

First United
Methodist Church
Downers Grove
1836-2011



Through
The Ages

First United Methodist Church
1032 Maple Ave.
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www.dgfumc.org



Remembering Our
History

“Connected to the Past, Committed to the Future”

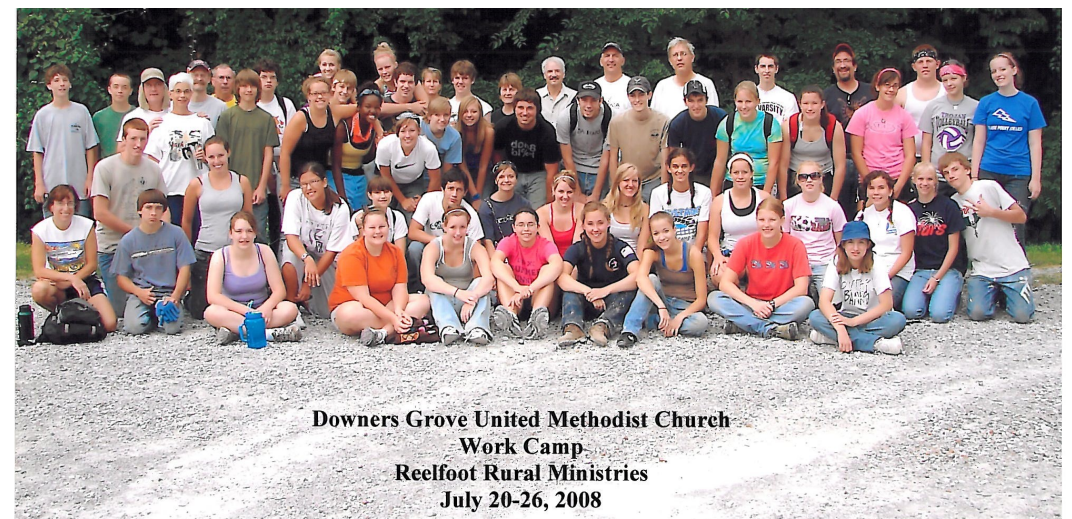
As Jim and I were settling into this congregation, we kept hearing about “The Welcome Church.” I knew it had something to do with our congregation’s history, and that it was evidently some sort of nickname attached to one of our previous church buildings.

Then, in meetings with the 175th Anniversary Committee, I finally saw the old, old photo of what was, indeed, “The Welcome Church.” It was so named because there was an electric “Welcome,” sign that hung at the front entrance. There was no mistaking the attitude of this congregation – that welcoming the neighbor, whoever that neighbor might be, was an essential part of their devotion to Christ.

Though the buildings that house our congregation keep changing, that central devotion to Christ, and the resulting call to be neighbors for others in this world in his name, remains. That is our identity, a gift we have been offered because of the faithfully lived lives of the past. That is our identity, a gift we are called to give with all our heart, in every way we can, for the sake of the church yet to be.

Greta McDonald, Pastor

Images of our Modern Church Family



**Downers Grove United Methodist Church
Work Camp
Reelfoot Rural Ministries
July 20-26, 2008**

Images of our Modern Church Family



*We remember and honor the many leaders
and members who built and sustained this
church for 175 years.*

*May their guidance and legacy
continue to strengthen and grow our
congregation in years to come.*

175th Anniversary Committee

Marilou Welch and Dorothy Kesl
Co-Chair Persons

Gregory Beggs
Charles Behnke
Margery Bergstrom
Melinda Bergstrom
Nancy Bifulco
Elmer Chessman
Diane Cole
Carol Conger
Andrea Conley
Don Dunham
Joan Ebersold
Doris Fetyko
Ellie Fletcher
Kay Frank
Kelley Hook
Shirley Jacobs
Alice Johnson
Helen Lotz
Rev. Jim McDonald
Rev. Greta McDonald
Rev. Nick Nicholas
Don Safford
Bruce Swanson
Joan Wilson

Chapel Choir Tour Through the Decades

1988



1997



2001



The 1980 Elizabethan Feaste



Celebrating 175 Years 1836-2011 Historical Highlights

- 1836 Methodists begin worshipping with Circuit Rider and become first organized church in Downers Grove.
- 1838 Services held in log schoolhouse.
- 1852 Henry Carpenter donates land for the first Methodist church to be built here.
- 1879 Fire damages this frame structure.
- 1880 New Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated and first parsonage was built.
- 1881 The Ladies Aid Society founded and Epworth League youth group chartered.
- 1894 Church outgrown; new larger building is used for many community gatherings.
- 1895 Welcome Church dedicated. Mr. and Mrs. George B. Heartt give tower bell.
- 1927 Last service held in Welcome Church. Masonic Temple used for services.
- 1928 Methodist Episcopal Church dedicated. Heartt Bell moved to new tower; old oak pews moved to balcony. Sanctuary window is gift from Mrs. George B. Heartt. Members used homes as security to help save church during Depression.
- 1940 Becomes First Methodist Church.
- 1951 Marilou Welch joins church staff
- 1952 Tower Bell newsletter introduced.
- 1961 High school Chapel Choir begins singing at 9:30 worship service.
- 1963 Family Life Day Nursery is founded.
- 1965 Education wing/addition completed.
- 1968 Heartt Memorial Chapel erected.
- 1969 Now First United Methodist Church
- 1970 First Handbell choir organized, John Neve hired as first full time Choir Director.
- 1971 First week-long Chapel Choir tour.
- 1976 Phelps Pipe Organ dedicated, given by Inez Tenney. Third worship service begins in Heartt Chapel at 8:15.
- 1981 Rev. Fred H. Conger appointed Senior Pastor
- 1984 Counseling Center opens
- 1985 West entrance is enclosed; elevator installed; and new offices completed.
- 1994 Sanctuary and parlor air conditioned
- 1996 Parking lot expanded to Grove Street.
- 2000 Parlor renovated
- 2001 New computers funded by cookbook sales
- 2007 Sanctuary roof replaced. Extensive renovation begins, including gym, Fellowship Hall, two kitchens, bell choir rehearsal room, outreach offices, showers, laundry area, expanded Youth Center with handicap lift.
- 2010 Building rededicated on January 24.
- 2011 175th anniversary celebrated

