting the dining room," "a heater for the dining room," "oyster suppers," and "father-son banquets."

The life of the Ada Methodists goes on although the trustees are concerned with the increasing debt as more members are unable to pay their pledges. The social hall is used by community groups for suppers and club banquets. The Sunday School classes are filled, and the Epworth League keeps the young people of the church busy. Leaders of the Lend-A-Hand Circle in 1923-24 are Eva Tyson, Gail Foss, Mattie Mertz, Mamie Raabe, and Agnes Wolfrom. A 1925-26 program for the Women's Missionary Society shows the group elects secretaries for "Mite Box, Queen Esthers, Home Guards, and Mothers' Jewels." As the women do their part, the men of the church work on repairs and improvements to keep the church alive spiritually and materially. The decade ends in tragedy as Ora Dirmeyer, the church custodian, falls while adjusting the lights for Sunday service. He falls 18 feet, hitting his head on a heavy seat and dies the next day.

1930-1935

In 1930, a general world economic depression sets in as world trade declines, production drops, and unemployment increases; 4.5 million Americans are out of work. More than 1,300 banks close during the year. United Airlines cuts flying time from New York to San Francisco to 28 hours and hires the first airline stewardesses. The kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby makes international headlines. U. S. radio set sales increase to 13.5 million. Blondie and Dagwood debut in the comic strips. "The Lone Ranger" begins as a radio drama. Movie studios rush to make "talkies." The total number of U. S. farms is about 6.3 million. Average annual farm income is $400. Pre-sliced Wonder Bread, the automatic toaster, Hostess Twinkies, and Snickers candy bars are introduced.

Earl Huber, Paul Motter, and E. R. McCleary are president, secretary, and treasurer of the Ada Methodist trustees. In 1930, the trustees approve a 90-day Liberty Bank loan for $600 to pay outstanding debts until the congregation can pay its pledges. The church secretary, H. M. Povenmire, is asked to send reminder letters to those owing on pledges to the building fund. The trustees authorize the purchase of 15 tons of coal from the Sousley Coal Co. and 10 tons from Baransy and Wolf from at $7.25 per ton. All college religious groups are given free access to the church for their functions as long as the Ladies' Aid Society is in charge when the kitchen is used. The trustees ban smoking for all groups that rent the church.

In the U. S., 2,294 more banks fail in 1931 and unemployment reaches 8,000,000. President Hoover recommends emergency public works to Congress. Penicillin is used in England to treat eye infections. Congress votes
March 3, 1931, to designate “The Star Spangled Banner” as the U. S. national anthem. Salvador Dalí’s surrealist paintings draw attention and ridicule. Mechanical refrigerator sales top 1,000,000. “Dick Tracy” is a new comic strip, and “Little Orphan Annie” makes her radio debut.

In 1931, as hard times affect the community, the bank note for Methodist Church repairs is overdue and pledges are still unpaid. The Ladies’ Aid Society offers to assume the repair debt. Three new trustees, Elbin, Klingler, and Ahlfeld, take their positions in the church.

In 1932, Nazi leader, Herman Goering, is elected president of the Reichstag. Franklin Roosevelt wins the U. S. election, defeating Hoover in a landslide, as economic depression worsens. The average weekly wage drops to $17, and breadlines form in many American cities. The Dow-Jones drops from a 381.17 high to 41.22. U. S. Rt. 66 opens to link Chicago and Los Angeles. It is soon lined with motor courts, Burma Shave signs, and gift shops. At the Yankees-Cubs World Series, Babe Ruth, with two strikes against him, points to the flagpole and hits the next pitch out of Wrigley Field. Wheat prices drop to 25 cents a bushel and sugar to 3 cents a pound.

In 1932, the Ada Methodist trustees deal with janitors who come and go, furnace problems, and the price of coal. Church members in Ada try to aid those who need help in the community. Meetings are held in homes to conserve heat in the church. The Republican Committee asks to rent the chairs for a meeting in the Armory. The trustees vote not to let the chairs leave the church. “Misses Hearst, Wiant, and Martha Helen Cole are given permission to use the pipe organ.” Dome Insurance gets the bid for the church insurance.

In 1933, Adolph Hitler begins 12 years as dictator of the German Reich, and Franklin Roosevelt begins 12 years as president of the United States. FDR proclaims a national bank holiday. Lynchings spread across the South as 42 black persons are killed by lynch mobs. Typical annual U. S. salaries in 1933: congressman, $8,663; lawyer, $4,218; physician, $3,382; engineer, $2,250; public school teacher, $1,227 and hired farm hand, $216. Gasoline sells for 18 cents a gallon. FDR begins his radio “fireside chats” to calm depression fears and to win support for his New Deal. Women tune their radios to the 15-minute soap operas, “Ma Perkins” and “Helen Trent.” The children tune to “Jack Armstrong the All-American Boy.” Helen Jacobs is the first woman to wear shorts in tennis tournament play. Others still wear knee-length or longer skirts. At least a million destitute farm families receive government relief. The 21st Amendment repeals prohibition. Ritz Crackers and 7-UP are introduced.

In 1933, a concern with the Methodist Church windows is addressed. Willis Shelley is instructed to take care of window glazing and repair of the window sashes. He also replaces some of the broken iron on the windows. Trustee president, Earl Huber, goes before the congregation to ask for extra money to repair the furnace.

Germany’s President von Hindenburg dies in 1934, and Hitler assumes the presidency. The Dionne quintuplets are born in Ontario. Shirley Temple makes her first full-length film at age six. The first launderette, “The Washeteria,” opens in Texas. Dust storms from the west blow 300 tons of soil from Kansas, Texas, Colorado, and Oklahoma. “Oakies” and “Arkies” from the dustbowl begin a move to California.
In order to cut back on expenses, the Methodist trustees reduce the fire insurance on the church by $5,000 and on the parsonage by $2,000. Coal will be purchased only as it is needed. The Three-C’s Sunday School Class asks the trustees for a larger classroom. In 1935, the parsonage is painted for $84. The trustees meet in April, August, and October to hire new janitors.

1936-1940

King George V of England dies in 1936 and is succeeded by his son, David, who abdicates to marry American divorcée, Wallis Simpson. His brother, Albert, becomes George VI. A Spanish civil war begins and some 3,000 Americans join General Franco and the Spanish Loyalist cause. American Jesse Owens is victorious in the 1936 Olympics held in Berlin. President Roosevelt wins reelection, defeating Alf Landon of Kansas. Sulpha drugs come into use in the U. S. *Gone With the Wind* is published and becomes an instant best-seller. Bob Feller signs with the Cleveland Indians and Joe DiMaggio signs with the New York Yankees. General Mills creates the fictitious “Betty Crocker.”

The Ada Methodist Church trustees must make a decision on the ailing pipe organ in 1936. They meet often during the winter months at Huber’s Hardware Store after closing hours so they can conserve heat in the church. In March, they receive a bid for $5,000 from the Toledo Pipe Organ Co. to replace the organ with an offer of a credit of $800 for the old organ. In June, Mr. Bulley of Toledo, who will build the new organ, advises the trustees to rearrange the choir loft before a new organ is installed. The rose window will need to be cleaned and the choir loft repainted. The trustees vote to borrow $3,000 from the Liberty Bank for six months, make an initial payment on an organ, and have the choir loft work done. A committee is appointed to raise funds. The “Townsend Plan folks” offer $10 for the use of the church dining room. After discussion, the trustees decide not to accept the offer.

Neville Chamberlain is British Prime Minister in 1937. The Germans open Buchenwald concentration camp on July 16. Germany’s airship, the Hindenburg, explodes and burns on arrival in New Jersey, killing 36 people. The Golden Gate bridge across San Francisco Bay opens. Japanese forces invade China, embarking on an undeclared war. Diabetics are treated successfully for the first time with zinc protamine insulin. Joe Louis wins the world heavyweight title. A&P opens supermarkets, and the shopping cart is introduced in Oklahoma.

Harold Fox and J. O. Tyson, secretaries of the Goodsell Class at the Ada Methodist Church in the 30s, report in their minutes an average class attendance of 32-38 with the collection averaging $1.50-$2.31. Ruah McNeal, Mrs. Huber, Mrs. Irick and others serve as pianists for the hymn-singing. Brothers Austin Gant, Rev. Holycross, Bert Schurtzer, Oren Dickinson, C. H. Hayden, Guy Cox, Earl Wolfrom, A. E. Goble, George Klingler, and Grant Tressel share the teaching of the lesson until Dean Raabe takes on a permanent role. Mr. Cribble offers guitar music, and Marilyn Packard and Joan Tyson often play piano solos.

In 1937, life begins to improve in Ada. Sixty people are working on WPA projects in Ada, including the new post office, the new municipal building, and the new bath house and swimming pool. Only 13 families are on “direct relief,” and 112 “aged persons” in the area will receive pensions of $20 or more from
the new Social Security plan. Ohio Northern University expects 700 students, the highest enrollment in many depression years.

British Prime Minister Chamberlain and America’s Charles Lindbergh advocate letting Germany expand eastward in 1938 rather than risking war. Twenty to thirty thousand Jews are taken to concentration camps in Germany. Orson Welles’ radio broadcast of “The War of the Worlds” is so realistic that near panic occurs in many areas. Glenn Miller tours with his big band.

In 1937 and 1938, the Ada Methodist trustees discuss repair of the spouting on the church and talk about the possibility of charging a fee for funerals held in the church during the winter months for non-church members. They decide to raise the janitor’s salary to $400 a year.

World War II begins in 1939. Britain and France declare war on Germany as a U-boat sinks two British ships. Marian Anderson tries to rent Constitution Hall in Washington but is refused because of her race. She draws an audience of 75,000 at the Lincoln Memorial. Albert Einstein warns President Roosevelt of the possible future use of uranium energy in the construction of bombs. The first commercial transatlantic passenger air service from New York to Paris begins. Fewer than 60 percent of Americans own cars. “This is London,” are the words over the shortwave radio from CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow as he brings the war in Europe into America’s livingrooms. Frank Sinatra, 23, joins Harry James’ band as a singer. Yankee “Iron Horse” Lou Gehrig gives a tearful farewell to his fans as he takes himself out of the line-up. U. S. college football teams make helmets mandatory.

In 1939, the Ada Methodists are given an opportunity to install chimes in the organ for $250. The trustees decide to ask congregation members to sign pledges to pay for the chimes. Mr. Pat Gobin talks to the trustees about installing a loud speaker in the church. He agrees to install a system with an eight-day approval. H. M.

Povenmire moves the trustees buy a 70- to 100-watt loud speaker for $160. In order to make extensive repairs to the parsonage, the trustees agree to borrow money.

