Remembrances Under the Rainbow

A Compilation of Historian Articles Published in The Steeple Bell between 2012 and 2020

Franklin First United Methodist Church
303 S. Main St., Franklin OH 45005

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Written & Compiled by

Robert C. Bowman, Jr.

Franklin First United Methodist Church

303 South Main Street
Franklin OH 45005

October, 2020

Preface

This booklet contains all of the church Historian articles published in the Franklin First United Methodist Church (FFUMC) monthly newsletter *The Steeple Bell* starting with the September 2012 issue through the March 2020 issue. Except for some minor format editing and corrections of the occasional errors, each article is reproduced with its original contents.

Following the Introduction, which is an edited and updated version of the March 2013 Historian article, the articles have been organized into five sections grouped into the following related topics:

- Church Building History Items
- Circuit Riders & Past Ministers Stories
- Congregation Members and Groups
- Community Events & Organizations
- General Methodist Denomination Items

The articles are arranged by a nominal chronological sequence within each section.

Of course, these are not all of the stories that can be written about the Franklin First United Methodist Church and its congregation during its over 220 year history. Hopefully, readers can suggest additional subjects or provide stories for future Historian articles.

Bob Bowman
FUMC Historian
Franklin OH
October 2020

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INTRODUCTION

It was in early 2012 when Pastor Bryan Lauzau asked if I would be willing to become our Church's Historian. Mrs. Ruth Ann Stephens, who served in this position for a number of years, had passed away on December 31, 2011 and someone was needed to fill the vacancy on the FUMC council and to continue performing the historian's functions. Pastor Bryan gave me some documents describing the general duties and responsibilities for collecting and maintaining records and various types of historical material generally retained by local churches. I also checked the National and Ohio websites of the United Methodist Church for more details. Although my membership at FUMC had been only a few years since Judy and I permanently moved to Franklin from Southern California in 2008, I accepted his offer to become our Church Historian. While we had lived in the Los Angeles and San Diego areas for nearly 30 years, I have deep ties in this community having been born in Dayton, attending and graduating from the Carlisle school system, graduating from Miami University (where I met and married Judy), and working 15 years at the Mound Laboratory in Miamisburg prior to going to California. Judy & I had purposely selected to move to Franklin for our retirement years, even though I'd not yet fully retired from my profession of a materials research scientist.

I have enjoyed history since childhood. Because I was also very good at math and science in school, I decided these latter fields would offer better career options than history. Hence, I majored in chemistry for my Bachelors, Masters, and doctorate degrees. I have spent and enjoyed over 40 years working as a research scientist and engineer for aerospace, defense, and energy organizations and I still work part time as a consultant.

During the first months as the church historian, I began searching and examining the various sources of information on the history of the Franklin Methodist Church, its congregations, pastors, and events and celebrations. There is a series of binders at the church containing bulletins, announcements, newspaper clippings, letters, photographs, and miscellaneous articles dating back into the early 1900s. There are also brief articles and descriptions of the Church in published histories of the City of Franklin and Warren County. However, there wasn't not a published book dedicated to the Church's history although there are some transcriptions of official membership and ministers that date to the middle of the 19th century. One of my initial goals was to compile sufficient information to create a comprehensive book on the history of the Methodist Church in Franklin since the circuit rider John Kobler preached in the cabin of Captain Robert Ross in 1798. One challenge was to locate enough records and documents in addition to those kept in the current folders. There were simply too many gaps to fill. Few descendants of the pioneer families remain in the area and I checked the files of Franklin Historical Society for leads as well. Information is also incomplete for the past several decades, so I continued requesting any old letters, articles, or other documents that be available in the family archives of current and recent members of our Church.

Starting in September 2012, I have been writing mostly single-page articles on specific topics relating the history of FUMC that are published approximately monthly in the Steeple Bell newsletter and on the church's Face Book page. I have supplemented the Church's archives with local historical history documents and searches of on-line information databases such as Ancestory.com, Wikepedia.com, NewspaperArchives.com, and United Methodist Historical organizations. One of the bits of information I discovered was that my fourth-great uncle Rev. Elisha W. Bowman was sent as a Methodist circuit rider minister in 1802 to preach on the Miami Circuit which included the families living in Franklin village.

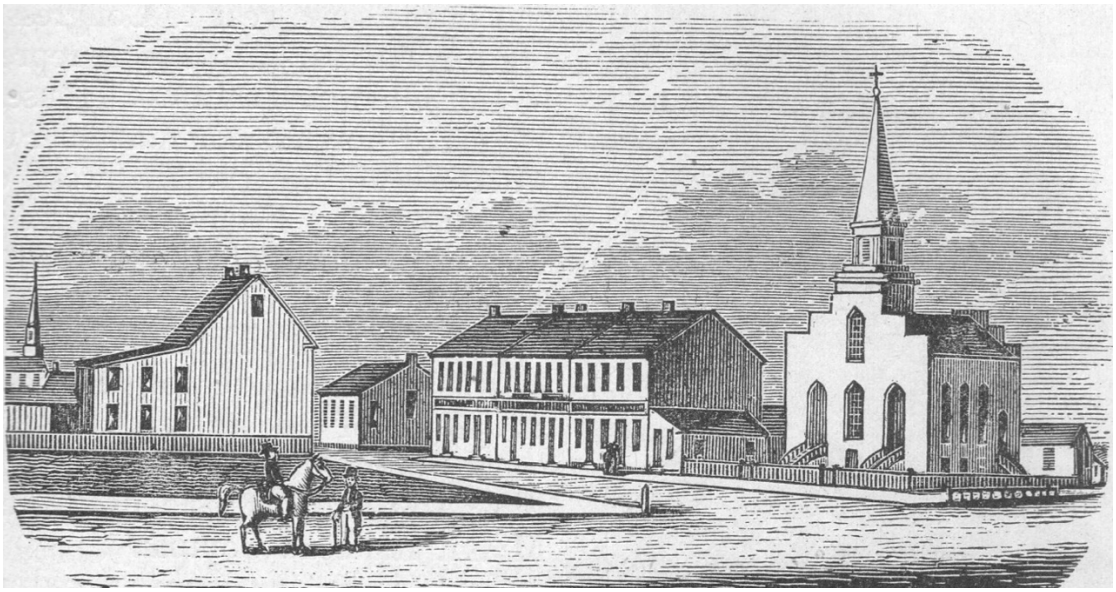
The duties of a church historian also include collecting, preserving, and retaining descriptions and records of contemporary activities and events within the church and its members for future generations. I'm working on this task although I do need to improve my organization and documentation of this information as well as prior historical facts that I continue to discover. I hope to provide my successors with thorough and comprehensive reports of FUMC during the first decades of the 21st century.