Senior Pastors of Our Church

1836	Stephen R. Beggs	1876-77	Samuel Howes
1840	Henry Jenks	1878-79	J. O. Foster
1848	Rev. Chambers	1880	A. H. Kistler
1852	Rev. Stoughton	1881	C. W. Cordis
1853	Rev. Langdon	1882-83	T. C. Warrington
1854	S.R. Beggs	1884	W. L. Demorest
1855	Rev. Stover	1885	John Neely
1856	Rev. Trumbull	1886-87	Fletcher Pomeroy
1857	Rev. Washburn	1888-89	A. Newton
1858	Isaac Nate	1890-91	Richard Brown
1859	W. P. Jones	1882-94	A. E. Saunders
1860-61	Lyman Clifford	1895-1900	T. R. Greene
1862	Joseph Ames	1900-04	H. H. Hood
1863	F. Curtiss	1904-09	F. F. Farmiloe
1864-65	R. Wake	1909-11	H. F. Lawler
1866-67	Samuel Ambrose	1911-13	J. H. Williams
1868	J. R. Allen	1913-17	J. F. Jenness
	A. W. Patton	1917-20	B. H. Fleming
	R. D. Russell	1920-23	G. H. Newland
1869	A. A. Patton	1923-25	Q. R. Wright
	H. J. Christ	1925-27	Allison F. Clark
	W. D. Barr	1927-30	J. E. Fluck
	R. D. Russell	1930-36	Steuart D. White
1870	D. O. Fox	1936-44	Will L. Collin
	R. S. Cantine	1944-51	Harold K. Taylor
	O. L. Fisher	1951-63	Arthur E. Hagberg
	J. H. Gill	1963-76	Farrell D. Jenkins
1871-73	George K. Hoover	1976-81	William D. White
	William Dawes	1981-2001	Fred Conger
	John Cowan	2001-06	Debbie Fisher
1873	H. A. Cobbledic	2006-2010	Tom Ostrander
	A. M. Gould	2010-	Jim & Greta McDonald
1874	W. S. Crowe		
	George Chenny-Hilton		
1875	C. W. Thornton		
	M. C. Wire		
	Rev. Crowe		



The former parsonage was located east of the sanctuary prior to being sold and moved in 1967 to make room for the building of the education wing and chapel.



Rev. Robert Campbell, Dan Dennett, Irving Heartt and Rev. Farrell Jenkins participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Chapel and education wing on May 24, 1968.



Dr. and Mrs. Farrell D. Jenkins stand in front of the new parsonage at 1108 Maple Ave. on May 21, 1967.



The J.O.Y. Sunday School class had many members over the years. This photo was taken in 1954.



These young ladies got all dressed up for International Night on Nov. 11, 1955.



The children seemed captivated by the Sunday School lesson taught by Charlotte Andersen in this 1958 photo.

Honoring Our Long time Members

The following persons have been active members of our church for close to or more than 50 years. While every effort was made to compile a complete list, there is a likelihood that some persons have been inadvertently omitted. We celebrate and recognize with sincere gratitude the enormous contributions and tireless efforts these individuals have made on behalf of our church.

Art Arnett
Glenn & Jean Bahler
Vera Bateman
Greg Beggs
Don & Marge Bergstrom
Edris Byers
Elmer Chessman
Gwen Clore
Doris (Snyder) Dalluege
Mildred Drew
Joan & Keith Ebersold
Bob & Ellie Fletcher
Deb Howard
Ken & Shirley Jacobs
Alice Johnson
Andi Kinsella
Mary Lord
Helen Lotz
Joan (Raming) McGuire
Louise Mech Melkus
Clive & Jackie Mosby
Sandy (Senkbile) Pine
Pat Pyburn
Art & Jan Roberts
Peg Schultz
Roberta Shaw
Bruce Swanson
Delores (Sikorski) Wenc
Marilou Welch
Joan Wilson
Arnie & Nancy Zimmerman

175 Years of History, Memories and Making a Difference

The following are excerpts from Joan Ebersold's welcome and opening remarks at the 175th anniversary banquet on August 28.

The reason anniversaries are so important is that they remind us of something meaningful that happened. Spanning back over six generations, lives have been linked together - strengthened by the bond of friendship and faith through the Methodist Church in Downers Grove.

We remember with gratitude all those who established our church. We honor the past members, musicians, teachers and ministers, planners and dreamers, all the faithful stewards whose legacy we share. We celebrate all that has been, all that is now and all that we hope the future to hold. May the past be a prelude to the future.

In 1832, Pierce Downer, a 50-year old man from New York, arrived in Chicago where his son, Stephen, a stone mason was helping to build a lighthouse. He had written his father about the beautiful stretch of prairie just west. So his dad set out, alone, on horseback and traveled for three days. He came upon an ideal location. It was a beautiful grove of trees on high ground, surrounded by rich prairie. He set up camp ready to stake a claim.

The important thing to remember was that he was greeted by friendly folks who were already here...the Potawatomies. A tradition of friendliness was established. All who followed were warmly welcomed.

Pierce Downer's daughter, Adele, joined him in 1834. By 1835 and 1836, there were other settlers who wanted to take the opportunity to buy good farmland from the government. The area had become a settlement.

Nothing develops in a vacuum. Just think about the year of 1836 when the first church was established:

- Our nation was only 60 years old. 75% were engaged in agriculture
- Andrew Jackson was president, Martin Van Buren was vice president. Van Buren would be elected the 8th president on Dec. 7, 1836.
- President Jackson decreed that all land purchases be in gold or silver.

The church opened a new parking lot in 1953.



Do you recognize anyone in the 1954 Confirmation Class?



Years ago, there were apparently many fewer outside activities to interfere with church participation as evidenced by the size of the 1954 Junior High Youth Fellowship



The west entrance to the church looked much different in the 1950's.



- There were 24 states for most the year and Arkansas became the 25th.
- Vandalia was the state capital of the 21st state - Illinois.
- Chicago had been incorporated as a town for just three years and had less than 4,000 people. Fort Dearborn was dismantled; as there was no Indian threat.
- Abraham Lincoln has just received his license to practice law.
- John Deere was given credit for inventing the first commercially successful highly polished steel plow. However, local blacksmith, Israel Blodgett, who had moved to Downers Grove after settling in Lisle in 1830, had produced a self-scouring plow used in this area. But he did not have a patent.
- The Erie Canal, which had been completed in 1825, had just been widened and deepened, making barge traffic easier. This opened the water route through the great lakes to northern Illinois.