France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Denmark, Norway, and Romania fall to the German "Blitzkrieg" in 1940. Winston Churchill succeeds Chamberlain as prime minister telling the British Commons, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat." Hitler launches an all-out air attack on Britain. FDR wins a third term, defeating Wendell Willkie. The Luftwaffe bombs Coventry in England, destroying the cathedral. The Nazis extend a persecution of the Jews in occupied countries. The first U. S. Social Security checks go out. In June income taxes are raised. The first peacetime military draft in U. S. history begins October 29, 1940. The U. S. Army places orders for 70 of the new Jeeps. The soybean crop reaches 78 million bushels in the U. S.

On August 7, 1940, the charter meeting of the Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS) is held with Rev. George Wilson presiding. The Missionary Society's 103 members and the Ladies Aid Society's 102 members join to form six Circles, each Circle to have no more than 25 members. Taking part in the enrollment ceremony, 255 women sign as charter members. Officers, with Mrs. J. W. Winans as president, are Mrs. J. D. Judkins, Mrs. Mark Ramsey, Mrs. Virginia Enterline, Mrs. J. A. Needy, Mrs. Margaret Whitworth, Mrs. J. W. Black, Mrs. Carl Dickmeyer, Mrs. Jennie Straub, Mrs. Estella Pumphrey, Daisy Bohanan, and Mrs. Clyde Lamb.

1941-1945 World War II

President Roosevelt asks Congress for a Lend-Lease program to aid the Allies and includes $11 billion for national defense in 1941. The America First Committee unites isolationists. German troops invade Soviet Russia. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor. December 8, the U. S. Senate and U. S. House vote for a declaration of war on Japan. Germany declares war on the United States December 11. Londoners whistle the opening motif of Beethoven's 5th Symphony (three dots and a dash for victory) to warn of Nazi sympathizers. Britain receives the first shipment of U. S. Lend-Lease food. Thousands die of starvation and cold in Leningrad because of Russia's severe winter.

The trustees of the Ada Methodist Church thank the Three-Cs class for refurbishing its classroom. Mr. Huber says he will take care of the Fenwick classroom fireplace that is out of order, and a maple tree damaged by a storm in front of the church will be removed. The trustees will see about having a telephone installed in the pastor's study. A bequest of $120 given for the church organ debt by a Los Angeles man is accepted. The trustees also learn the men's Sunday School class has agreed to give $20, Mr. Needy, $7.50, and the Brotherhood, $15 toward the organ debt. The Sunday School teachers ask for carpets in the classrooms. The trustees decide to bring the matter of the church debt before the official board. The janitor resigns because of illness.

In 1942, President Roosevelt calls for production of 60,000 planes, 45,000 tanks, and 20,000 anti-aircraft guns. U. S. troops in Bataan, The Philippines, surrender to the Japanese. Most of the 36,000 men do not survive "the death
march” to prison camps. Eight German saboteurs are captured by the FBI in June two weeks after a U-boat lands them on Long Island and Florida beaches. The Women’s Auxiliary Army Corp (WAAC) and Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES) are authorized by Congress. By executive order, FDR calls for internment of some 110,000 Japanese-Americans living in the Pacific coast area. Nationwide gasoline rationing is ordered in September. Those with “A” stickers are allowed four gallons a week. U. S. sugar rationing begins in May, and coffee rationing begins in November.

The Women’s Society of Christian Service (WSCS) since its formation in 1940, is one of the most active groups in the church during the war. In addition to retreats, Bible study, missionary support, and taking care of communion services and altar flowers, the group cleans and adds to the kitchen equipment, serves banquets and luncheons to help retire the church debt, takes canned fruit and vegetables to hospitals, and sends The Upper Room to servicemen and women. Their programs include “Post-war Plans for Peace” and discussions on Russia and China. Mrs. Clyde Elder is the president.

Rev. Carpenter talks to the Goodsell class about “the effort Methodist churches are making to raise one million dollars for relief in war stricken countries.” When the Goodsell class pays the bills for its father-son banquet, the secretary, Harold Fox, notes, “To the president’s surprise, we had $3.15 left.” In the Sunday morning class, the Goodsells continue to sing their favorite hymns: “Rescue the Perishing,” “Bring Them In,” “The Church in the Wildwood,” “Rock of Ages,” and “Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd.”

British paratroopers and U. S. airborne troops invade Sicily in 1943. Italy surrenders to the Allies. Allied forces take Guadalcanal in the Solomons. Industrial areas in Germany and occupied France are heavily bombed by U. S. planes. In the U. S., meat, cheese, flour, fish, and canned goods are rationed. Shoes are rationed to three pairs a year. “Oklahoma,” by Rodgers and Hammerstein, appears on Broadway. Two popular songs are “Comin’ in on a Wing and a Prayer” and “Mairzy Dotes.”

In 1943, the Ada Methodist Sunday School classes are an important part of the church ministry. In June, attendance is 531 and in July it reaches 907. The junior classes, the Fenwick and Goodsell classes have the largest attendance.
Superintendent Roscover has a full set of officers: Adult, Mr. Roberson; Junior, Mrs. Smith; Orchestra Conductor, Ernie Routson; Secretary, Eleanor Whitworth; Treasurer, Mrs. Dickmeyer; Librarian, Bill Rowe. Sunday School teachers are Nursery, Mrs. Wayne Freeman; Beginners, Mrs. Oscar Fisher and Mrs. Ed Berger; Primary Boys, Mrs. Von Spellman; Primary Girls, Mrs. Luft; Junior Boys, Miss McWilliams; Junior Girls, Betty Estep; Intermediate Girls, Mrs. McAdams; Intermediate Boys, Bob Chandler; High School, Mr. Warthman; Students, Prof. Berger; Three Cs, McAdams and Warthman. In 1932, the Goodsell class loans an Ohio Northern student $200. In 1943, the class receives a check for $200 from the student. The class faith is restored.

In 1944, under the Supreme Command of General Eisenhower, 176,000 Allied troops land at Omaha Beach, Utah Beach and other Normandy beaches on June 6—D-Day. German V-2 “buzz bombs” with warheads of one ton fall on Britain. New U. S. B-29 bombers can now reach Tokyo from Saipan. French troops liberate Paris. President Roosevelt wins re-election to a fourth term, defeating Thomas Dewey. The Battle of the Bulge begins December 16 and takes a heavy toll on U. S. troops. The U. S. Supreme Court rules an American cannot be denied the right to vote in a Texas primary because of his color. The first automatic general purpose digital computer is completed at Harvard. The GI Bill of Rights, passed by Congress in June, will finance college educations and give four percent home loans with no down payment for U. S. veterans. “Kodacolor” gives everyone color snapshots. Farmers increase soybean acreage as new uses are found for the beans.

In April 1944 the trustees face the problem of an ailing furnace in a meeting at the Huber Furniture Store. Something has to be done before another winter. The reports show the committees have been unable to make any definite statement “due to war conditions.” The trustees decide to hold monthly meetings. John Needy is instructed to contact some companies for furnace bids. Milnor and Hall of Lima present plans for a forced hot water heating system. In September, the trustees meet with the finance committee of the official board. Those present are Huber, Fisher, Tipple, McCleary, Powell, Ramsey, Povenmire, Dome, Holycross, and Rev. Tinsler. The group decides the church needs a completely new system if the money can be raised. Repairs should be made at once. In December, Rev. Tinsler reports “some comment among members as to why the work was not started.” The trustees, after “a lengthy discussion,” appoint Rev. Tinsler, Mr. Huber, and Mr. Povenmire to prepare a statement to the congregation on the state of the furnace.

President Roosevelt dies April 12, 1945, at Warm Springs, Georgia, and Vice-President Harry Truman becomes president. Nuremberg falls to the U. S. 7th Army, and Russian troops reach the suburbs of Berlin. Adolph Hitler commits suicide April 30. Germany surrenders May 7, and President Truman proclaims May 8, V-E Day. Toyko refuses to surrender. An atomic bomb is dropped on
Hiroshima, and 200,000 Japanese are killed. Another atomic bomb is dropped on Nagasaki three days later and Japan surrenders. President Truman proclaims August 14, V-J Day. The church bells in Ada ring out the end of the war. Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Dachau are liberated. An estimated 14 million Jews, gypsies, Poles, and Slavs have been killed. Gasoline rationing ends in the U.S., and automobile companies convert to passenger car production. Penicillin and streptomycin are put on the commercial market. Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson has two successful recordings including "Move on Up a Little Higher" and "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands."

In 1945, Ohio Northern and Ada are overflowing with returning soldiers and their families as they take advantage of the G. I. Bill. Every available space is turned into student housing, including government-furnished trailers for the married students. The congregation and the WSCS make a special effort to welcome the soldiers, single and married, at First Methodist Church. The women donate their red ration meat stamps to make sandwiches for after-church lunches. The WSCS also holds a welcoming reception for Rev. and Mrs. Brown. Rev. Brown asks for helpers to meet returning servicemen and strangers at the church door each Sunday. Each circle agrees to provide "greeters" for a month. Karl Roeder comes to teach at Ohio Northern University. He also takes over the Methodist Church music program and the chancel choir in 1945 and continues as director of music at the church until 1970.


1946-1949

Winston Churchill uses the words "Iron Curtain" in a speech in Missouri in 1946. The United Nations General Assembly opens its first session at London in January. In October, it accepts a gift of $8.5 million from John D. Rockefeller Jr. to buy a permanent site in New York. The Nuremberg Tribunal sentences 12 leading Nazis to death. President Truman lifts wage and price controls, and inflation begins to rise in the U.S. A revised version of the American Standard Version of the New Testament of 1901 is published after 17 years of work. U.S.
birthrates soar to 3,411,000 as veterans return, some after three or four years overseas. Westinghouse Laundromats go on the market.

In 1946, as the Methodist Sunday School classes fill with young families, the classes join at times to view religious films before they move to the crowded classrooms or the sanctuary for Sunday School lessons.

The CIA is formed in 1947 by Congress as ordered by President Truman. The “Hollywood Black List” of alleged Communist sympathizers names 300 writers, directors, and actors. The Marshall Plan, proposed by Secretary of State George C. Marshall, gives financial aid to European countries to help them in war recovery. The Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient biblical manuscripts, are discovered by a Bedouin boy exploring a cave. Jackie Robinson signs with the Brooklyn Dodgers and becomes the first black baseball player in the major leagues. The “New Look” in fashion lowers skirt lengths to 12 inches from the floor. UFOs make the headlines.