SECTION II.

CHURCH BUILDING HISTORY ITEMS

Franklin First United Methodist Church (August 2018)

Image of the Franklin Episcopal Methodist Church in 1846



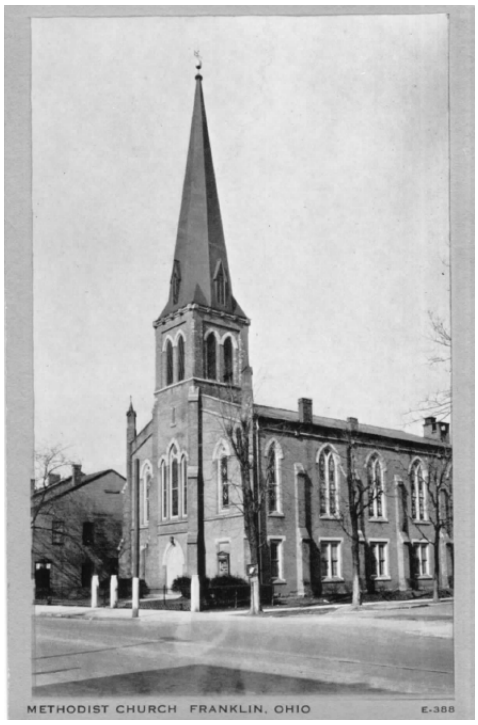
A view of Franklin, Ohio as drawn by Henry Howe in 1846 showing the Methodist Episcopal church with its bell tower/steeple (built in 1836) on the right side, next to it on Center (Main) street is a commercial block, beyond is the single-story Baptist church, and on the extreme left is the spire of the Presbyterian church. The small building on the extreme right is believed to be the original Methodist church built in 1832 that was subsequently converted into a private residence.

Starting in January 1846, Henry Howe (1816–1893) had spent over a year traveling across the state of Ohio making sketches, interviewing people, and collecting information for his book "**Historical Collections of Ohio**" that he published in 1847. The first edition sold over 18,000 copies. Between 1885 and 1887, Howe undertook a second tour of Ohio updating material to produce a three-volume version completed in 1891. The front page of this expanded work is subtitled "An Encyclopedia of the State: history both general and local, geography with descriptions of its counties, cities and villages, its agricultural, manufacturing, mining, and business development, sketches of eminent and interesting characters, etc., with notes of a tour over it in 1886." This work was highly acclaimed, but sold poorly leaving Howe deeply in debt from the project when he died in 1893. The State of Ohio did pass legislation to buy the copyright and printing plates for $20,000 that relieved Howe's widow of this debt. The books were reprinted by the State for a number of years in either two or three volumes sets.

Howe reported that the village of Franklin had 770 inhabitants in 1840 and was served by the three churches identified in the engraving. The population was 2729 at the 1890 census with Catholic and Christian churches in addition to those formerly cited during his 1846 visit. Howe also noted that paper manufacturing was the primary industry in Franklin where eight companies had 435 employees in 1888.

The above engraving may be the only known surviving image of this brick Methodist church, which clearly shows twin front entrances as well as a separate staircase located at the back of the north side. The building was demolished in 1859 and replaced with the much larger and current Sanctuary that was constructed and dedicated in 1860. While we cannot conclude from the drawing whether the front windows are stained glass or not, the image is suggestive that they were and possibly installed into the 1860 church. The four stained glass windows in the north and south front stairwells have very different coloration and much less elaborate patterns than the Memorial windows installed in the Sanctuary during 1893. However, no documents have been found to date in the church records to verify this supposition.

Dedication of the New Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church in September 1860



Photograph of the Franklin Ohio Methodist Episcopal Church circa 1900.

On September 16, 1860, Bishop Matthew Simpson and Rev. L. F. van Cleve, pastor, dedicated the present (and third) building of the Franklin Methodist Congregation. During services conducted on the previous day, $3575 was raised to free the new building from debt. Notes in a Bible used by Bishop Simpson at the dedication indicate that the cost of the church exclusive of old material and furnishings was $10,300 with $600 for new furnishings. This plus old material and the value of the lot ($1100) made a total valuation of $12,000. According to the Beers History of Warren County Ohio published in 1882: "The new building is in Gothic style, having buttresses exteriorly and having a steeple which rises 120 feet from the ground, in the lower part of which hangs a magnificent bell. This house cost about $10,000 and was a marvel of cheapness. The sanctuary is a very large one, and is now handsomely frescoed, has stained glass

Gothic windows and is neatly seated and carpeted. Below are the vestry, Sunday-school room and five classrooms. The building is heated by means of furnaces and lighted with gas." The Beers History also states: "This church was built through the efforts of the proceeding pastor Rev. Alexander Meharry, who, when he came, found a debt on the parsonage, an old church building and a congregation of old people, and who left this charge clear of debt, with the new church almost completed and a large number of young men and women members of the church. His zeal was so great that he was called a fanatic, but he infused some of the fire into others and built more temples than the one visible to mortal eyes."