The following pages celebrate the life of this congregation through historical references, stories, reflections and photos of individuals, groups and events that have helped define the legacy of this church. While not intended to be a complete or comprehensive history of the church, this booklet will hopefully provide a sense of our past and serve as inspiration for the future.

Many thanks to the individuals who provided information and photos.

The early years 1832-1879

In 1832 Pierce Downer established the settlement soon known as Downers Grove. Within four years, those living here decided that the seven-mile trip to Cass Church was too far to travel, especially in winter, so Rev. Stephen Beggs (a distant relative of current member Greg Beggs) agreed to add Downers Grove to his circuit and the first Methodist Church was formed, becoming the first organized church in Downers Grove. In 1838, a log school was built on Maple Street near Carpenter and served as the church on Sunday mornings – or whenever Rev. Beggs could get there.



By the 1850's the village had grown and so had the Methodist congregation. Log cabins were being replaced by clapboard cottages. In 1852 Henry Carpenter donated land and \$20 to build a Methodist church. Samuel and Mary Curtiss were each paid \$20 for adjacent land. Although there is no picture of the first church, a written description stating “men dragged logs to the carpenter shop from which to cut lumber” is evidence that it was a frame building. A photo of the succeeding church shows the rubble of this first building (visible in the background of the photo on the next page).

In 1864, the year the railroad came to Downers Grove, the church was still on the circuit of Downers Grove, Barber's Corners, Lyonsville and Cass. The Downers Grove Church paid the pastor \$59 per quarter.



The Washington Banquet filled the gym annually for many years, as shown in these photos from the early 1950's.





The church held a mortgage burning service on October 27, 1946.



The front entrance to the church in 1950 was off Maple Ave. through what is now referred to as the Tower Room.



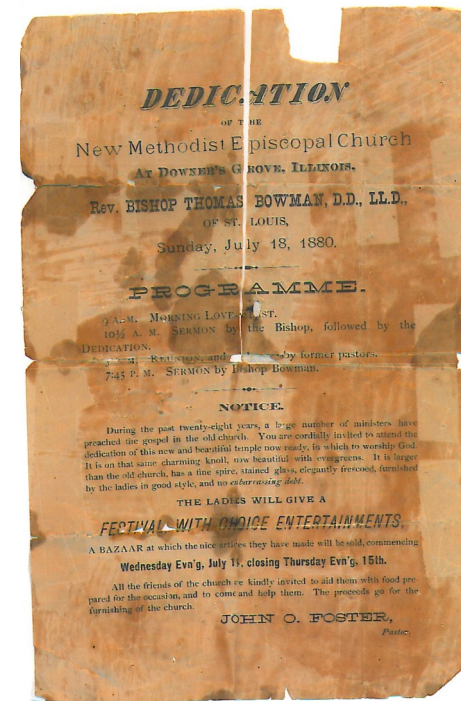
The ashes from the previous church are still visible in the background even after the 1880 building was completed.

The Church Grows 1880-1895

In 1879 the first church burned down and a new church was constructed at a cost of \$5,000. Pledges ranged from \$5 to two day's work with a team, or 1/2 cord of stone. The dedication program describes the 1880 church as "...on that same charming knoll, now beautiful

with evergreens. It is larger than the old church, has a fine spire, stained glass, elegantly frescoed, furnished by the ladies in good style and no embarrassing debt." The spire of this church was the first in Downers Grove. When a new church was built in 1894, this building was bought by James Batterham and moved to what is now 5321 Lane Place.

During the 1890's the village population grew to almost 1,000. The church also continued to grow. The Ladies' Aid Society was organized to extend the outreach of the local church and the Epworth League youth group was chartered. It later was renamed United Methodist Youth Fellowship. The congregation continued to grow and once again a larger church was needed.



The Welcome Church 1895-1927

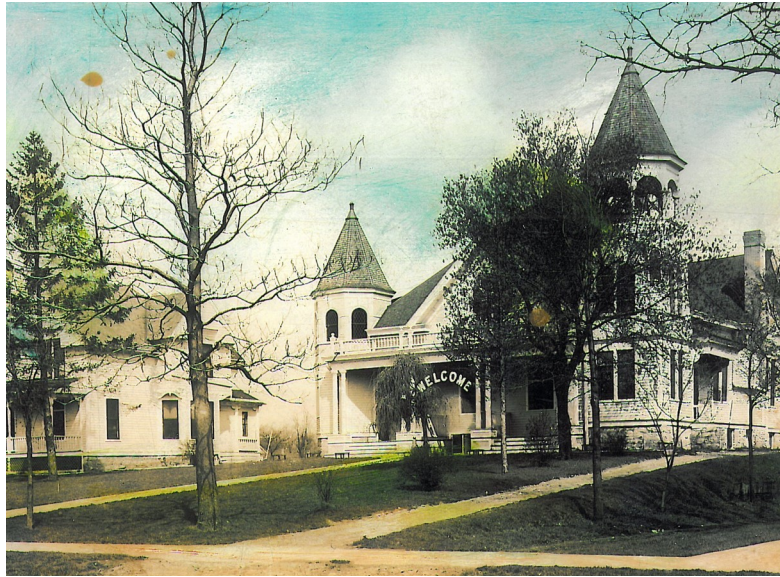
Four years of planning and fund raising culminated in the dedication of a new church in 1895 which became known as the "Welcome Church" because of the lighted sign in the front of the church.

When the fund raising began, there was \$60.94 in the church treasury. By dedication day, the entire cost of \$10,000 was subscribed. The description in the 1896 directory states "60 x 80 feet, unique in design, very pretty in appearance, situated on a hill, its colonnade, massive oak doors and beautiful windows making it very attractive. The interior finish is of cypress, pews and pulpit of oak and the frescoing harmonized beautifully with the windows and carpeting."

The 1895 high school graduation ceremonies for the four graduates were held in this church. Because of its large "auditorium" it became the center for many community events, as well as for worship.