In May 1947, Rev. and Mrs. Frank Brown, Dr. Robert McClure, and W. B. Wilson attend the Ohio Methodist annual conference in Cincinnati, Bishop Lester Smith presiding. Rev. Brown’s report from the Ada church where he is pastor shows that 440 children and adults are enrolled in the Sunday School classes, and there are 661 church members. The church expenditures “for all purposes” during the church year are $18,501, and the benevolence fund receives $2,394. A strong music program is evident on Saturday evenings as the Sunday School orchestra and the church choir rehearse that night.

In June 1947, the Ada churches hold an Interdenominational Bible School for the community youth. Rev. C. L. Stager of the Ada Lutheran Church and Mrs. Martha Trowbridge are appointed by the committee to be directors. The Bible School is held at the North Grade School building with each church providing teachers. The enrollment is 172.

Ohio Northern University starts a drive for a million dollar endowment fund. Ohio Methodists agree to raise one-half the goal. Since the Ada Methodists feel a special bond with ONU, they take the lead in the community to help raise the $500,000.

The State of Israel is proclaimed May 14, 1948. David Ben-Gurion becomes prime minister and minister of defense. President Truman wins election and embarrasses The Chicago Tribune whose headline that Dewey has won has hit the streets. President Truman issues an executive order ending racial segregation in the U. S. armed forces. Congress reduces income taxes over Truman’s veto; workers strike for higher wages and inflation begins to rise. Pogo makes his debut in a newspaper cartoon and declares, “We have met the enemy and he is us.” Ed Sullivan hosts a new Sunday night television variety show. The 331/3 long-playing phonograph record replaces the old 78 and begins a record industry revolution.

Mrs. Verla Baughman gives her weekly flannelgraph presentation to a large group of children in junior church. In 1948, one of her topics is “What We Know About Jesus—His Nature.” The male quartet, Chester Chambers, Paul Brown, Robert Suhr, and Karl Roider, sing “Holy Spirit, Light Divine” for the adult Sunday service. The Youth Fellowship meets on Sunday evening. Clara Weishampel leads a discussion on “How Sound is Your Mind?” Ronnie Parshall
is the leader of the Junior MYF. Mrs. Brooks Trueblood, an ONU student, speaks to the Women’s Society on “Infiltration of Communism in Our U.S.” In March, several Ada families are quarantined for scarlet fever.

In April 1948, as Rev. Frank Brown is preaching his Sunday sermon, a voice intrudes over the loud speaker in the church. Thinking the voice belongs to a member of the congregation, Rev. Brown chides the speaker. As the interruption continues, Mrs. Brown, who is the organist that Sunday, reaches over and turns the loud speaker off. A state highway patrolman is parked in a cruiser near the church, and a police broadcast has become part of the minister’s sermon.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is created by a treaty signed by 12 countries on April 4, 1949. East Germany is established under Soviet control. The People’s Republic of China is formed in October with Mao Zedong as chairman and Zhou-En-Lai as premier. Typical prices in America: a new Cadillac, $5,000; a gallon of gasoline, 25 cents; a man’s suit, $50; 10-inch TV set, $250; a loaf of bread, 15 cents; a pound of pork, 57 cents. Congress raises the minimum hourly wage from 40 cents to 75 cents. Germany’s Volkswagen introduces its “Beetle” to America, but only two are sold in 1949. Evangelist Billy Graham gains prominence with a tent crusade in Los Angeles. Radio Free Europe begins to send news behind the Iron Curtain. 1984 by George Orwell presents a picture of a future society where “Big Brother is watching you.” The first TV situation comedy, “The Goldbergs,” is soon followed by “Amos and Andy.” General Mills and Pillsbury introduce prepared cake mixes in a box.

In 1949 and 1950, during a period of needed improvements and not enough money, the First Methodist Church women assume some of the church expenses. They raise money by having a series of public dinners and renting the church garage for $2.00 a month. They pay taxes of $32.85 on the parsonage, pay Mr. Reed $11 for “tank repair,” pay Ream’s Hardware $5.50 for plumbing, pay $25 for cesspool cleaning at the parsonage, pay $70 for the painting of the parsonage barn, and pay $50 to the public school for a stove. In addition to the expenses, they contribute $800 to their mission pledge, give $25 for youth work, and give $5 to the Campus Fund for Upper Rooms.

1950-1953

The U.S. population in 1950 is 151 million, double that of 1900. North Korea invades the Republic of South Korea. President Truman authorizes production of the H-bomb. Britain’s George VI dies, and Elizabeth II ascends the throne. Senator Joseph McCarthy reveals he has a list of “known communists” in the State Department and conducts hearings on communist subversion in America. Three- and four-bedroom houses in Levittown, Pennsylvania, sell for 11 to 14 thousand dollars. Dwight D. Eisenhower is nominated for Presi-
dent, and Richard Nixon is his running-mate. Nixon gives his famous "Checkers" speech on television and stays on the Republican ticket as vice presidential candidate.


In 1950, the new stadium at Ada's War Memorial Park is used for the first time when Ada High School plays Bluffton. In 1951, the Ada school board sells the old north building to ONU to house engineering classes, and pupils in grades K-6 move to the new elementary wing of the high school. Many Ada churches build floats and participate in the three-mile parade that begins Ada's Centennial celebration in 1953.

The Methodist Church participates in the formation of the Methodist Council. Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren become active members of the World Council of Churches, founded in 1950. At Ada First Methodist, Mrs. Gladys Wright of Ravenna, the first teacher of the Fenwick Sunday school class, returns for a class reunion. The class, which had a membership of 20 when it first organized in 1912, now has 60 members in 1950. In June of 1950, the Fenwick class receives a note from Katie Lou Craft, announcing her coming marriage to Eugene Nelson Hanson. The minutes of the meeting on December 18, 1951, are the last record of the Fenwick class. Britton Mansfield is elected chairman of the new Family Night Supper Program. Ada First Methodist Church is identified as the "Methodist Student Center of Ohio Northern."

1954-1957

The Supreme Court, in Brown vs Topeka Board of Education, rules racial segregation un-constitutional. Funds for an interstate highway system are authorized with the adoption of the Federal Highway Bill in 1956. Martin Luther King Jr. leads a 54-week boycott of city buses in Montgomery, Alabama. Dr. King and 60 others form the Southern Leadership Conference. President Eisenhower signs the 1957 Civil Rights Act, the first since the Civil War. Sputnik is launched into orbit by the Soviet Union. The golden arches appear as
McDonald’s open several hamburger stands in 1954. Elvis Presley makes his first recording. Magazines offer advice on how to arrange furniture around the TV set. “Captain Kangaroo” and “The Mickey Mouse Club” are popular with the children. Frisbees, hoola hoops, 3-D movies, drive-in movies, Disneyland, and Dr. Seuss entertain children of all ages. The Ford Thunderbird makes a hit, while the Ford Edsel bites the dust.

The Methodist Church grants full clergy rights for women in 1956. There is a growing uneasiness with the problem of racism in the church. Jim Kuhn, a junior in pre-theology, is elected president of the Ohio Northern University Wesley Fellowship for 1953-54. Rev. Harry Bright, pastor of the local church, is the group’s advisor. Wesley Fellowship, a joint program of ONU and Ada First Methodist, “seeks to confront students with the challenge of Christian life” and offers a varied program of speakers, discussions, retreats, and social events.

In 1953-54, the Ada Methodist women set a goal of $1,060.34 for new tables in Wesley Hall. They serve dinners for the ONU Alumni, Methodist Union, Hi-Y Club, District Conference, Tabernacle, and Fireman’s Day. The receipts show they buy supplies from Ada merchants at the Ada Locker, Kroger’s, Clum’s, Chrismer’s, Field’s Bakery, Hoover Creamery, Ada Dairy, Binkley Poultry, Frank Street’s for meat. They go to “the dime store” to buy table decorations. Adding $3.76 from the general fund along with a gift of $42.50, the ladies buy the tables in June, 1954. The Christmas Bazaar does not bring as much profit, but the competition between booths is evident. The fish pond produces a profit of $32.06, the doll booth, $73.60, and the needlework booth, $81.85. Gayle and Faye Irene Zimmerman, with their apron booth, show a profit of $83.00 so they are declared the top sellers at the bazaar, a title they and their enthusiastic backers try to maintain each year.

On October 20, 1954, the Galilean Sunday School class is organized at Dwight and Verla Baughman’s home. On February 19, 1955, the Mathews Sunday School class, named in honor of Bishop James K. Mathews, organizes the first smorgasbord dinner, and the $1,286.24 profit from the project is turned over to the church furnace fund.

1958-1961

Nikita Khrushchev gains power in the Soviet Union. The U. S. launches its first satellite, Explorer I, from Cape Canaveral in 1958. Alaska becomes the 49th state and Hawaii becomes the 50th state in 1959. Fidel Castro takes control
of Cuba in 1959 by defeating Batista. When Castro signs economic agreements with the Soviets in 1960, President Eisenhower declares the United States will never permit a regime "dominated by international Communism" to exist in the Western Hemisphere, and relations with Cuba are soon severed. The microchip is invented, and experimentation with artificial intelligence begins. The Barbie doll, the Polaroid camera, and Ocean Spray cranberry juice appear in stores. The Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, opens in New York in 1959. The St. Lawrence Seaway opens the same year.

In the 1950s, when most women are homemakers unless they need to get a job, the Ada First Methodist WSCS circles are a place for the church women to learn, to be of service to the church, and to socialize. The detailed minutes of Circle 5 in 1958-59 show there are 54 members listed, with 25 or more women on average who attend the monthly meetings in homes. In February 1959, Mrs. Archie Hillery is president of Circle 5; Mrs. Robert Berger is vice president; Mrs. Adrienne Smith is recording secretary; Mrs. Daryl Baker is corresponding secretary; and Mrs. Larry Archer is treasurer. At one monthly meeting, Ann Berger distributes maps of the Middle East and summarizes Rev. Teller's course, "Understanding Other Cultures," taught on Sunday evenings. "Irene," a university student from India, tells the group about schools, homes, and family life in India. At a meeting in 1958, the circle decides to help liquidate the debt incurred when the church bought the property west of the church. They are able to give the church $100 in 1959 and pay their pledge of $431 to the WSCS. The money is earned by cooking and serving dinners and luncheons. When they serve a meal for the Liberty Bank trustees, they offer them a choice of two menus, one costing $1.75 and the other costing $2.00 a plate.