Although Methodist circuit riding preachers had been holding services in Franklin since 1798, meetings had been held in members' homes or in the open fields and woods until the first church was built, in 1832, on the alley and fronting the south side of Third street, between Front (now, River) and Center (now, Main) streets. This building was later used as a residence for many years, but has since been demolished. In 1836, a brick church of larger dimensions was erected just east of the former and fronting on Center (Main) Street. This was a more pretentious building, having classrooms and a Sunday-school room in the basement and the audience room above, reached by steps in front and at the sides. As the congregation grew, this building also became too small and was torn away in 1859 to make room for the present building. The services of the church were held at the town hall and the Baptist Church during the demolition of the old and the building of the new church. The class and prayer meetings were held at the residences of members.

Over the 152 years since its dedication, the Methodist Church was renovated and updated numerous times including the construction of the "Education Building" addition at the back of the church in the 1950s. Some of these changes will be described in future articles.

Celebration of 150th Anniversary of Church Bell in the Steeple (2012)

What is "under the green steeple" of the Franklin Methodist church? Answer: A magnificent bronze bell cast in 1862. While this bell is rung before services most Sundays, very few members of the congregation have probably ever seen it. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its creation.

Photograph of the bronze bell in steeple of Franklin First United Methodist Church.

In addition to floral and script decorations, there is also the following lettering on the bell "G. W. Coffin & Co. Buckeye Bell Foundry Cincinnati Ohio. 1862". Prior to 1837, George Washington Coffin established a foundry in Cincinnati to cast bells and other brass & bronze items. The bell portion of the foundry was called The Buckeye Bell Foundry. Around 1856 his son, C.A. Coffin operated the foundry and specialized in bells for the Ohio River steamboats. The Coffin Bell Foundry bells were very ornate with elaborately decorated mounting hardware. Most Mississippi River paddle wheel boats sported a C. A. Coffin bell. The Buckeye Foundry Bells were primarily supplied to churches. In 1865, E. W. Vanduzen and C. T. Tift purchased the foundry and operated it under their control from 1865 to 1894. In about 1894, E.W. Vanduzen bought out his partner, changing the incorporated name to The E.W. Vanduzen Co., Inc., which officially ceased operations in about 1951. The Verdin Company of Cincinnati bought its remaining assets but was a distributor rather than manufacturer of bells.

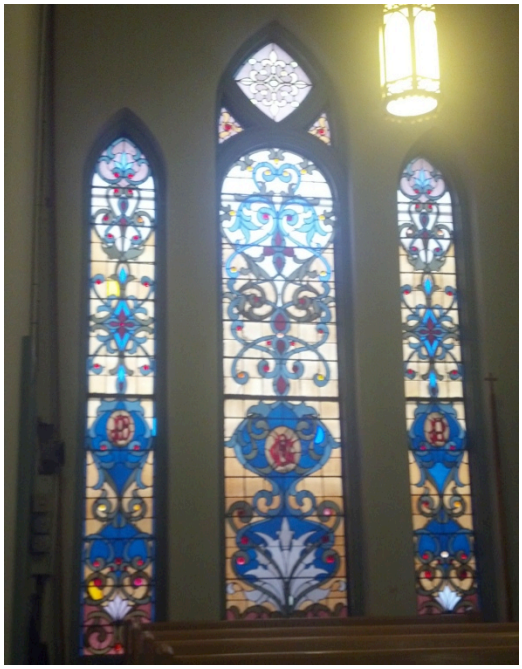
According to the Beers History of Warren County published in 1882, Ransom Seely Lockwood had donated this bell to the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church. Squire Lockwood was Franklin Village mayor and Township clerk for many years. R. S. Lockwood had been born in Union City (at what is now the Otterbein Retirement Manor) to Shaker parents. He was a self-made and highly successful businessman with no formal school education and his primary occupation as a young man was as a tailor. He settled in Franklin in 1835, where he married Hannah Ross in 1840. The couple had four children. In 1846 he was elected a Justice of the Peace and held that office until the time of his death in 1889. While he was not a member of any church, Mr. Lockwood was said to have contributed liberally to all and his favorite gifts were church bells to summon the worshipers to their houses of God.

Ransom S. Lockwood (Born: 2/12/1810 & died 7/16/1889) who donated the bell to the church.

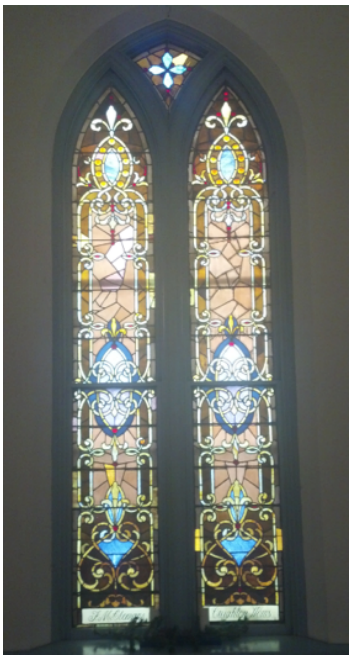
From the church records, the present bell is the third one owned by the Franklin church. A bell had been purchased in 1841 to replace a broken smaller bell in the first church. This second bell weighed 408 pounds and at $0.40 per pound (less $21 for the old broken bell) cost $141.80. This bell was purchased from David Altick of Miamisburg. No information is known on the fate of this second bell or when the current bell was installed in the present building.