Annual Washington Banquets, designed to bring the community together, started in 1899 and continued until 1987.



The Semperatus Class of 1918 was taught by Fern Fairweather. Pictured on the front row, left to right are: Leroy Phelps, Arthur Tylar, Richard Deees, Ben Morgan and Wallace Grieb. The boys standing are Louis Stevenson, Harley Rogers, Anton Broberg and Gene Pickett.



The 1923 Missionary Society picnic attracted quite a crowd.

Remembering Our Church History Through Photos



This photo was taken at the marriage of Mary Tenney to Mr. Hawk in 1895. Of all the photos in the church archives, this is the only one that shows what the interior of the sanctuary looked like at the time.



A.E. Saunders served as pastor from 1882-1894.



Elizabeth Heartt, as photographed in 1905, and her husband, George, donated the bell that still rings in each worship service every Sunday.

In 1905, Mr. and Mrs. George B. Heartt donated a fine bell which was later transferred to the present church and continues to welcome worshippers every Sunday.

During World War I the Sunday School aided the war effort by shipping barrels of clothing for European war sufferers and making a monthly contribution of a crate of eggs to Wesley hospital. The five churches in Downers Grove alternated Sunday services to save fuel.

As surrounding towns grew, the Downers Grove congregation assisted other communities to form their own church. Westmont church began in 1926, Hinsdale and Lisle in 1952, Woodridge in 1962 and Bolingbrook in 1974. By 1927 church membership had grown to 620 and the beloved Welcome Church could no longer serve the needs of the congregation. The final service was held in July, 1927.



Members gathered outside following the last service at the Welcome Church on July 10, 1927. The Heartt Bell, which still is used to ring in Sunday services, is visible in the belfry.

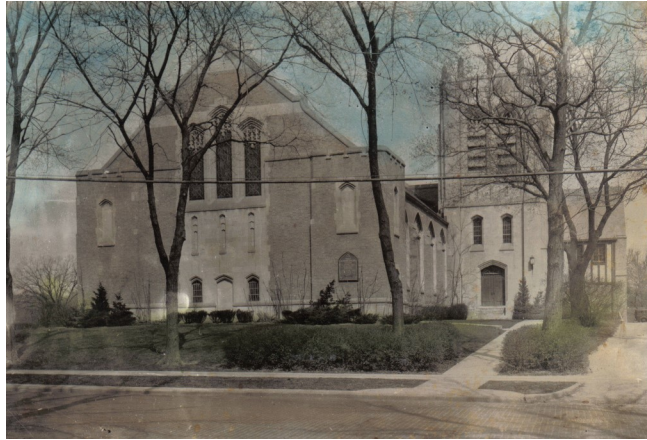
A new church was to use all the land occupied by the Welcome Church, so it was torn down, but some of the oak pews and the bell could be moved to the new church. The pews in the current balcony came from the Welcome Church. While the new church was being built, worship services were held at the Masonic Temple.

A New Sanctuary 1928-present

The cornerstone for the present building was laid on July 16, 1927.

By March 1, 1928 the \$190,000 cost for the new church was met by donations and pledges extending over a five-year period. Sixteen members, seven of them women, signed a

promissory note guaranteeing payment of the \$90,000 mortgage. The new church, the present building, was dedicated April 8-15, 1928. The window above the altar, a gift of Mrs.



George B. (Elizabeth) Heartt, was dedicated at the evening service on Easter Sunday.

In 1929 the stock market crashed. All four local banks failed. In 1931, as members, including the guarantors, lost savings and jobs, the church continued to fall behind on mortgage payments, Rev. Steuart White and 48 new guarantors joined the original 16 to decrease the obligations to a reasonable amount.

As the pastor and finance committee continued negotiations with the Great American Insurance Company, the guarantors began mak-

Contents of Cornerstone Copper Box (located in current church Tower Room)

Laid July 16, 1927

Membership list
List of subscribers to the new church and educational building
1924 Discipline of Methodist Episcopal Church
1927 Methodist Year Book
Sept. 27, 1927 edition of *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, containing account of Cornerstone laying
October 1, 1927 issue of *Epworth Herald*
Certified copy of property deed dated April 1, 1852
Copies of *Downers Grove Reporter* with cuts and accounts of new church relating to 1926 financial campaign, ground breaking services, opening of cornerstone from former church and cornerstone laying and history of the church
Picture of church and people on Ground Breaking Sunday, July 10, 1927
Copy of Cornerstone services Sept. 25, 1927 bulletin.

Also contents of former Cornerstone laid July 16, 1894:
1892 Discipline; list of members and societies of church; July 11, 1894 *Northwestern Christian Advocate*; July 14, 1894 edition of *Epworth Herald*; July 16, 1894 front pages of *Inter Ocean* and *Chicago Record*; and various coins

Chapel Choir Tour Destinations

2011	Toronto, Canada	1990	New York, NY
2010	Philadelphia, PA	1989	Atlanta, GA
2009	New Orleans, LA	1988	Washington, DC
2008	New York, NY	1987	New Orleans, LA
2007	Wilmington, NC	1986	Boston, MA
2006	Washington, DC	1985	New York, NY
2005	Atlanta, GA	1984	Dallas, TX
2004	New York, NY	1983	Atlanta, GA
2003	Fort Worth, TX	1982	Toronto, Canada
2002	Boston, MA	1981	Washington, DC
2001	St. Simons Island, GA	1980	Orlando, FL
2000	New York, NY	1979	Colorado Springs, CO
1999	Pensacola, FL	1978	New York, NY
1998	Virginia Beach, VA	1977	Atlanta, GA
1997	Toronto, Canada	1976	Dallas, TX
1996	Hilton Head, SC	1975	Colorado Springs, CO
1995	New York, NY	1974	Washington, DC
1994	Myrtle Beach, SC	1973	Iowa
1993	Orlando, FL	1972	Memphis, TN
1992	New Orleans, LA	1971	St. Louis (mini-tour)
1991	Hilton Head, SC		

Chapel Choir Directors

Richard Hart
Lois Lawrence
John Neve
Dave Gladstone
Vicky Chapman
Brett Goad
Holly McKee
Belford Hernandez
Chad Goetz

Reflections and Memories from Megan (Roberts) Salgado (1979-1981)

I love to sing! Unfortunately, I have a very mediocre voice. My joke during high school was that I sang with the Chapel Choir because the church couldn't say no. Being in a group of teens, with a wide array of talent, it always amazed me the music that came out. It was a remarkable and inspiring thing to be a part of.