In 1959, members of Ada First Methodist Church celebrate 60 years of worship in their building. Honored banquet guests include eight who were present at the building's dedication in 1898: Mrs. Mervyn Enterline, Mr. and Mrs. John Richardson, Mrs. Clara Claybaugh, Miss Esta Wright, Mrs. Mabel Motter, Mrs. Stewart Main, A. E. Rockwell, and H. J. Holycross, representing his wife. Toastmaster, Miller Brown, also introduces three former pastors, Dr. Lee Moorehead, Rev. Wilbur Vorhis, Rev. Marion Tinsler, and the present pastor, Rev. Richard Teller.

Members of the local Ada First Methodist Church return from the 1959 session of the annual conference held at Lakeside-on-Lake Erie with exciting news: The Methodist Theological School in Ohio will be completed in 1960, and the new 465-bed Riverside Methodist Hospital should be completed in 1961.

A yellowed newspaper clipping with no date shows the result of a project for the pre-teens in the church started by Rev. Richard Teller. Surrounding Rev. Teller in front of the altar are Mahlon Darlington, David Wirt, John Bucher, Kay C. Collett, Sharon Sobers, Betty Kyvig, Mike Bowers, Joseph Crist, Janice Neiswander, Joanna Roof, Bonnie Archer, and Phyllis Hodges. The twelve appointed as "Disciples" are each given a silver dollar by the pastor at the beginning of Lent and told to use their talents to multiply the money. On Easter, they surprise their pastor and the congregation by presenting their offering of $331. Other groups of young people participate in this project in other years.

Senator John F. Kennedy defeats Richard Nixon in the 1960 election. Kennedy creates the Peace Corps after telling the American people in his inau-
gural address to “ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” In 1961, the Soviets send the first manned space ship to circle the earth, while the U. S. launches astronaut Alan Shepard on the same trip six months later. President Kennedy approves sending U.S. Special Forces to South Vietnam in 1961. The Berlin wall goes up. Americans are found “twisting” to Chubby Checker’s hit song, “The Twist,” recorded in 1960.

Eight Protestant denominations, including the Methodist Church, form the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) in 1960. Methodist missionaries are recalled from Cuba. The Goodsell class is inactive from June to December of 1958 and then is reorganized with 76 members. The annual smorgasbord dinner is produced by 31 committees, with all proceeds going to liquidate the debt incurred by the purchase of the property west of the church. The Memorial Organ Fund is established in 1960, and in 1961 the church receives an anonymous gift of $1,000, making the total in the fund $3,289.96. In November of 1961, the average attendance at Sunday morning worship is 342.

1962-1965

John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit the earth; in a Mercury Capsule, he circles the globe three times. Riots take place on campuses as James Meredith enters the University of Mississippi accompanied by U. S. marshals. The Cuban missile crisis pushes the U. S. to the brink of war. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his “I have a dream” speech in Washington, D. C. He is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. A bill granting women equal pay for equal work is passed in 1963. President John F. Kennedy is assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, and TV news comes into its own in covering this event. Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as President of the United States and is elected in 1964, defeating Barry Goldwater. LBJ launches plans for the “Great Society” and a “war on poverty.” Thirty-five hundred Marines land at Da Nang in March of 1965. Students participate in demonstrations to protest the Vietnam War. Malcolm X is assassinated while addressing a rally in New York City. In 1964, the Civil Rights Bill is passed. The Watts riots erupt in Los Angeles. The U. S. Post Office introduces the zip code to the nation. The Beatles explode on the music scene. The first K-Mart and Wal-Mart stores open. The miniskirt and the beehive hairdo are the rage.

In 1962, a “Social Relations” questionnaire is distributed to Ada Methodists to determine members’ attitudes toward a “Negro minister,” an “Oriental minister,” and the use of the Ada pool by migrant Mexicans. The church takes a stand on Sunday sales, recommending observance of Sunday closing laws in Ada and urging church members to shop on days other than the Sabbath. There is concern about college students being excluded from the life of the church; thus “Methodist Home Night” is established, and members are encouraged to invite ONU students to dinner in pairs. Verla Baughman is recognized for her 21 years as director of the Ada Methodist Junior Church. The 1964-65 budget shows the following items: Gas Company, $1,450; Ohio Power, $250; telephone, $150; water, $75 and Benevolences, $5,281.

In 1963, at a special Quarterly Conference, presided over by District Superintendent John McMahan, church members approve an estimated $82,000 build-
ing improvement program, replacing an earlier proposal for a $160,000 program. It is the first major construction project undertaken since the building was erected in 1899 at a cost of approximately $20,000. In November of 1964, the church decides to proceed with remodeling only, and plans to build are postponed. Archie Hillery has presented a building plan that includes new wiring and a new sewer. As of May 28, 1965, over $93,000 is spent on Phase I of the remodeling project. Projects undertaken include undergirding and strengthening foundation pillars, replacing wiring and light fixtures throughout the building, creating a new entrance, beautifying Wesley Hall, repointing and sandblasting the stone, repairing the roof, completely redoing the rose window, and creating new offices, Sunday School rooms, kitchen, and lounge. Fred Heifner, a trustee, suggests in 1965 that “an automated elevator might be considered in a new building program.”

In 1964, the music committee reports that Mary Markle has resigned as church organist and recommends that Mrs. Lowell Weitz replace her and Mrs. George Failor be appointed assistant organist. At the Fourth Quarterly Conference in 1965, conducted by Dr. Glen Hughes, Lima District Superintendent, the following members are appointed to the Nominating Committee: Donald Bettinger, Clyde Dornbusch, Harold Hinderliter, Edith Rutledge, Jack Miller, Robert Cole Jr., Roy Klingler, Robert Crider, and Mrs. Leonard McAdams. Rev. Donald Weller is the chairman. The minister’s salary is increased to $6,750, travel allowance, $950, and hospitalization insurance contribution, $250. In 1965, the Senior High classroom is moved from the north tower room to a room north of the lounge. On April 5, 1965, Wilbur Umphress, Boyd Sobers, Fred Heifner, George Allen, George Miller, A. C. Smith, and Mel Wade serve as ushers. Robert Berger repairs the balcony flooring.

The Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church hold a joint Bible School program that runs five days a week for two weeks in 1965. The Commission of Christian Social Concerns discusses inter-racial issues and the problem of pornographic material. “The Christian and Responsible Citizenship” is a study sponsored by the Commission of Social Concerns. The Ada First Methodist official board sends a message to the President of the United States, urging the U. S. to “refrain from atmospheric tests of nuclear explosives.”

1966-1969

The National Organization for Women is founded in 1966. The Black Panther Party is founded in Oakland, California, also in 1966. President Johnson appoints Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court, making him the first African American to serve in that capacity. Riots erupt at the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago. President Johnson decides not to seek re-election and Robert F. Kennedy announces his candidacy. Martin Luther King Jr. speaks in Ada at Ohio Northern University on January 11, 1968. On April 4, 1968, he is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. In June 1968, Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated in Los Angeles. Authorities across the United States are called upon to deal with protesters as Americans turn against the Vietnam War. The USS Pueblo is seized by the North Koreans, and the Tet offensive in Vietnam begins. Neil Armstrong is the first man to walk on the moon and becomes famous for his “one giant step
for mankind.” An estimated 500,000 people attend Woodstock. “Sesame Street,” “Sixty Minutes,” “Hair,” and “Star Trek” make their debuts.

All proceeds from the Methodist Mathews Class All-Church smorgasbord in February of 1966 go toward the church indebtedness. The $80,000 loan has a balance in May of $76,980. The matter of a new organ is tabled until fall. The trustees announce that Gene Hoffman has donated folding screens for the basement area. The congregation studies the union of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches. Steve Sobers is the president of MYF. Edith Rutledge is chosen president of the WSCS for 1967. The church congregation raises money to help two foreign students at ONU pay hospital bills.

The minister’s salary for 1966-67 is $13,390. Along with new wiring, a modernization of the heating system, a new entrance, a strengthening of the foundation pillars, the exterior repainting and sandblasting, costing $140,000, a new Main Street bulletin board is added.

The pastor, Rev. Ford Hoff, announces that 100 young people had a dance in the church basement and “their behavior was excellent.” Jack Miller, chairman of the Membership and Evangelism Committee, reports 17 host homes are ready for “Home Discussion Group” meetings in October, 1967. Fred Heifner is chairman of the trustees and Evelyn Jenkins is secretary.

In 1968, Dave Weimer is chairman of the official board; Louise Reese is secretary; and Eleanor Whitworth is financial secretary. New members of the board are Mrs. Dale Wilhelm, Leonard McAdams, E. A. VanAtta, and Mrs. Wiliam Ellery. Bart Meyer is the president of MYF.

As a result of a January 1966 church-wide mission study, Ada Methodist church groups decide to increase support of mission efforts closer to home. They will work with area foster homes, support Rev. Gilford’s “Study on Wheels” project in Lima, work with the Big Brothers organization, assist in a tutoring program for Ada High

School students and help families through the Hardin County Welfare programs. Rev. Ford Hoff reports to the trustees that young people in the MYF have collected 100 books and $20 for Rev. Gilford’s “Study Bus.” Dr. Jim Udy, the ONU chaplain, organizes some students who go to Lima on Saturdays to assist in repairing and painting homes. The Mathews Class members begin a discussion of race relations with Lima couples at social meetings in their Ada homes. Several Mathews Class families, including Norma and Dale Wilhelm, invite Lima families to their homes for a week-end visit. In 1968, Anne Udy tells the trustees that 14 members of the Mathews Class will attend the “Negro History Dinner” in Lima.

New Methodist hymnals are purchased in 1966. In 1967, a campaign is begun to raise $75,000 over a three-year period to retire the debt incurred for the building and renovation projects. Any surplus raised will be applied to a new organ and chancel alterations.

The Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren Churches unite in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church. The West Ohio News of December 10, 1999, recalls the 1969 Ohio Conference at Lakeside as the last as “just Methodists” with the addition of the important word, “United.”

1970-1975

The Paris peace talks to end the Vietnam War continue for a second year. At Kent State University, 1,000 protesters are fired on by the Ohio National Guard: four students are killed and eight are wounded. Although many colleges close down, Ohio Northern University students hold a peaceful candlelight march on campus and raise money to run an ad in The Washington Post asking the government to seek peace. Captain Ernest Medina and five soldiers are charged with premeditated murder in a 1968 massacre by U. S. troops at My Lai in South Vietnam. Governor George Wallace urges southern governors to defy integration. Several passenger planes are hi-jacked. President Nixon signs the Clean Air Act. “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” debuts on TV. U. S. women reject the new midi-skirt.