Introduction to the Historic Memorial Windows

There are stain glass windows on three sides of the church's sanctuary. If you look closely, the windows on the front façade of the Church that faces Main Street (i.e., behind the former Chancel choir loft in back of the Sanctuary) have very different designs and coloration than those along the sides. Quoting from the Beers' History of Warren County that was published circa 1882, the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church was described as follows: "The audience room is a very large one, and is now handsomely frescoed, has stained glass Gothic windows and is neatly seated and carpeted." However, according to all the FUMC history compilations now available, Charles Smith presented designs for cathedral stain glass memorial windows in 1893 to replace the original sanctuary windows and they were dedicated in 1894. There are the eight windows (four on each side) in the Sanctuary with names or initials in the bottom panels. While I have not located any records to confirm my suspicions, I believe those stain glass windows in the back of the Sanctuary as well as those on the upper landings of the front staircases were part of the church when it was completed in 1860 or they were added very soon afterward in order to have been mentioned in the 1882 Beers' History book.



Stain glass windows behind the old choir loft at the back of the Sanctuary.



Example of a side Memorial Window.

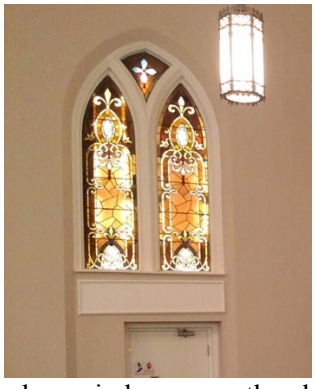
As the church historian's special project for 2014, I propose to research the origins of all the stain glass windows in our Sanctuary as well as identify and prepare short biographies on the individuals who names or initials are on them. In addition, I hope to obtain more information on the windows themselves, as well as the fund raising events and their original dedication with the intent of preparing a booklet in time for the September 2014 Homecoming service. While some of the names are familiar to us from long time family and businesses associations in Franklin, others seem quite obscure as well as being rather difficult to decipher with their script lettering. This task may prove quite challenging when only initials are available. Hence, I'm requesting that all current and former members of the congregation provide me whatever information that have from personal memory, written documents, family or church records on the history of these windows and the names for all those individuals that were once sufficiently associated with our Church to have been memorialized. Furthermore, I welcome any volunteers who would like to work with me on this research project.

[**Note**: A booklet on the FFUMC was produced in September 2018 for the 125th commemoration of the stain glass windows and is available.]

Some New Information on the Sanctuary Memorial Windows

A brief historical summary of the stain glass windows located on three sides of the church's sanctuary was reported in the January 2014 issue of the Steeple Bell. The windows on the front façade of the Church facing Main Street existed prior to the 1882 publication of the Beers' History of Warren County. Charles Smith presented designs for cathedral stain glass memorial windows in 1893 to replace the original 1860 plain sanctuary windows and were dedicated in 1894. These are the eight windows (four on each side) in the Sanctuary with names or initials in the bottom panels.

In January 1999 an elevator, which was made possible by a donation from the Ruth K. Schilder estate, was installed in the southwest corner of the sanctuary. To accommodate the elevator, the bottom halves of the double stained glass window had to be removed and were sealed in a wooden box on 3/8/99 and stored in the basement. The upper portions of the windows have remained unlit for over seventeen years. This year the Trustees added back lighting to the stained glass window. Jerry Rhude engineered the project attaching LED lights to boards using spring hinges so they can be maneuvered into the area with very limited working space. John Lass and Jim Martin assisted with this installation. The picture below shows the lighting after two boards of lights have been mounted on each side of the window.



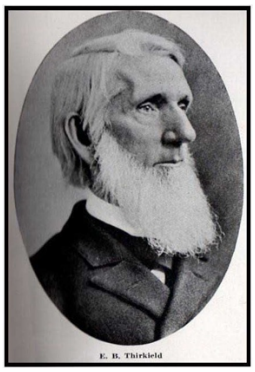
The stain glass windows over the elevator on 7/17/16 after installation of the custom lights.

Jim Martin and I went down to the basement and opened the crate containing the two stored windows. The windows are in excellent condition and each had a memorial name, which was photographed, as shown in the next figure.

First memorial nameplate was E. B. Thirkield

Second memorial nameplate was Pearl

Eden Burrows Thirkield (1828-1905) was one of the founders and a pioneer member of the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church. He became the Sunday school superintendent in about 1865 and served in this capacity for over 25 years. He was also proprietor of the Thirkield Department Store and President of the Franklin Paper Company.



E. B. Thirkield photograph (unknown date)

"Pearl" probably memorializes one of E.B.'s daughters who is listed as being 11 years old in the 1870 U.S. census and entered in the 1875 church's probationers' records. Pearl is not included as one of his surviving children in the 1882 Beers' Warren County history nor included in the 1880 U.S. census or any later ones. It seems likely that she had died sometime after 1875. However, I couldn't find her name in databases of death records or among the various Thirkields buried at the Franklin Woodhill cemetery. This is now a mystery to investigate and confirm whether the Pearl on the Memorial window was a Thirkield and what was her fate.

Construction of Christian Education Addition in 1954

Since worship services are being held in the fellowship hall of the church on the ground floor of the educational wing while the sanctuary is being renovated, a little historical information on its original addition seems appropriate.

Construction of the 3-story Education Fellowship Unit addition was started in 1954 upon land to the south and west of the original church that had been built in 1860. Mrs. Nettie McCarthy had donated the land for this purpose. The Rev. H. Allen Cooper was the pastor during this period and led the congregation in this major construction effort. Members of the building committee were W. C. MacIntyre (Chairman), Roy C. Anderson, J. Creighton Burns, Mrs. Alverna Dishun, Howard C. Larick, Mrs. Mary Layman, Marshall Miller, and William F. Smith. The architects and engineers were Sullivan, Isaacs, and Sullivan of Cincinnati. Fred C. Whisman was the general contractor.