When I was 14, tour was about traveling without my parents, being with my friends, seeing new places, meeting new people, having a ton of fun on the bus, singing and enjoying the smiling faces every night . . .

But without really realizing it, I experienced what it means to be a Christian and to be a part of our church. *Open Hearts*: Imperfect people who join together in love and kindness reflect that and are made more perfect. *Open Minds*: So many friendships that would not have happened in the context of school; conversations and views of life, often different than our own, with host families that opened our eyes and widened our hearts. *Open Doors*: The many homes and churches that were so graciously opened to us, the meals and snacks fed to us, the people who came out in all kinds of spring weather to hear our message. I learned that the church is alive – it is not just a place to go on Sunday morning, but a way to live your life. We toured to share the message of Christ's love with others, but were given much more in return.

Fast forward 30 years . . . We don't live in Downers Grove anymore, but my daughter grew up attending tour concerts and knew that one day she would get to be a part of this tremendous choir. Not attending DG North or South, she didn't know many kids and was a bit apprehensive. The summer before her freshman year, she had the opportunity to attend a rehearsal and sing some tour songs. She was immediately hooked – not only by the music, but also by the fact that several choir members welcomed her in - chatting with her and sharing “the ropes.” There is now a different director, and different favorite songs, but the same beautiful sounds, the same amazement with the camaraderie and kindness of others, and, yes, even the same infamous potluck spaghetti dinners.

Four decades after this choir started, the circle continues . . .so many of my contemporaries are now seeing their children up front singing and are feeling the same pride and love of having them being a part of this very special and unique choir family. It's nice to know that in a world that has become so fast-paced and commercial, and where everyone has a slogan or catch phrase, that “Open Hearts – Open Minds – Open Doors” still really means something. It is so much more than words - It is the Chapel Choir – It is who we are.

The following members saved this church from foreclosure in 1929 by agreeing to use their personal mortgages as collateral.

Norman E. Anderson	Irving G. Heartt	Mr. & Mrs. H. F. Pippinger
R.E. Baker	Mr. & Mrs. John Heartt	William Pohlmann
Rupert E. Bateman	Edward F. Hecht	Theron O. Potter
May Batterham	Annie Herring	R.E. Rassweiler
Grace Batterham	I.M. Hogeland	Charles K. Roe
Austin Broberg	Mr. & Mrs. Wallace Journey	Franklin Roe
J. H. Butela	Herbert Lane	C.R. Spicher
A.P. Butler	George H. Law	Mr. & Mrs. Carl Standard
G.W. Caldwell	Hattie Law	C.S. Steffy
John E. Capps	W.P. Lehman	Mr. & Mrs. H.M. Stough
W.S. Chilvers	E.P. LeMont	Watts Tenney
M.W. Cole	Lee Littleford	R.E. Thomas
Fred Ebersold	Lewis B. Lott	D.L. Toon
L.W. Eddy	Marion Lower	T.O. Westhafer
M.H. Frazier	F.A. McClelland	Rollin Whitaker
William E. Garrison	A.G. Michel	Steuart White
Frank Gregory	Emma Mills	Fred Witz
Harlow Gregory	Fred W. Neill	E.F. Worsley
Mr. & Mrs. W. Hackelman	Andrew B. Nielsen	Vern W. Yost
I.E. Haebich	Beatrice Nielsen	
T.W. Harvey	Viola Nielsen	
Elizabeth A. Heartt	Ed Otto	

Payments, sometimes as small as \$5 per month. Rev. White kept reminding members who were struggling to pay at least part of their pledge, “It's harder to foreclose on a church than a grocery store.” After years of negotiations and many creative solutions the debt was paid, and the 65 guarantors released from their obligations. The mortgage was paid on October 27, 1946. The church had 803 members and Sunday School enrollment was 559.

In 1947, the land to the west of the church was purchased for \$18,000 and the present main parking lot was created.

The church began a period of outreach in 1951 following the appointment of Rev. Arthur Hagburg as senior pastor. It also became obvious that additional facilities were necessary, so discussions about expansion of the church began. Multiple Sunday classes were held at the same time in Fellowship Hall.



Prior to the addition of the Educational Wing, multiple Sunday School classes were held in Fellowship Hall.

The first Tower Bell was published in 1952 and two worship services at 9:30 and 11:00 became a reality in 1954.

Another tradition began in 1960 when the Chapel Choir began singing at the 9:30 worship service.

Through the following 30 years the children and the youth programs expanded. Classes were held in every nook and cranny. The Nursery Department served children from birth to three years in one room. The 1963 construction of the new education wing in two stages began just as the Family Life Day Nursery School started. The second stage of the education wing project was completed and the Heartt Chapel was dedicated on April 20, 1969. Church membership was 2,284 and average Sunday School attendance was 630.



Construction of the Heartt Chapel and Education wing began in 1968.

In 1969, The Tower Bell became a weekly publication and the church name was officially changed to First United Methodist Church. A year later, John Neve was hired as the first full time Director of Music.

The first handbell choir was organized in 1971, the same year the Chapel Choir celebrated its first tour.

In 1976, Rev. William D. White was appointed senior pastor. He had spent part of his youth in this congregation when his Father, Rev. Stuart D. White served as pastor from 1930-1936.

A Reflection from Denise Hage

God “speaks” to each of us at times and in ways unique and meaningful to each of us. One of the ways I “hear” God the clearest is through music – especially when I participate in the music. My earliest recollection of this is as a member of the children’s choir at our Methodist church in Michigan at the age of six. I clearly remember choir rehearsals and singing “We are climbing Jacob’s ladder”. I remember learning songs at Vacation Bible School at my grandmother’s church in Kansas – songs like “Jesus wants me for a sunbeam...to shine for Him each day”, and that God’s love is “Deep and Wide”. Every summer it was fun to sing “Jesus Loves Me” with my sisters and cousins in my grandmother’s music room as the whole extended family (all 20 of us) gathered before going to church together.