At the 1970 charge conference, Dr. Sumpter Riley, District Superintendent, discusses the Black Church Development Fund and appeals to the Ada church for support as members attempt to provide open discussion between black and white communities. The church makes a contribution to the Vietnam Chaplaincy Fund. The college Sunday school class asks for more Bibles and evangelistic material. “Student Sunday” includes more informal moments and guitar music. The 1970 church budget is $36,861. Church membership is 668. The “grey bus” is purchased in April and picks up ONU students for church or takes Junior MYF or Senior MYF members on their out-of-town trips. Mrs. Carroll Alden donates funds to install an electric stair lift chair in the northeast stairway as a memorial to her husband. A new college Sunday School class is organized. The trustees present a three-year plan that includes remodeling the Sunday School rooms at the rear of the sanctuary and bringing the walls out to the edge of the balcony. George Miller is chairman of the Administrative Board.

On June 9,1970, an important ritual takes place. The note is burned eliminating the building fund debt. Bob Cole Jr. “holds the safety measures;” Joseph
DaPore strikes the match; and Ann Berger burns the note. “All in attendance smile happily.”

The WSCS is reorganized as United Methodist Women (UMW) in 1971. A FISH program is organized in the community to respond to special needs. Pastors and lay leaders are studying the Commission on Church Unity (COCU) with the Presbyterian and other Christian churches. The Ada First United Methodist Administrative Council votes to spend up to $4,000 for reconditioning of the organ console, electrification of relays and reconditioning of the pipes if it finds that the money is not earmarked for a “new organ.” Plans are made for coffee hours after the worship service.

In 1972, President Nixon visits China, ending hostilities since 1945. U. S. planes bomb Cambodia and the Senate debates the resumption of bombing. Quang Tri falls to the North Vietnamese. Governor George Wallace, campaigning for the presidential nomination, is shot by a would-be assassin. Five men are arrested inside Democratic headquarters in the Watergate complex on June 17. Popular TV shows are “The Waltons” and “M*A*S*H.” Dallas beats Miami 24-3 in Super Bowl VI. For 10 days tropical storm Agnes strikes the U. S. east coast. Because of drought, the Soviets buy a million tons of U. S. wheat, corn, and soy beans.

In 1972, Bill Johnson resigns as First United Methodist Church organist; Helen Welles and Jane Hoffman replace him. Trial summer church services are held in Wesley Hall. A junior church program is reinstated. Bob Berger builds new bookcases for the minister’s relocated study. LaDonna Compton is the church secretary. “The Mirror” is the title of the church newsletter. “Jesus Christ Superstar” is performed in the sanctuary by the church choir, ONU students, and others in the community. The local church and Rev. Ford Hoff join with the Ada Ministerium to provide guidance for the “Sit N’ Bull” in a building across from the ONU campus. They feel this experimental ministry has been a need for many university young people over the past three years.

The Head Start program is given permission to use the church basement in 1973. The Sunday School renovation is put on hold and instead, a major parsonage remodeling project will be completed in two phases. In 1973, the church purchases an Allen 601 digital organ for $16,450. Nancy DaPore, Don Milks, and Gerbert Darlington volunteer to ring the church bell on Sunday mornings.

The last U. S. ground forces leave Vietnam after a cease-fire on January 28, 1973. Vice President Spiro Agnew resigns pleading “no contest” to income tax evasion. Nixon appoints Gerald Ford as Vice President. Special prosecutor,
Archibald Cox, is discharged over the release of Nixon’s tapes. Lack of oil and soaring grain prices create a worldwide economic recession. President Nixon resigns August 9, 1974. Gerald Ford replaces him as president and grants Nixon a full pardon. The Dow-Jones bottoms out at 570. Word processors begin to replace typewriters in offices. Hank Aaron breaks Babe Ruth’s career homerun record. Mohammad Ali regains the heavyweight title by knocking out George Foreman.

High inflation begins to affect the Ada First United Methodist’s finances. A committee looks at the out-of-town membership list in an effort to bring the membership figures in line. The congregation celebrates the 75th anniversary of the building of the church. The United Methodist annual conference topics include the amnesty issue relating to the Vietnam conflict. Ada United Methodists and Presbyterians hold a joint summer church school. Junior choir robes are purchased.


In 1975, Rev. Sharritts asks that the temperature in the sanctuary be lowered to 50 during the week in the winter months in response to the energy crisis. Weekly prayer groups meet throughout the summer. A booklet is assembled, describing the responsibilities of all positions relative to the administrative operations of the church. Rev. Sharritts expresses the problems of the year in his 1976 forecast to the congregation: “Next year looms as a problem. We have limited our future or future programs by saying there just isn’t money to do anything. I must admit this a cause of real frustration.” He is optimistic, however, because attendance is up for Sunday School, the church has many dedicated leaders, and worship is still “the core of the life of the church.” He thanks, in particular, David Weimer, Jerry Smith, Roger Young, and Irma Hood for their work of the past year.

1976-1979

Jimmy Carter wins the U. S. election. Two Soweto townships in South Africa experience some of the worst racial violence in its history. The Dow-Jones peaks at 1,014.79 in September. Apple Computer is founded by Stephen Wozniak, 26, and Steven Jobs, 21, in a California garage. Fax machines gain use in banks, offices, and universities, but the quality remains poor. Perrier water is introduced in markets for fitness-conscious Americans. “MacNeil/Lehrer News Report” debuts on PBS. Fleetwood Mac albums are popular. At the Olympic Games in Innsbruck and Montreal, Soviet athletes win 142 medals; East Germans, 109 medals; and the U. S., 104 medals.

In 1976, the Ada First United Church administrative structure is reorganized into a “council” format. Education, Witness, Nurture, and Operations Councils will now work with and report to the Administrative Board. The Council on Ministries is eliminated. Average attendance at Sunday School is 82, with average worship attendance reaching 232. United Methodist Women pay for the plastering and painting of ceilings and walls and sell homemade noodles to help
with the local bicentennial project. Ada community churches mark America’s Bicentennial by holding a Colonial Order of Service at War Memorial Park July 4, 1976. Clergy leading the community in morning worship include Rev. Mahoney, Rev. Minnick, Father Endres, Rev. Andrews, Rev. Dowty, and Rev. Ervin. At the service conclusion, following a colonial custom, each person is given five grains of corn as a reminder of America’s bounty.

In 1977, a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is signed by 15 countries, including the U. S. and Russia. President Carter pardons all Vietnam era draft-evaders, except for deserters. Deputy Premier Deng Xiaoping begins de-communizing China with capitalistic programs. A power failure blacks out New York City for 25 hours during a heat wave. Treaties ratified by the U. S. Senate in 1977 will turn over the Panama Canal to Panama on December 31, 1999. The first MRI scanner is tested. Elvis Presley dies at age 42; Bing Crosby dies at age 73. U. S. blue jean sales top 500 million pairs. “Annie” opens in New York.

The last Ada United Methodist Women’s circle formed, the Square Circle, is meeting in 1977. Changing membership often, with an average of nine to thirteen members, it is comprised of the younger church women, most with small children. Their programs reflect their interests: drug abuse, television viewing’s impact on children, mother-children banquets, a “Happy Shoes” project and “Secret Sisters.” They often spend meetings cleaning the church nursery, making salt dough for the baby nursery, having cookie exchanges, or making spice hangers and quilted place mats for the church bazaar. With just nine members present in 1983, they will vote with the other circles on January 6, 1983, to continue as individual circles or meet one day a month as a larger group. With a membership list of almost 40 women over the years, the Square Circle reflects the larger society. The children are growing up and some of the mothers are returning to complete educations or are moving into the working world.

In 1977, the Nurture and Witness councils merge into one body for more efficient programming and coordination. An “I Care” mission is undertaken, and the minister, Rev. Mahoney, in his Charge Conference report, refers to the music program as one of the finest in the Lima District. United Methodist Women buy new chairs for Wesley Hall and make a year-end gift that allows the church to pay its apportionments in full. They also host the Lima District Annual Meeting of United Methodist Women and assist with the Conference Annual Meeting held at Ohio Northern University. The United Methodists join with the Presbyterians for a summer church school, Vacation Bible School and the Christmas Eve service. Forty-five children make a joyful noise in the cherub and junior choirs.

The Camp David Accord is reached after 13 days of negotiating in 1978 by Egypt’s President Sadat and Israel’s Prime Minister Begin. Washington recognizes the Peoples’ Republic of China. Unemployment rises throughout the world, six percent in the U.S. OPEC nations meet and agree to raise oil prices 14.5 percent. Pope Paul VI dies in August, and his successor, John Paul I, dies in September. In October, John Paul II becomes the Pope. Jim Jones and 911 of his followers commit mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana. Americans buy 13 million pairs of running shoes. Ninety-eight percent of U.S. households have TV sets.

United Methodist Women organize a “tape chain” in 1978. Sermons are taped and delivered to the elderly and shut-ins during the week. Using bazaar funds, they remodel the women’s restroom and make plans to remodel the men’s
restroom with 1978 bazaar funds. In the spring, the Junior High United Methodist Youth Fellowship is suspended because of discipline problems; it resumes in the fall with good results. The church welcomes 95 new members in a little over two years. The Ada Ministerial Association sponsors a CROP Walk and raises nearly $2,300. United Methodists participate in an Ada Church Slo-Pitch League and in a marriage enrichment program.

In 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran after a 15-year exile. As the Shah flees to Egypt and then is permitted entry to the U. S. for medical treatment, Iranian terrorists seize the U. S. embassy in Teheran, take 66 hostages, and demand the return of the Shah. Conservative leader, Margaret Thatcher, becomes Britain’s first woman prime minister. Terrorist acts occur world-wide. Fuel shortages create long lines at gas stations in America. The Walkman cassette player is introduced.

In 1979, the sanctuary, balcony, narthex, and choir loft get a face-lift with new carpeting, and United Methodist Women purchase new stair treads. The boiler is partially replaced at a cost of $4,000. Membership dips to 603 members. The loss of a large number of people in a short period of time is attributed to turmoil at Ohio Northern University, but the ranks soon begin to increase. A Permanent Endowment Committee is established. The church welcomes guest speaker Geoffrey Francis, active British Methodist layman and heraldic artist to Queen Elizabeth II. The Nurture-Witness Committee undertakes a year-long emphasis on hunger, and a Hunger Task Force initiates a gardeners’ market, Hunger Sunday, and a mission saturation week.

1980-1985


Lay speakers in First United Methodist are Philip Compton, Irma Hood, and George Miller. Ann Berger gives a month’s service as a volunteer nurse at the Red Bird Mission Hospital in Kentucky. Susan and John Peterson and Debra Lenssen work with some 80 children and adults in the cherub, junior, and senior choirs. Don and Connie Fleming serve as advisors to 20 junior high UMYF members, and Pastor Mohoney leads the senior high UMYF group of 30. Vacation Bible School has 75 children in attendance.