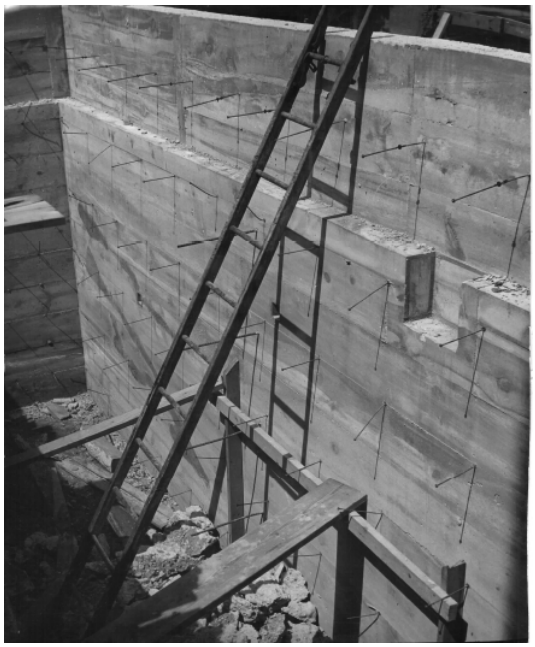


Fig. 1. Photograph of the foundation walls for the new addition taken circa September 1954**.**

The first floor area where we are currently holding our Sunday services was designated in the architectural plans as the Youth Division (and multipurpose recreation area) room with a stage that could also be used as a classroom. A few years ago, a back portion of the room was converted into the present Pastor's office.

Fig. 2. Pastor H. A. Cooper is shown with two trustees and the District Superintendent at the "official" ceremony just prior to starting laying bricks on the nearly completed foundation**.**

Fig. 3. Looking north across the basement and lumber towards 3rd St. as the foundation is being finished circa September 1954**.**

A special plea was issued by Pastor Cooper and the building committee as the foundation was being finished for the congregation to pledge an another $20,000 in order to include the third floor during the construction. Since the addition does have three floors, the call must have been heard and acted upon. The total cost for completing this addition was about $109,000 in 1954, which corresponds to around $950,000 in today's (i.e., 2014) buying power.

Views of Our Sanctuary Over the Years

As we begin holding our services this month in the newly restored and rejuvenated Sanctuary, it should be interesting to see some of the changes that have taken place over the years. I could not locate any photographs of the Sanctuary in the church's archives that date before the 1940s.

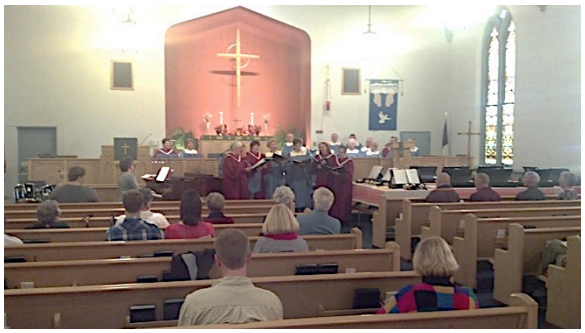
Easter Sunday 1949 with Pastor J. R. Stanforth, the choir, and the pipe organ that had been installed in 1894.

The Sanctuary decorated for Easter 1959 after a major renovation the previous year that removed the pipe organ and installed an electronic organ, new pews, a remodeled chancel with matching and coordinated furnishings, new carpeting, lighting fixtures and repainting.

The Sanctuary as prepared for the Christmas services held in December 1991.

Vacation Bible School held in July 2002.

The Sanctuary decorated with butterflies for the Easter Services held on March 31, 2013.



One Voice double trio, choir, and congregation during worship service on November 17, 2013.

Story of the FUMC Cross

Photograph of the Cross over the alter in the FUMC sanctuary taken in January 2016

On Sunday October 26, 1958 the Franklin Methodist Church consecrated its newly remodeled sanctuary in the building that had been constructed in 1860. The pipe organ, which was installed circa 1894, had been replaced with a modern electronic organ in 1957 creating an exposed alcove where a new altar was placed. While the original Gothic architectural design of the church was preserved during the remodeling, the "drab" Victorian brown and green interior of the sanctuary was replaced with a pastel sandalwood color and the archway behind the altar was painted a shade of aqua called "South Wind". In addition, new foam rubber pews were added, the chancel was altered, and the floor fully carpeted.

A new cross was placed above altar. David Briggs Maxfield (1906–1971), who had been an architecture professor at Miami University with a national reputation as a church architect, designed this cross. The design was stated in the Oct. 24, 1958 issue of the *Franklin Chronicle* to be a replica of the cross in the ultramodern Christ Church Cathedral of the Episcopal Church located in downtown Cincinnati that was also designed by Professor. Maxfield. Fred H. Wade (1900–1986), a member of the congregation fabricated our cross. Mr. Wade was a building contractor and developer with a business based in Carlisle. He was also a skilled cabinet marker. In the program for the April 1957 dedication of the electronic organ along with the reconfigured chancellery, the following words of appreciation were given: "Mr. Fred Wade and his skilled craftsmen are responsible for the chancel carpentry; the excellent varnishing was done by Mr. Clarence A. Litsch."

As also mentioned in the October 1958 *Franklin Chronicle* article, this cross was the only modern touch in the remodeled Gothic sanctuary. In deference to various renovations and restorations to the sanctuary for nearly sixty years, the cross still retains its unique distinction.

Photograph of the Cross circa Easter 1959**.**

SECTION III.