Later, as a member of our own Chapel Choir under the loving direction of John Neve, the song that spoke directly to me at a church in Pennsylvania in 1974 was, “He is alive and He’s opened the door, He gives me joy to live life evermore, He is alive and so I celebrate, this is the story that I must relate, He is alive and I love Him, I am alive and He loves me!”

The message of God’s love for me and for us all comes alive in music, and it just has to be shared! As parents, Eric (also a Chapel Choir alum) and I wanted our children, Adam and Syrena, to have the opportunity to experience this special connection with the Holy Spirit and with their friends at church through music with the Chapel Choir. We were pleased that they both chose to participate in the Chapel Choir and experience sharing the message on spring tour. Now they have their own stories to relate. It has been a blessing to have had opportunities to sing praise and share the stories of faith with others through the years, to “pass it on” to our own children and to your children while choir adult leaders.

I’m so grateful to have been raised in the Methodist church, to be part of this Methodist church with 175 years of people who “love to tell the story”. It is the Song – like God’s love- that never ends. Thanks be to God! Amen

Reflections and Memories from Tom and Karen Wagner

Our history with the Chapel Choir started in 1990 when our daughter Melinda was asked by some new freshmen friends to join the FUMC Chapel Choir. It was a hard request to turn down since the small church we were members of had a choir of about ten kids. As the weeks passed, she asked Tom and me to come to FUMC to hear them sing. We did and we will never forget the first time we saw the 80-plus kids in the choir. I'm sure our mouths dropped open at the same time. A church that could attract that many kids to attend church and sing every Sunday had to be doing something very special. Then, we heard them sing. Wow! We were hooked.

We left our little church and joined FUMC. I was asked to help collect props for the choir. I enjoyed working with the choir and getting to know Melinda's new friends. As it turned out, because of illness, I was asked on a Thursday if I could accompany the choir leaving on Saturday to help chaperone the tour. I went and that was the beginning of my ten years of chaperoning ten very special Chapel Choir tours.

It became evident early on that tours were a huge undertaking. Maryann Himmel and I suggested that the details be handled by someone other than the choir director, thus the "Tour Director" was born. Maryann and I tour directed the next three years together. She retired and then Tom and I would tour direct four more tours. Two more trips followed and that ended ten years of wonderful tours.

During our tenure we travelled to New Orleans, Orlando, Myrtle Beach, New York twice, Hilton Head, Toronto, Virginia Beach, Pensacola, and Saint Simon's Island. We can honestly say that although each tour is unique in its own way, each was also a joyful experience. We have wonderful kids at FUMC. They were given compliments regarding their performances, as well as their behavior, at every church we visited. We were always asked to please return when we were travelling to their area. We were always proud to be chaperones to such a great group of kids. Teenagers can be a scary group. However, if you treat them with respect and take the time to listen to them, they will return your respect.

We believe we got more out of the tour experiences than we gave. From the many nice comments during our sharing nights to the special notes and hugs we've gotten since, it was a truly awesome experience.

If you ever have a chance to be a Chapel Choir chaperone, don't hesitate. You'll feel extremely blest, we guarantee it!



This early poster announces the Chapel Choir's 1973 home concert following its third tour, a tradition that continues nearly 40 years later.

The 8:15 service was started the same year and on May 23, 1976 a new sanctuary organ was dedicated, a gift from Inez Tenney. The accompanying chimes were a gift from Dean Dildine and Shirley Carlson.

Rev. Fred Conger was appointed senior pastor in 1981, an appointment that continued for 20 years.

In the following years the programs and services to serve the congregation's spiritual, social and recreational needs have continued to grow and change as society has changed. Bell choir, band and orchestral music, and the voices of our seven choirs are an integral part of our worship.

The nursery school continues to be the fun place to learn basic skills in a Christian setting. School age children fill classrooms every Sunday. Junior, Senior and Post High School mission trips give youth a perspective of how others live. Adult mission trips have further extended the reach of this congregation both within and beyond our nation's border.

The two-year Onward Bound program for seventh and eighth graders prepare them for confirmation.

United Methodist Women and other groups provide fellowship, service and worship opportunities. The adult education program covers everything from small group study to Friday Night at the Movies to Young at Heart for the senior members. Membership and Church and Society work areas encourage participation and generous financial support for community and service needs. In 2011, the First United Methodist Church is a very busy place and membership is close to 2,000.



Though the name has changed many times from The Methodists in 1836 to First United Methodist Church of Downers Grove in 2011, the essential church remains the same. As in the past, our church remains a community of Christian faith united by prayer, worship and service to others.



Chapel Choir—Five Decades of Tours

The Chapel Choir has a long and rich history at First United Methodist Church. It has led Sunday worship at the 9:30 morning service during the school year since 1960.

Since 1971, when John Neve became Minister of Music and made the dream a reality, the choir has participated on a week-long Spring Break musical mission trip spreading God's message in word and song to congregations throughout North America, including such places as Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Denver, Fort Worth, Memphis, Myrtle Beach, Nashville, New Orleans, New York City, Orlando, Pensacola, Philadelphia, St. Simon's Island, Toronto, Virginia Beach, Washington, D.C., and many communities in between. Over the years, the choir has also performed at the Northern Illinois Conference and other sporting and community events.

Choir members represent as many as a dozen different area high schools. In addition to singing on Sundays, the choir presents a Christmas concert and home tour performance. Members also give of their time through many fundraising and mission activities at church and are involved in numerous activities in school, including athletics, speech, band, choir, dance, and clubs.

The Chapel Choir has impacted many lives over the years both within our own congregation and those who experienced their music and messages during tour. It is exciting and rewarding that the legacy continues since many recent and current members are second generation Chapel Choir participants.

The following pages contain photos and memories of Chapel Choir.

HE IS "REAL"

A CONCERT OF SACRED MUSIC



*presented by:
Chapel Choir of the
First United Methodist Church
Downers Grove, Illinois*

The 1976 Tour Choir

throughout the years. My major accompanists/organists were Marion Lower and Art Eymann. The senior pastors during these years were Farrell Jenkins, Bill White, and Fred Conger.

And then there is Marilou Welch!! This church wouldn't be the great church it is without her loyal, dedicated, and long-time ministry. I learned and grew from these and many others I served with on staff during these years.