News of the release of all U. S. hostages from Iran comes during the inauguration of Ronald Reagan in 1981. In March, President Reagan and three others are wounded in an assassination attempt in Washington. In May, Pope John Paul II is wounded in an assassination attempt. Egypt’s President Anwar el-Sadat is killed by an Islamic extremist in October. Sandra Day O’Connor becomes the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court. High unemployment,
double-digit inflation and prime interest rates of 21.5 in September cause President Reagan to ask for an additional $13 billion in spending cuts and $3 billion in tax increases. AIDS begin to spread worldwide. IBM introduces its first personal computer and soon has most of the sales. Britain’s Prince Charles marries Lady Diana Spencer. World population reaches 4.5 billion. U. S. Dept. of Agriculture cuts school lunch programs and announces ketchup can be counted as a vegetable.

The Ada First United Methodist Church budget is $72,016. Treasurer Roger Young announces all apportionments will be paid by the end of the year. The Christmas offering will go to an emergency fund for local needs. Catherine Freed is added to the list of lay speakers. The UMW raises $2,500 as well as collecting stamps, soup labels and Christmas cards for local and mission projects.

In 1982, Israel’s Prime Minister Begin, warning of PLO terrorist activities and arms buildup, strikes PLO strongholds in Lebanon. The Reagan administration dispatches 1,600 U. S. troops as part of a multinational force in Lebanon in 1982. The Vietnam war memorial in Washington is dedicated. The Boland amendment bans the use of funds to overthrow Nicaragua’s Sandinista government. The Garth-St. Germain Depositories Institutions Act signed by President Reagan removes regulatory restraints on federally insured savings and loan companies. “Electronic mail” over fax machines gains popularity.

Rev. Robert Versteeg is Ada First United Methodist’s minister in 1982. Connie Fleming is chairman of the Administrative Board. The Sunday evening Bible study group sets a goal to buy Bibles for all the pews. The trustees report, signed by Geneva Heifner, gives the present value of the church at $970,000 and the value of the parsonage at $50,000. The District Superintendent, Rev. James Davis, reminds church members that the bicentennial celebration of the United Methodist Church will take place in 1984.

President Reagan proposes a “Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)” in 1983. Terrorists blow up the U. S. Embassy in Beirut in April, killing 63 people. On October 23, a terrorist attack on a barracks kills 241 U. S. Marines and 58 French paratroopers. Two days later, President Reagan sends U. S. Marines and Army Rangers to Granada because he fears their leftist government. In order to save Social Security for the next 75 years, Reagan signs legislation to boost payroll deductions, raise the retirement age to 67 by 2020, require new federal employees to join the system, and require higher income retirees to pay higher income taxes on their benefits. First Lady, Nancy Reagan, introduces her “Just Say No” cam-

paign. A drought caused by an El Nino reduces the U. S. corn crop by some two billion bushels. Cabbage Patch dolls become the rage. Chicago motorists can talk from their cars on cellular phones, available for $3,000 plus monthly costs.

The membership for the Ada United Methodist Church in 1983 is 557. A successful tri-church Vacation Bible School is held. Cathy Smalley, president of UMW, reports that a prayer chain has been formed. A Permanent Endowment Committee consists of Harold Cotsamire, chairman, Evelyn Jenkins, Herta Mencis, Catherine Roider, and Roger Young. From a prayer-study group, a program called “Witness to the God of Peace” is developed. Consisting of songs, scriptures, prose, and a one-act play, “The Witness” the program is presented to many church groups. Reporting for the trustees, Don Milks informs the congregation that the trustees are considering the sale of the parsonage at 406 N. Main.


The Ada United Methodist Church decides to use the services of the Finance and Field Service Office to raise money for the operating budget and the capital improvement fund. Stewardship director, Rev. Frank Witt, is hired. A goal of $250,000 is set for the operating budget and $100,000 for capital improvement. Contributions for a new typewriter are sought as the church newsletter tells its readers that “the 30-odd-years-old office typewriter is wheezing mortally.” The Ada church participates in the 200th anniversary of Methodism by using the antique communion ware, listening to the senior choir present a “Wesley Hymn Concertato,” and enjoying a visit from circuit rider Peter Cartwright. Pastor and Mrs. Versteeg write a bicentennial play which is presented at the West Ohio Conference. The Methodist softball team plays on Sunday afternoons. In one dramatic game, the men’s team beats the boys’ team with a two-out hit in the last inning. Bert Holmes is the hero of the game.


In 1985, Pam Smith is chairman of First United Methodist’s Board of Trustees; Jon Smalley is chairman of the Administrative Council; Soni Neiswander is president of the United Methodist Women; and LaDonna Compton is the youth coordinator. The communion steward is Myrtle Fisher, Marian Thompson, Mary Dilts, Herta Mencis, and Ethelyn Rogers. The church increases its sup-
port for the Ada Food Pantry and the “local needs fund.” Gayle and Faye Irene Zimmerman are in charge of the apron booth at the November bazaar.

In March 1985, Joyce Fox presents a financial report saying that weekly offerings of $1,535 and $1,744 will be needed to meet operation costs. A letter goes to the congregation informing them that the operating budget has outstanding bills of $2,876.48 and $126.54. In May, Roger Young announces he has paid Mr. Craig of 5-Cs Roofing 20 percent or $5,700 for the new roof. The remainder is due when Mr. Craig is finished. Masonry work and the window painting will be done before winter. $1,092 has been added to the roof fund from Charles Hubbell memorial donations. Leonard Earl is contacted about a leak in the furnace boiler.

1986-1989

In retaliation for a terrorist bombing of a west Berlin discotheque, President Reagan sends U. S. warplanes to bomb Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi’s headquarters at Tripoli in 1986. More than 1.5 million South Africans strike to protest apartheid. All seven astronauts aboard the Challenger are killed as the spacecraft explodes. The Soviet Union’s Chernobyl power plant explodes sending radioactive fallout over Europe. Insider trading scandals rock Wall Street. Seventy-five tons of cocaine come into the U. S. Nintendo video games debut in America and reach sales of $300 million.

First United Methodist Church attendance increases three percent. LaDonna Compton, as youth leader, expands programs into many new areas such as “peace seminars” and the maintenance of a more active church nursery program. Members participate in the Hands-Across-America project. The use of lay leaders in the worship service is increased, and a “Time for Children” is initiated into the weekly worship service. Cash salary for the minister is $20,524. The United Methodist Women’s Christmas bazaar raises $1,764.86 for its missions.

Pam Smith and the trustees and Don Fleming and the Operations Council handle the purchase of a new parsonage at 427 E. Lima Avenue. The only money borrowed comes from the congregation. The cost is $62,500; the old parsonage on Main Street is sold for $30,000. David and Gail Misicka thank everyone who helped them move. Jon Smalley, chair of the Administrative Council, reports the church is “alive and well” in 1986.

After emerging as the new leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev begins reforms in 1986. Kuwait asks for U.S. naval protection against Iranian attacks in the Persian Gulf. The U. S. frigate, Stark, is hit by Iraqi missiles
with a loss of 37 men, and Saddam Hussein apologizes. The Iran-Contra deal is investigated and involves members of the Reagan administration. Party Leader Gorbachev and President Reagan sign a treaty eliminating medium-range intermediate nuclear weapons in both superpower arsenals. U.S. Supreme Court rules Rotary clubs must admit women. U.S. health care costs rise to $500 billion, up 9.8 percent over 1980. Microwave oven sales reach $12.6 million.

The First United Methodist church is kept busy in 1987 with renovations of the sanctuary, Sunday School classrooms, the nursery, and the library. Speaker for "Woman in the Pulpit" Sunday is Catherine Freed.

In 1988, President Khomeini of Iran and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq agree to a cease-fire after eight years of hostilities. George H. W. Bush becomes the first sitting vice president since 1836 to win the presidential election. Savings and Loan losses reach $13.44 billion. Drought reduces crops in America, and the U.S. imports grain for domestic use. NASA climatologist, James Hansen, tells a Senate committee that "global warming threatens mankind." One of the popular songs of the year is "Don't Worry, Be Happy."

In 1988, current membership of Ada United Methodists is 509. New blinds are installed in the church fellowship hall. After many years of serving in that position, Roger Young retires as church treasurer. Rev. Misicka teaches a Bible study class on Russia. Ron Kuhlman leads an interfaith youth rally.


Ada United Methodist Church lay speakers are Ron Kuhlman, Catherine Freed, and Philip Compton. Eric Hinderliter is the senior high youth president. Church treasurer, Boyd Sobers, makes the final payment on the bank loan for church renovation and retires the last interest loans on the parsonage. Church members provided interest-free loans and special gifts.
The 90th anniversary of the church building is celebrated on Sunday, June 18, 1989. Rev. Misicka’s sermon is on the early history of the Ada church. A Peace Pole is planted on the southeast corner of the church lawn on May 21. Bud Sonntag returns as church organist. Terri Coldwell and Karen Cooper are co-chairs for the September church auction. October “greeters” are Betty Archer and Ann Berger, Jerri, Kristine and Leslie Banks, Daryl and Helen Baker, and Myrtle Fisher and Violetta Fox. One hundred of the new United Methodist hymnals arrive at the church. Rev. Misicka suggests members donate $5.00 if they want an old hymnal to keep. United Methodist Women sponsor a “1989 Holiday Candlelight Tour of Homes.” Featured are the homes of DeBow and Catherine Freed, Dave and Patty Devier, Melanie Caw, and Harold and Susan Putt.

1990-1991

The U. S. population in 1990 is 249 million; less than two percent are farmers, and the average farm is 425 acres. Iraqi forces invade Kuwait. Soviet leaders surrender the Communist Party’s 72-year power. Boris Yeltsin is elected president of the Russian Republic in May and leaves the Communist Party in July. As the Soviet economy collapses, president of the central committee, Gorbachev, is given new powers over the 15 republics, East and West Germany reunite on October 3. British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, is replaced by John Major. South Africa’s Nelson Mandela is released after 17 years of prison. In spite of his campaign promise, “Read my lips, no new taxes,” President Bush concedes in June that tax increases and spending cuts may be needed. Washington National Cathedral is completed after 80 years of construction. Bumper wheat crops in America, China, and the USSR force prices down to $2.20 per bushel.