CIRCUIT RIDERS & PAST MINISTERS STORIES

John Kobler: Circuit Riding Methodist Preacher

In 1798 the Methodist Episcopal bishop Francis Asbury (1745-1816) sent John Kobler, presiding Elder of the Kentucky district, across the Ohio River into the Northwest Territory "to form a new circuit and to plant the first principles of the Gospel" in the frontier region of the Little and Great Miami Rivers. Rev. Kobler preached the first sermon in Warren County at Deerfield on the morning of August 9, 1798 in the house of a self-proclaimed Baptist then traveled to Turtle Creek to preach at the house of Ichabod Corwin on the same day. After going to and preaching at Dayton, he rode down the Great Miami River and preached circa August 14th to six or eight families at Franklin in the log cabin of Captain Robert Ross. Although the Methodist Episcopal Society of Franklin wasn't formally organized until 1825 and the first church building was constructed in the village during 1834, the Franklin Methodist congregation began with this service led by Rev. Kobler in 1798. Franklin was a regular stopping place for the itinerant Methodist preachers until a pastor was assigned in 1853

John Kobler had been born on August 29, 1768 in Culpepper County Virginia and was raised in a highly devout family. He became a Methodist itinerant preacher at the age of twenty-one. He soon volunteered to travel to the western frontier of Kentucky where he was considered a dedicated and effective servant of God. Hence, Bishop Asbury appointed him to be the first Methodist missionary sent north into the wilderness of the Ohio Territory.

Rev. Kobler served throughout his newly established Miami Circuit that extended from the Ohio River to Dayton for about nine months. He found this region to be in its almost native, rude, and uncultivated condition with relatively few settlers scattered in isolated clearings and little communities. Small parties of "friendly" Indians encamped occasionally near the settlements of Warren County until the period around the War of 1812. In the spring, the Indians often camped for making sugar from the maple trees. While these savage parties were considered friendly, they sometimes stole horses from the settlers.

As reported in the Beers History of Warren County Ohio (published in 1882), Rev. Kobler gives the following account of a visit from a group of Indians while he was preaching at Franklin in March 1799: "In the time of the first prayer, a company of Indians, to the number of fifteen, came to the door. When we rose from prayer, the old chief fixed his eyes on me and pushed through the company to give me his hand. He was much strung out with jewels in his ears, nose and breast, and the round tire about his head was indeed like the moon. His men all behaved well."

No portraits or images are known to exist for Rev. Kobler although the former Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court John McLean (1785-1861), who was raised in Clear Creek Township near Ridgeville, often heard John Kobler preach when he was a boy and wrote about him as follows: "I will never forget his appearance and manner. I was always much interested with his discourse, and especially with his prayers. He was tall and well proportioned; his hair was black, and he wore it long, extending over the cape of his coat. His dress was neat, with a straight-breasted coat, and in every respect as became a Methodist preacher of that day. He had a most impressive countenance."

Rev. Kobler was assigned to another district in 1799 and would not return to the Miami Valley area for over forty years when he made a short visit to Cincinnati and to some locations where he had once preached. He had left the itinerant ministry in 1809 exhausted and ill after more than eighteen years of hard travel in the western frontier. He went back to Virginia and was involved in local churches near his original home. In 1836, the Baltimore annual conference made him a superannuated (i.e., pensioned) minister along with assigning him to a preaching appointment in Fredericksburg Virginia where he continued active preaching the Gospel as well as successfully leading efforts to replace their decaying church building.

Rev. John Kobler died in 1843 in Fredericksburg at the age of 74. His final words were reportedly: "Come Lord Jesus; come in power, come quickly!"

Pilgrimage to the Fredericksburg VA Methodist Church of John Kobler – Part I

The Reverend John Kobler was the circuit rider of the Methodist Episcopal Church when he preached in Franklin on August 14, 1798 to the six or eight families in the log cabin of Captain Robert Ross. The Franklin Methodist congregation began with this service. John Kobler had been born on August 29, 1768 and became a Methodist itinerant preacher at the age of twenty-one. He was the first Methodist missionary sent north from Kentucky into the wilderness of the Ohio Territory. He established the Miami Circuit that extended from the Ohio River to Dayton and served in this area for about nine months before returning to Kentucky. Rev. Kobler continued as a circuit rider minster until he resigned in 1809 exhausted and ill from eighteen years of hard travel in the western frontier. He soon married and later moved to Fredericksburg VA where he remained active as a layman and local preacher. In 1836, the Baltimore MD annual conference made him a superannuated (i.e., pensioned) minister with a preaching appointment in Fredericksburg where he successfully led efforts to replace their decaying church building. Rev. John Kobler died 1843 in Fredericksburg at the age of 74. He and his wife Mary were buried underneath of main pulpit of the new church.

I briefly visited the Fredericksburg UMC on June 12, 2018 where I took these photographs.

Fig. 1. Front Facade and entrance to the UMC building in Fredericksburg VA.

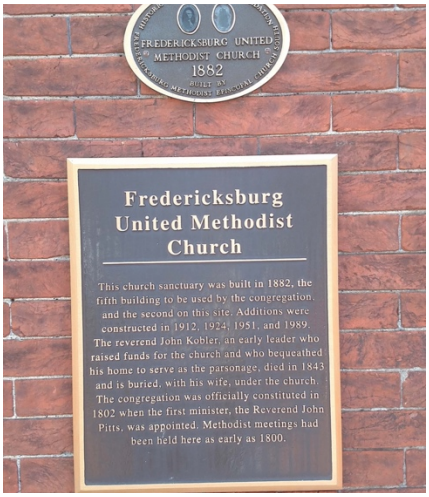


Fig. 2. History Plaques Fredericksburg UMC.