Dave and Beth grew up "in church". They received their spiritual and musical growth through the ministries you all have provided throughout these many years. It was very difficult for them when we moved from DG in 1984. FUMC was all they knew of "church". Of course they adapted to something new, but they both will always look back at your church as the place where everyone knew their names and where they truly felt "at home".

It was only by the grace of God that we were called to Downers Grove and to First United Methodist Church. I truly believe it was all a part of God's plan for our lives that we spent those 15 glorious years with you, the church, at 1032 Maple. I am thankful that I was able to so effectively use the gifts of ministry that God gave me when I served your church for this very small part of your 175 year history. Thank you for allowing our family this life changing experience. We will never forget you!

Congratulations! Thank you, congregation, for your outstanding support of the music ministry down through the years. May it continue for many years into the future. Happy 175th!

Memories and Reflections

Several church members offered to share their memories about the church. The following was provided by Ken Jacobs.

My family have attended and supported this church since 1930. When I was a young child we would get up on Sundays a little early so I could "ring the bell." I would jump up and grab the rope in the preacher's study, but nothing would happen. I was not heavy enough to ring the bell, so Mr. Broberg, our custodian, would laugh and start it swinging for me.

In about 1942 Mr. Broberg had a heart attack and couldn't work. The church had very little money at the time and could not hire a replacement, so many members helped with the church cleaning, etc. My father, Walter Jacobs, volunteered me to handle the building and grounds. In the fall I mowed the church and parsonage lawns with a hand push mower. Then when winter came, two coal furnaces had to be "hand fired" to warm the building. When temperatures dropped to the teens, Dad and I would get to church around 4:30 a.m. to stoke the furnace. We could only get the sanctuary up to about 50 degrees, so everyone wore their coats.

My parents served on many committees. My mother, Beulah, was church secretary at one time and my father printed the church bulletin each week with a hand cranked mimeograph machine. After getting the needed information, my mother would type the stencil. As the copies were produced, they had to be "slip sheeted" to keep the ink off the next copy. That was my job. My father also served as "church greeter" for many years and my parents spent several Sunday afternoons each month visiting sick members at their homes and in the hospital. After my father's death in 1977, an "Everlasting Light" was installed in the Heartt Chapel in his memory. Later, two benches were installed in the Prayer Garden in memory of my mother after her death in 1995.

My wife Shirley and I were married here in 1950 and our four children attended Sunday School, sang in the choirs and became members. This church has always been a great part of our lives from my years in Sunday school to potluck suppers, to Easter sunrise services and of course all the Christmas programs.

One other memory not related to church history occurred at 10:30 p.m. April 3, 1947. My father and I had left the building after helping with Easter decorations when we saw the Burlington Zephyr hit a 14-ton Caterpillar Tractor that had fallen off a westbound train, jump the tracks and slam into the Downers Grove train station. Several people were killed in the accident.

Memories and Reflections

Alice Johnson provided her own list of memories.

Women sewing layettes for children in the gym on church owned sewing machines that were then shipped to missionaries.

While potlucks and meetings were held in the gym, the children were roller skating in what is now Fellowship Hall. The skates were clamp-ons and owned by the church.

There used to be a driveway around the church. It went away when the education wing was built.

The Washington Banquet was the social event of the year and people dressed to the nines.

The Junior Missionary Society, comprised of 12-15 girls, met after school at the home of Mrs. Marsh on Washington Street.

Epworth Fellowship was started in 1951. Our parents felt that as new parents we needed some church affiliation and activity so they offered to babysit for us. This was a class of discussion and fellowship. I was the first president. We sponsored a spring concert each year in the gym. It was decorated with locally grown bushes and flowers. There were top notch singers and instrumentalists. One was Alan Keller who was a member of the Fred Waring Singers. Money collected was given to the church for missionary use.

We had a church orchestra in 1939 made up of eighth graders. We met in the parsonage (Rev. Collins) on Carpenter Street. Members of the group were: Phil Collins, percussion; Donald Whitaker, coronet; Hazel Eastman, violin; and myself on clarinet. We were not very good and only played for our classmates in Sunday School.

church. I still receive letters and cards and emails (yes, even on Facebook) from "kids" that went through the program, some of them now in middle age, letting me know how much our time together meant to them then and means to them now. Some of them have kids who have gone through the program or are presently singing at FUMC. What a great gift to me to see that the strong program still thrives today.

The Chapel Choir grew to a super size during these years. Many of you will remember when the numbers of senior highs far exceeded the size of the choir loft. Members "fought" over who had to sit in the overflow and who got to be in the loft. Latecomers and freshmen usually ended up sitting and standing down below. We began touring on a grand scale in 1972 with a trip to southern Illinois, Missouri, and Kentucky. That was the start of "something big!"

That started 40 years of FUMC sending out youth to all parts of the country. I always told the youth that they were representing their church as they traveled, spreading the gospel of Christ. Spiritual growth in these young persons was the reason we did it, the reason we spent all the hard work and time and funds on these trips. The fact that they were also touching the lives of those we sang for was a wonderful by-product. I have counted up at least 24 states, Washington D.C, and Canada, that we toured in during those years. This one ministry meant the world to those who sang in Chapel Choir. Who can forget our productions of *Godspell*, *Celebrate Life*, *Lightshine*, and *A Reason To Rejoice!* When I retired in 2003 from the church in Tucson, AZ that I served for 19 years, Chapel Choir alums from all over the country descended on Tucson to help us celebrate my retirement and my 40+ years in music ministry. What a striking testament to what being in Chapel Choir did for so many. What a privilege it was for Jane and me to be able to serve as God's instruments for so many! The success of the Chapel Choir program and the tours gave our church a reputation all over the country. As youth choirs in this country were failing, and as youth became less and less interested in singing, we were a model for many other youth choir programs as others heard of us and read of our strengths. You can be very proud of supporting such a ministry.

The adult Sanctuary Choir was also a pride and joy for the church. My memories of this choir include the bi-annual Elizabethan Christmas Feaste. Completely produced and presented by the choir, this became a much loved and looked forward to event of the church. The Sanctuary Choir also presented major musical works with orchestra. This choir also grew in size. An overflow was never necessary, but we often had to add chairs in different places in the loft.