First United Methodist Church finds it must borrow an additional $57,000 for the new furnace. Charlotte Apfelbeck is welcomed as church organist. Sarah Peltier is appointed the director of music. Debra Lenssen, serving as choir director, and Bud Sonntag, serving as accompanist, are part of the benefit concert held in Lima for the Lima Area Foodbank. “The Church Mouse” column appears for the first time in the new church news letter, The Sower. Ushers for July are Ed Brazen, Wilbur Umphress, Gene Smith, Les Keller, and Norm Rex. A wagon pulled by two Belgian horses driven by Roy and Jeanne Klingler takes a group of 20 church youth to sing Christmas carols to the town shut-ins.

In 1991, the world population reaches 5.5 billion. Boris Yeltsin, in the first democratic elections in the Russian Republic, is elected president. Soviet Union president, Gorbachev, suspends the Communist Party. U. S. and allied missiles and planes bomb targets in Iraq on January 17. Iraq begins to pump Kuwaiti oil
into the Persian Gulf. By the end of the war, the Iraqis have set fire to 732 Kuwaiti oil wells. Operation Desert Storm, the ground attack, begins February 24 and ends in 100 hours with Iraqi forces defeated. Saddam Hussein remains in power and sends helicopter gunships to suppress Shiite and Kurdish rebels. The American public focuses on sexual harassment in the workplace as Senate hearings on Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas take place with Anita Hill’s testimony. “The Will Rogers Follies” and “The Secret Garden” open in New York.

The Ada United Methodist Men’s group has a “sweetheart dinner” in February. Don Brubaker and Karen Ward provide entertainment for the 40 people attending. The junior high youth officers are president, Isaac Seagrave; vice-president, Brian Gulbis; secretary, Tina Lobenhofer; district representative, Jennifer Ward. The youth group announces they plan to do a UNICEF drive. The new district superintendent Rev. L. Cean Wilson, speaks to the men’s group.

As we reached the final years of the Ada First United Methodist Church’s 100-year history, the committee found we were dealing with a world and national history that is not yet complete.

We had wondered why the congregation put British Prime Minister Gladstone’s 1898 obituary in the cornerstone and why they included “a souvenir of the World’s Fair.” Perhaps “Irish home rule” and the wonder of the first Ferris wheel in the U.S. were topics discussed around the community supper tables. We decided to leave for the historians at the end of the next 100 years the task of evaluating the rapid changes, the events, the failures and achievements of the 1992-1999 world outside the church.

The Ohio Normal catalogue and the two Ada newspapers in the cornerstone are still part of our local history. The importance of the Eisteddfod program has been lost in time, except to tell us it must have been an important Ada and ONU cultural event.

The copy of the early Methodist history before the stone church, the Methodist Hymnal, the Bibles, the histories of the church groups, the sermons of John Wesley placed in the cornerstone are a common religious history we still share with the congregation of 1899.

The Ada First United Methodist Church years 1992-1999 are a fruitful time for the Ada church and deserve to be recorded. The 1898 church history tells us the stone church is “a legacy from the Ada of 1898 to the greater Ada of the future.” The church history through 1999 completes our legacy to those who will work and worship in the stone church during the next 100 years.

1992-1993

The First United Methodist Church trustees report on projects underway in 1992: the sound system, choir loft lighting, bell tower repair, and the telephone system. The church has a “Spring House-cleaning Day.” Valentine boxes of homemade cookies are sent to undergraduates away from home. On each Sunday in March, the church holds “Lenten Happenings” with a light supper, a devotional period, and Lenten study. Rev. Misicka leads the adult and youth group, and Susan Putt leads the children’s group.
In June, Bob and Marilyn Swart provide a computer, printer, and software for the office. The Swarts give a new cassette recorder for recording Sunday services, and Nancy Barker provides speakers for under the balconies. Sarah Peltier expresses appreciation for those who provide special music during the summer: Charlotte Apfelbeck, Nancy Kuhlman, Ron Evans, Maggee Erbe, Peg Collins, LeAnne Compton, Brian Ward, Heather Putt, Phil and LaDonna Compton, David Peltier, George Miller, Deb Lenssen, Amanda Lewis, and Connie Fleming.

The Worship Committee welcomes the new acolytes Susan Beckley, Heather Putt, Derrick Spar, and Brian Ward. The First United Methodist men make their first litter pick-up on Highway 309 in the “Adopt a Highway” program.

In 1993, A Martin Luther King Jr. community celebration is held at the First United Methodist Church. Some participants gather at the ONU English chapel and march to the church to mark the 25th anniversary of Dr. King’s visit to ONU. Under the leadership of Ken Cooper, the church sponsors a college/career class for ages 18 to 25. Members of the church help form and fund the Hardin County Chapter of Habitat for Humanity. Members of the Confirmation class are Kristine Banks, Jenny Barga, Jordon Brazen, David Maris, Jenn Neeley, Scott Smalley, and David Spar.

David and Jane Weimer, First United Methodist members, leave to serve as missionaries at Henderson Settlement in Kentucky for two-and-a-half months.

The youth ministries reorganize. LeAnn Zimmerman and Ron Kuhlman direct the senior high group; Bob and Karen Ward and Carol Lobenhofer and Todd Brecount direct the junior high group. A congregational meeting is held on June 13, 1993, to discuss a possible new entrance to the church with an elevator and renovation of the restrooms.

1994-1995

In 1994, First United Methodist Church trustees meet with the Finance Committee and the Administrative Council and present their proposal to expand and remodel the church restrooms and install an elevator to allow easier access to the sanctuary. They receive enthusiastic support. The church must raise an estimated $200,000. Based on gifts and pledges, one-half of the money is already available. The group decides to move ahead with this major project.

Ron Parshall provides new figures for the outdoor nativity scene. Bishop Judith Craig appoints Rev. James Kuhn, who attended the Ada church when he was an ONU student, to serve the church as its new pastor. Rev. David and Gail Misicka move to Dayton. The “church mouse” leaves also, creating an empty space in the Sower for “the Mouse’s view of people and happenings at First United Methodist.” A luncheon is held for the university students who have made the Ada church their home. Senior and junior high groups make plans for their summer activities: a weekend retreat, A Mudhens game, a baseball game at the new Cleveland Indians’ ballpark, a trip to King’s Island, and a water skiing day at the lake.

Rev. Jim Kuhn and his wife, Nancy, meet with small groups at neighborhood homes to get acquainted. Cathy Smalley makes new vestments for the acolytes. In November, members of the congregation meet for the “Hanging of the Greens” and share a potluck after the work. Millie Cowan chairs an Election Day pasta dinner open to the public. Rev. Richard Teller, former pastor of the Ada church and a retired district superintendent, delivers the message on Consecration Sunday.

At the beginning of 1995, the trustees announce the renovation of the church, a project discussed for many years, is almost complete. With direction from Cathy Smalley and Lorna Minich, United Methodist Women have been making quilts for “at risk babies.” Ada United Methodist participates in a pulpit exchange organized by the Ada Ministerial Association. Rev. Jim Kuhn brings the message to Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church and Fr. Ted Thomas brings the message to First United Methodist. The Cheney, Beaschler, and Smittle families care for nursery-age children during the Sunday School hour. The church uses the original crystal cups and set used at the beginning of the century at the Holy Mauindy Thursday service of discipleship and candlelight communion. The
congregation cooperates with Phi Delta Chi fraternity in a winter clothing drive for needy people.

Dave Retterer gives a renovation overview, saying the decision to blend the new construction at the church with the old, suits the original purpose made by church leaders 97 years ago “to build a sound and beautiful structure.” The project, a new handicap entrance with an elevator to the sanctuary and the renovated restrooms, is completed in November 1994 with the elevator in operation in December. The total cost is $288,320. Trustees responsible for overseeing the project are Geneva Heifner, chair (who died in February of 1995), Roy Klingler, Ted Prueter, Ron Parshall, Tom Cassell, and Jon Smalley. Pam Smith and Robert Swart work with the construction committee. Rev. David Misicka is the pastor when the project begins, and Rev. James Kuhn is pastor when the project is completed. The renovation and elevator building are dedicated Sunday, April 23, 1995, with District Superintendent Rev. L. Cean Wilson bringing the message.

Membership-Nurturing committee members, Sandy Green, Karen Cooper, Mary Parshall, Bev Daugherty, Bob Ward, Wes Clarke, Harold and Doris Cotsamire, Ruth Turner, and Judy Lusk have an active program to reach ONU students, shut-ins, and inactive members. United Methodist Women decide on a money-making project, a woven coverlet with Ada scenes, including all the churches. Betty Wirt is chairman and Cathy Smalley, designer. Bob and Marilyn Swart leave Ada. Joanne LaSala becomes the new church secretary, taking Marilyn’s place. Nancy Kuhlman is the cherub choir director, Ruth Roider, children’s choir director, and Deb Retterer, junior high choir director. Harold Cotsamire takes over as financial secretary. New acolytes are Meredith Elliott, Jonathan Howard, Mary Hughes, Brian Retterer, Vanessa Ward and Stephanie Zank. Several new members unite with the church: Allison Bower, Mike, Kathy, and John Suzo, Evelyn Rost, Mike and Michelle Elliott, and Irina and Christo Boyadzhiev. Rev. Kuhn and Nancy host a Christmas open house at the parsonage.

1996-1998

At the general meeting of the UMW, Susie Closson and Beverly Daugherty are recognized for their contributions to the UMW and to the church. At First United Methodist’s trustees meeting, those elected to serve for 1996 are Jon Smalley, chair; Soni Neiswander, vice-chair; Ted Prueter, secretary; and Karen Ward, representative to the finance committee.

“Easter Triumph” is the theme of the senior high youth sunrise service. Carmen’s “The Champion” provides the message, and the cast includes Scott Smalley, Leslie Banks, Brian Gulbis, Kristine Banks, Jennifer Ward, Anneka Lenssen, and Rebecca Maris.

The Confirmation class is presented for church membership by their teacher, David Lusk. Those in the class are Dustin Agner, Seth Banks, Joshua Brazen, Susan Beckley, Gregory Butler, Erin Goldberg, Sara Gulbis, Joel Hauenstein, Elisa Lenssen, Heather Putt, William Putt, Melissa Retterer, James Roll, Jenise Smalley, Derrick Spar, and Brian Ward.
As part of the Advent season, the cantata, “A Journey to Bethlehem” is presented. The music is composed by the Kuhns’ son-in-law. New members, Robert and Myrna McCurdy, Mark and Kim Light, Harold Evans, Kathy Carpenter, and Dave Zimmerly are welcomed to First United Methodist. Rev. Kuhn announces his retirement in June. Bishop Craig appoints Rev. George Reed to serve the Ada church.