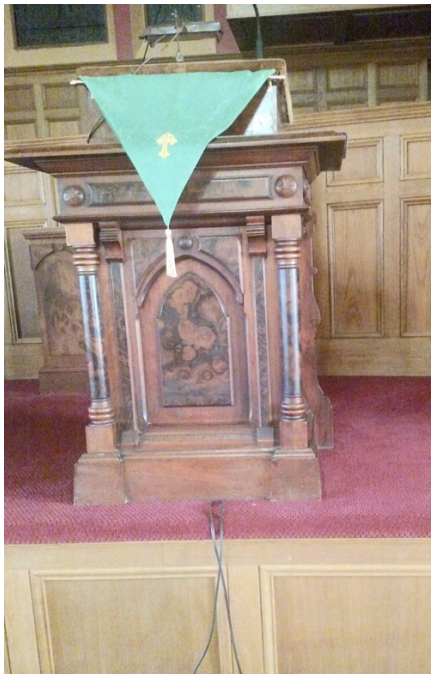


Fig. 3. Pulpit over the grave of Rev. Kobler.

Fig. 4. Rev. Kobler's Grave Marker

The large multifunctional addition built in 2008 at the rear of the main church is named Kobler Hall. The Fredericksburg UMC has ~2500 members and has a very active ministry.

Pilgrimage to the Fredericksburg VA Methodist Church of John Kobler – Part II

For the July 2018 historian's article, I briefly described my visit in June to the Fredericksburg VA church where the former Methodist circuit rider Rev. John Kobler (1768-1843) is buried along with his wife Mary underneath the main pulpit. The article for this month includes a few more photographs taken on that day.

When the Fredericksburg congregation was building the first brick structure at this location in circa 1841, Rev. Kobler traveled to the western Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio districts where he had been a circuit rider over forty years previously to raise funds and he obtained over a thousand dollars in many small contributions. There is no record that he visited the Franklin church during this trip. Upon the death of Mary in 1855, their home was given to serve as the parsonage, which is does to this day.

As reported last month, there a very spacious recent addition behind the main church called Kobler Hall, which is used for many activities throughout the week as well as holding contemporary services on Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Fig. 1. Sanctuary of the Fredericksburg UMC with Bob standing at the pulpit located over the grave of Rev. Kobler.

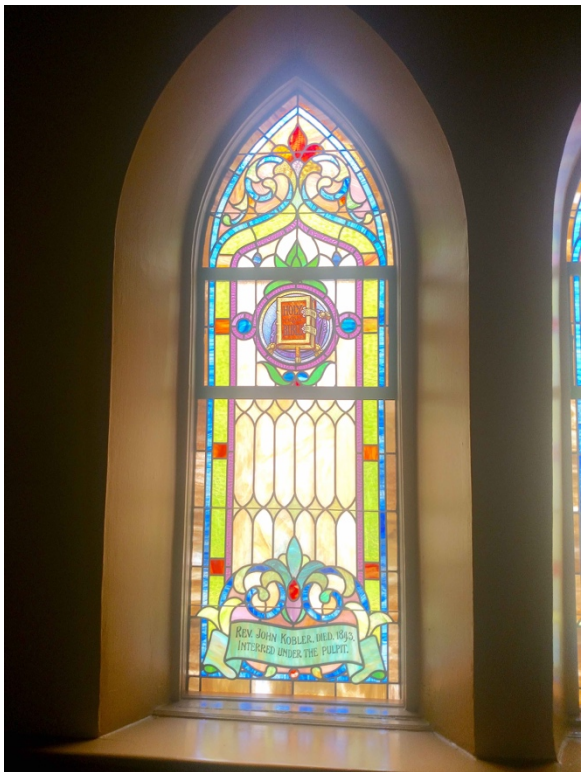


Fig. 2. Memorial Stain Glass window in the Sanctuary of the Fredericksburg UMC.

Fig. 3. Exterior view of the Rev. John Kobler Hall addition to the Fredericksburg UMC.

Fig. 4. Parsonage of the Fredericksburg UMC is the former home of Rev. and Mrs. Kobler.

Elisha Bowman: Circuit Riding Methodist Preacher

Image of Rev. Elisha W. Bowman from an unknown original source probably circa 1840.

Elisha Williamson Bowman was born on December 25, 1775 in Virginia to Cornelius and Susannah Bowman and was in the middle of their twelve children. When he was a small child, the family moved first to western North Carolina and then to Madison County Kentucky, which were both frontier areas. Elisha was raised in a highly devout Christian family where his father was a licensed Methodist Episcopal exhorter (i.e., a lay preacher sponsored by an ordained minister) by 1790. Two of Elisha's brothers (Jacob and Thomas) became local preachers in Methodist churches in Kentucky. Elisha was licensed himself at sixteen as a lay preacher and was ordained a Methodist deacon in 1800. He became a Methodist itinerant preacher in 1801 being first assigned to the southwestern Ohio territory encompassing the valleys of both the Scioto and Miami rivers. In 1802, he was given the Miami Circuit founded by Rev. John Kobler in 1798, which included the village of Franklin. We have no specific information concerning Elisha during his service on the Miami circuit. However, he was highly regarded by his contemporaries as an effective and dedicated speaker and traveling preacher. He was next sent (1804) to the New River District in Kentucky and then to French-Broad Circuit of eastern Tennessee in 1805.

Bishop Francis Asbury sent Rev. Bowman as a missionary to the recently purchased Louisiana Territory in November 1805. In a detailed letter written to Rev. William Burke on January 29, 1806, Elisha described New Orleans "as filthy as a hog-sty" and residents were completely unreceptive to the Methodist messages and detailed his arduous journey through swamps and lakes to Opelousas Louisiana lying 200 miles northwest of New Orleans. At the end of the first year, there were 17 members in a Methodist congregation. This was the first Protestant church in Opelousas, the first Methodist Church in Louisiana, and oldest Methodist Church west of the Mississippi River.

Elisha continued as a circuit rider in Kentucky and Tennessee for two more years, but due to health issues caused by the rigors from continuous travel he located (left the itinerant ministry) in 1809 and then had difficulties and controversy when he returned to his ministry in 1811 in the Knox Circuit of the Muskingum District. At the Ohio 1812 Annual Conference, Elisha was permanently located at his request to be near his family in Clay and Estill counties Kentucky where he became a medical doctor and practiced for nearly 30 years. In 1816, he married Sarah (Sally) McMonigle. The couple had five children that grew to adulthood. In his later years, Elisha became an active vigorous local Methodist preacher while supporting visiting circuit riders. He died on October 3, 1845 in Estill County, KY.