Of course my memories have to include the great professional team I worked with

Memories and Reflections

John Neve was the first fulltime Minister of Music. He was kind enough to share some of his memories.

My first memory was when I traveled to DG for an interview for the position in 1969. I could see then that this church had a lot going for it. I sensed something very special about the persons on the Staff-Parish Committee and about the rich opportunities for ministry that they presented.

I accepted the position as your first full-time Minister of Music, and Jane and I moved to DG that summer with our 9-month old son, David. We bought a little house on Webster, and the rest is history. It is actually the history of our family being raised in the church and the village that Dave and his sister, Beth, born in 1970, considered "the center of the universe".

What a church to be raised in! Our kids grew up singing in a children's choir from the time they were Cherubs to Dave's final years in the Chapel Choir and Beth in the Crusader Choir (Jr Hi). Yes, we were able to build on the fine tradition of choirs at FUMC to the point where large choirs became a yearly occurrence. We kept wondering, where are all these kids coming from? We had a Choir Mother's Committee that helped to keep things moving along in a smooth and orderly fashion. We started an award system for outstanding attendance, along with a Singer of the Week Award, which by the close of each season, each singer had received at least once. We gave gifts of personal, name embossed hymnals for memorization of hymns which I considered vital to the religious education of each child. Many of you will remember the yearly Spring, biblically based musicals presented by the older elementary singers given as a part of worship.

We founded a Northern Illinois Conference Music Camp soon after arriving, which had its humble beginnings at the Methodist camp on Plank Road in Naperville. The success of this endeavor grew and grew until it became an annual event at Camp Reynoldswood near Dixon, Ill. Our church yearly sent more campers to Music Camp than any other church in the conference. Our family has fond memories of going to camp each summer and presenting a full musical at the end of the week.

When I think back to the weekly choir rehearsal schedule at the church during those years it makes me tired and wondering how it ever happened. With seven singing choirs and three handbell choirs, there were rehearsals almost every day of the week and into the evening hours as well. There was truly "something for everyone!" It is quite overwhelming when I think back to all the lives that were touched in some way through the music of the

Memories and Reflections

Current Music Coordinator Andi Kinsella is one of five generations in her family who have been influenced by this congregation. She offered the following reflections.

The very first memory I have of our church is probably when I was 3 (1953). I remember being in the Tower Room (it was the main entrance at that time) and we were getting ready to leave. I was among a sea of legs. As I was holding my dad's hand and begging to be carried, a very nice older gentleman began talking to me. He was so nice that I asked him if he would be my Grandpa as I never had a grandpa that I knew. He said he would! I wish I knew today who he was because we sure bonded in the Tower Room that day.

Our family attended church every Sunday, all six of us. My brothers and I would go to children's Sunday School at 9:30 and my parents would attend J.O.Y. (Jesus, Others, Yourself) Class. Then we would all go to church together at 11:00. I remember my first Sunday School teacher and some of you might remember him also: Charlie Steffey. What a nice man. After I started working at the church, I had the opportunity to tell him what an influence he had on me. I will never forget him. Sunday School teachers have a lifelong impact on children!

I remember taking a pot of my mom's soup over to Rev. Hagberg at the Parsonage that was located where the Heartt Memorial Chapel is now. And I remember Charlotte Andersen, who was the Superintendent of Education for years and years and her photo is on the wall in the hallway leading to Fellowship Hall.

I remember when there used to be a huge celebration called the Washington Banquet. One year I remember the Governor of Illinois came! I was so impressed with his license plate number "1". Later on there was the Elizabethan Feaste which was a huge production put on by the Chancel Choir in the Gym. The Chancel Choir was in full costume -- it was quite a feast!

And of course Marilou. She was there, always ... and still is! Every time we would call on the phone or stop by, Marilou was always there. Her mom, Mrs. Welch, was always there too, in the old Room 100. I think it was where Sunday School supplies were kept.

My brothers were on the church basketball team. My parents and I would watch the games from the Gym balcony (which has since been enclosed). There was a wire fence that served as the railing. In the Gym there was a pop machine that held bottles by the bottle top in a track. You'd open it up like a chest freezer, put in a nickle and you could then pull

the bottle around the track to get it out. My favorite was Orange Nehi.

Dr. Jenkins was the minister when I was in Junior high school and high school. For Confirmation Class we came to class every Saturday morning for I think it was about six weeks. Before we could be confirmed, we would make an appointment with Dr. Jenkins to go to his office and recite the Apostles' Creed and the books of the Bible.

Mrs. Flood was the director of the high school choir. Sometimes my friend Mary Lou Buckmaster and I were the only altos! The choir was a lot smaller then!

Our youth group was called MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship). We met on Sunday evenings in Fellowship Hall before the Education wing was added.

This Downers Grove Methodist church has been a guiding influence in our family for over 100 years. Not only have I worshipped here my whole life, but for the last 12 years I also have had the honor of being employed here. How blessed we have been to have been a part of this congregation since when my ancestors William and Maria Herring, joined the "struggling Methodist church" in Downers Grove in 1882!



In 1937 Vera Kjeldsen and William Herring Bateman were married. They were faithful, active members of this church together for over 50 years. Both served on boards and work areas and Vera was an active member of United Methodist Women and Mission Team for many, many years. Their four children, including Andi (Bateman Kinsella), were all baptized and confirmed in the church.

Memories and Reflections

Long time members Glenn and Jean Babler reflect on their time with the church.

The Saturday we moved to Downers Grove in 1965 with our five children, we met our backyard neighbors, Alma and Andy Hibner (Alice Johnson's father). They had been long time members of First United Methodist Church and they promptly invited us to attend church with them...the very next day.

We moved here from Muncie, Indiana, where we had been members of Main Street Methodist Church since 1953, so we accepted the invitation to attend First UMC.

The Hibners made sure to introduce us to their friends and fellow church members and we were warmly greeted by the minister and other members of the congregation following the service.

Many of the people we met that first Sunday have become lasting friends. We have always felt 'at home' and very much a part of the church congregation during the past 46 years. Though there have been changes in our ministers, staff and fellow members, this church has always been a home to us and important to our family. We have been faithful in our attendance, our gifts, our service and our prayers.

Our many years of membership are meaningful and precious to us.