A new Yamaha piano and worship kneeler are dedicated during the Sunday service on May, 18. The piano is presented as a memorial to Dr. Karl Roider, former Ada First United Methodist Church’s choir director and head of the music department at ONU, by the Roider family, former choir members and friends. The worship kneeler is consecrated to the glory of God in memory of Dan and Eleanor Guy’s parents and also to the memory of Rebecca Ann Kuhn, Rev. Jim and Nancy’s daughter. The kneeler was constructed by Mark Kuhn and the pillow sewn by Pam Pruetter.

Rev. George and Betty Reed meet church members at small gatherings in the homes of congregation members. “Promise Builders for Jesus” is the Vacation Bible School theme. Kim and Mark Light bring the Bible lessons. Cathy Smalley, the crafts, Bob Ward, the recreation, and Karen Cooper and Chris Brazen, lunch and refreshments. The church serves breakfast and lunch and has a rummage sale as part of the Ada Harvest and Herb Fest. Some of those working on the event include Sandy Green, Sheila Hughes, Mary Gahman, Betty Wirt, Susie Closson, and Jane Weimer. A potluck supper is held to mark the 25th anniversary of the United Methodist Women. The theme of the UMW anniversary year is “Building on the Silver, Going for the Gold.”

In an effort to expand its ministry, the church undertakes an additional worship service in October of 1998. For several months, Saturday evening in Wesley Hall finds a non-traditional service in progress. Praise music, drama, participatory experiences, guest speakers and musicians, and other creative worship experiences are employed, but attendance dwindles. In March 1999, the organizers decide to discontinue the service and examine other means of accomplishing its goal.

The congregation is asked to start collecting photographs and articles from the past in preparation for the 100th anniversary celebration of the building of the present church.

In a professional inspection of the stained glass windows in Ada First United Methodist Church, the windows are found to be “in severe distress.” Some are cracked and need to be resealed. Arrangements are made for those in real danger to be repaired at once. A suggestion is made that repair of the stained glass throughout the church could be a centennial project that would honor the past and preserve the beauty of the windows for future generations. A special fund is established for the repair of the 1898 windows.

1998-1999 The Centennial

The Centennial Committee begins meeting monthly. Nancy Allison, the chairman, and the 22 members of the committee plan events to mark the 100-year celebration of the church building. The committee selects as the centennial theme “Celebrating a Century: Reflections of Faith.”
The first event is a tree-planting in Ada’s Railroad Park in May. Nancy Allison, Rev. George Reed, Mayor Ron Parshall, and Evelyn Jenkins oversee the planting of a sugar maple tree.

On May 3, 1998, a special celebration service with the Sacrament of Communion is followed by a dinner for about 200 after the morning service to mark the beginning of a year of special centennial events. Three large cakes baked by JoNell Hanratty trace Methodism in Ada from 1855 to the dedication of the stone church in 1899. Nancy Barker reads “A Poem for the Centennial” she has written for the occasion. The Confirmation class is received into the church on that Sunday. Members of the class are Austin Cheney II, Erin Cole, Meredith Elliott, Deidre Hauenstein, Jonathan Howard, Britton Devier, Mary Hughes, Molly Kuhlman, Lauren Lobenhoffer, Amy Lusk, Rachel Maris, Taylor Osbun, Brian Retterer, and Vanessa Ward.

On July 20, 1998, an informal entertainment taken from Martha Bolton’s “A View from the Pew” is presented in Wesley Hall by church members.

On September 9, 1998, members of the First United Methodist Church youth groups ride on a float in the Ada Harvest and Herb Fest parade to celebrate the church centennial.

January 31, 1999, District Superintendent Rev. Philip Brooks is guest preacher for Consecration Sunday. “A Winter Picnic,” sponsored by the United Methodist Women, is held in Wesley Hall following the morning service. Tables are decorated with holiday themes. The children present the program. $38, 371 is allocated for the stained glass window restoration.

February 7, 1999, Rev. George Reed, the pastor, conducts a Wesley service during morning worship. Dressed in the style of John Wesley’s time, he uses music by Charles Wesley and words and prayers by John Wesley to remind the congregation of its heritage. March 1999, Sarah Peltier arranges special music during Lent to celebrate the centennial:

March 7 “Children of the Light” give a public evening concert.

March 14 Ron and Linda Sprunger from Ashland, Ohio, are guest musicians. The Chancel Choir sings an anthem composed by the Spruners and written especially for the centennial. March 21 “The Glory Bound Quartet” and an Ada High School group sing during regular Sunday services.

March 28 The Chancel Choir presents special music for Palm Sunday and Easter under the direction of Debra Lenssen.

April 25, 1999, a celebration worship service and a dinner prepared by Lynn Cole bring to a close the centennial year celebration of the building of Ada First United Methodist Church at 301 North Main Street in Ada, Ohio.

Throughout the centennial year, under the supervision of Eleanor Guy, articles appear in The Ada Herald, The Kenton Times, and The Lima News highlighting special events and telling the history of Ada First United Methodist Church. A special centennial sign is placed in front of the church. Ruth Roeder creates a logo for commemorative bulletins, plates, mugs, and bookmarks featuring the rose window of the church. Scott Smalley designs a sun-catcher also featuring the church’s rose window. Cathy Smalley designs and sews a centennial quilt for the altar. A display case at the back of the sanctuary holds historic photos and materials of Ada First United Methodist’s history and of Methodism’s past assembled by Betty Miller and Harold Barker. A booklet with photographs
of the current church members with addresses and photos of some of the centennial activities is assembled by Linda and Stewart Graham. During the year, Karen Cooper, Dave Retterer, and Betty Miller work on an informal history of the stone church.

In the summer of 1999, Rev. George and Betty Reed are given another church, and Ada First United Methodist welcomes a new pastoral couple, Rev. Wayne and Fern Albertson, to lead the church into the new century. Gloria "Gigi" Hoffman Fetter takes Joanne LaSala Longbrake’s place as church secretary. Lisa Ferguson remains the custodian; Charlotte Apfelbeck is the organist; Deb Lenssen is the choir director; and Dan Gonder directs the Christian education and sees to the spiritual growth of the children. With a gift from the Beamer and Eunice Creator’s estate, the church is able to buy the property next to the church on North Main Street. As it has for many years, the church still receives support from the Avanelle Stambaugh estate. The congregation is currently over 350 members.

The 1999 mission trip of the church youth and their leaders to Campbell County in Tennessee, the Sunday School and nursery groups, the active programs of the Ohio Northern University religious groups under their chaplain, Vern LaSala, and the student presence in the church while they are at Ohio Northern add to the life and spirit of the Ada First United Methodist Church.

The Sunday School classes, the Sunday worship services, the Bible studies, the prayer groups, the continuing work of the United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Men, and the ministering programs of the church are signs that a vital spiritual life is present. Like those early Methodists in 1898, "we can truly say that God’s hand has shaped our history." The First United Methodist Church of Ada is ready for the next 100 years.
Centennial Events


Planting the Tree: Ada Mayor Ron Parshall, Evelyn Jenkins, Nancy Allison, and Rev. George Reed.
“Winter Picnic”
Mary Gahman and Betty Wirt.

Centennial Quilt: Cathy Smalley and Rev. George Reed.

Wesley Service: Rev. George Reed.

Appendix I

Because of changes in the Methodist Church organization, the official name of the church changed during the 20th century. From 1844-1939, it was the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Ada; from 1939-1968, it was the First Methodist Church of Ada; from 1968 when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church combined, it took its present name, First United Methodist Church of Ada.

Groups within the church have also had several names: The women's missionary societies and Ladies Aid Society joined to form the Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS) in 1940. In 1971, the group became United Methodist Women (UMW). Men's groups are organized under the title United Methodist Men (UMM). Under the general heading of Youth Ministries, the Epworth League became the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) and now is the United Methodist Youth Fellowship.

Appendix II

The Wesleyan Methodist Church, a split-off from the Methodist Episcopal Church because of disagreements in organization and in ideas about abolition before the Civil war, built a brick building on the corner of Gilbert street and College avenue in Ada. It was dedicated as a church in 1879. The church disbanded, and in 1910 the building was sold to Ohio Northern University. After that time, it was used as a building for college classes in music, biology, and art until it was torn down in the 1960s.

Sources

(Microfilm of both newspapers is at The Ada Public Library and ONU Heterick Library.)
All Ada Methodist Episcopal Church and Ada United Methodist Church documents and reports are at the Ada United Methodist Church, 301 N. Main St., Ada, Ohio 45810.

www.gbgm-umc.org/adaumc e-mail: adaumc@bright.net

*The People's Chronology*. James Trager, ed. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992. (All national and world event facts are from this source.)


*Ministers of Ada, Ohio, Methodism from 1852-1999*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rev.</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Samuel Hagerman</td>
<td>1852-54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason Wilcox, Philip Wareham, J. K. Ford, &quot;Preachers&quot;</td>
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<td>Rev. Jacob Holmes and Rev. William Gardner (Huntersville Circuit)</td>
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<td>Rev. Jacob Holmes and Rev. Samuel Hagerman</td>
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<td>Rev. Joshua A. Smith</td>
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<td>Rev. Joseph Wykes and Rev. J. C. Castor (Patterson Circuit)</td>
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<td>(Worship at the Ada Presbyterian Church)</td>
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<td>Rev. James DeLisle, (first pastor in wooden church)</td>
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<td>Rev. John Wesley Hill Sr</td>
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<td>Rev. Fitzgerald and Rev. Jesse Carr</td>
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<td>Rev. John J. Wean (first pastor in new stone church on Main St.)</td>
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<td>Rev. Stanley Wiart</td>
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Poem for the Centennial
by Nancy Barker

A small group of settlers pioneered their way,
to Johnstown, Ohio, known as Ada today.
They held their meeting at Montfort and Main,
in an old schoolhouse in a swampy terrain.
Rev. Samuel Hagerman helped organize the first class,
    He was a powerful speaker, not afraid of new tasks.
Among pioneers were: Johnson, Gilbert, Oyer and wife,
    Who were members of Huntersville Circuit life.
The Circuit in those days included a large space,
    so pastors preached monthly in one place.
In 1855, Revs. Holms and Gardner were the first preachers,
    known also as the Johnstown Class first teachers.
In 1890, the Methodists and Presbyterians worshiped together,
even building a church in inclement weather.
The first Methodist Church was made of wood frame,
    With Rev. DeLisle as the pastor of fame.
There was a division as to church's location and plan,
    So for seventeen years the lower story would stand.
The upper story was left uncompleted,
    Until Rev. Barnes became pastorally seated.
In 1897, two lots were purchased at Highland and Main,
Which later became the First Methodist Episcopal Church's domain.