Bob Bowman portraying his 4th great uncle Rev. Elisha Bowman during the Franklin FUMC Homecoming service on September 15, 2013.

The Former Pastor Who Retired to Franklin, Ohio

Rev. Frank W. Stanton (c. 1910)

Former Stanton residence photo on Mar. 27, 2016.

Frank Wade Stanton was born in Logan County, OH on December 15, 1867, one of seven children born to Samuel and Rachel Blair Stanton. He received his ministerial education at the Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, OH. Rev. Stanton married Georgia "Georgie" L. Reifsnider on October 25, 1893. The couple had three children, Ralph, Florence and Esther.

Upon becoming a minister in the Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church, Rev. Stanton was first appointed to the West Liberty circuit in Logan County before going to the Clark Street Church in Toledo. His subsequent Methodist pastorates included Delta, Hicksville, Napoleon, and Ada, OH before moving in 1913 to Asheville, NC due to ill health. After his recovery, he served as minister to the French Broad Methodist church in that city for four years. Dr. Stanton came to the Franklin Methodist church in 1918 and served here as our pastor for three years. After this tenure in Franklin, he went as the pastor to Leipsic, OH followed by an appointment to the First Church in Xenia.

In 1926, the Stanton family home was established in Franklin on River (Front) St. just across 3rd St. from the Methodist parsonage where they had previously resided. They built one of Franklin's nicer homes in part with an inheritance from his deceased brother, Calvin, who had been a successful businessman.

Dr. Stanton spent the next ten years as the conference evangelist for the Methodist church rather than serving as a local pastor. He was the opening speaker at the 1933 Miami Valley Bible Conference (MVBC) held on the Chautauqua grounds north of Franklin. That year Dr. Stanton was made president of MVBC. Under his leadership a splendid program was presented during the 1934 Conference where Rev. "Billy" Sunday, Mrs. Maude Ballington Booth, Dr. Bob Jones and others spoke. No finer program could be offered but the financial returns were insufficient to meet expenses and the Miami Valley Bible Conferences at Chautauqua were given up the following year.

Prior to his death on January 10, 1945 at his Franklin residence, Dr. Stanton had been in failing health for several years. He had served in the Methodist ministry for over 50 years. His funeral services were held the following Saturday led by Rev. Brice W. Nichols, pastor of the Franklin Methodist Church, assisted by Dr. John Danford, M.E. district superintendent, and Rev. H. S. Gessner, pastor of the Franklin First Baptist Church. Rev. Stanton was interred in the mausoleum in Franklin's Woodhill Cemetery along with his two daughters, joined in 1950 by his wife, Georgie.

As published in the 1946 M.E. Ohio Annual Conference journal, the Rev. J. J. Wean said, in part, "Dr. Frank W. Stanton was a man of God. With all the depth of meaning in the statement, he was a great preacher of the word of God, not a mere entertainer. He was a preacher of holiness with all the meaning of full salvation. He never wavered. Heaven is richer by the harvest of his love".

This article was co-researched and co-written by Terry Easton who is Rev. Stanton's second cousin, twice removed. I greatly appreciate his contributions.

Longest Serving Ministers at the Franklin Methodist Church – Part I

With the imminent retirement of our pastor Rev. Bryan Lauzau, I am writing three articles on those ministers who have served our congregation the longest since the first one (Rev. Gilbert C. Townley) was appointed in 1853. Prior to that date, only Methodist circuit riders provided formal religious services on occasional and often very irregular schedules starting in 1798 when Rev. John Kobler gave the first Methodist sermon in Franklin as reported in past Historian articles.

During the 164 years that ordained ministers have been stationed at either the Franklin Methodist Episcopal or First United Methodist Church, there have been 50 pastors located here. This gives an average tenure of just over three and a quarter years. Such rather short residence periods compared to most other Protestant denominations reflects the Methodist tradition of an itinerant ministry. However, several ministers have been assigned to our church for six years or longer. They are Rev. Norman Sweat (1910-1916), Rev. John W. Wedgewood (1966-1975), Rev. W. Dale Lykins (1992-2001), Rev. Diann O'Bryant (2001-2007) and Rev. Bryan Lauzau (2007-2017), who has just established the longevity record in Franklin.

There was one minster that had spent five years as the Franklin Methodist pastor when he died while serving. Rev. Creighton Wones started in 1902 and died suddenly on April 8th, 1907. From a copy of his memorial booklet that is retained in the FUMC archives, a brief biography is given along with words of remembrance.

Creighton Wones was born in Berlin, Jackson County, Ohio on Aug. 19, 1856. He was ordained as a minister in 1882 and his first charge was at Charlestown OH. On June 22, 1887, he married Bertha Bachelor and the couple had three sons and three daughters during their marriage.

Rev. Wones' service to our congregation was summarized in his Memorial "For the past five years he has been a Pastor among us, during that time he gained the love and respect of everyone in Franklin". Concerning his death, the Memorial also stated: "The summons came to him at mid-day. He answered quickly for he was ready for the summons, as he had always been ready and quick to answer when duty called him. He was strong and brave, and met death without fear. He had always faced life without fear for he was made of fine man fiber, clean straight grained, sturdy and staunch, sound at the heart and all knew it who knew him"

Rev. Wones was interred in the Franklin Woodhill cemetery where his wife Bertha (1863-1931) and one of their sons Stanley M. (1889-1919) are also buried.

The only name for a former minister on our Church's memorial stain glass windows is Rev. Wones as shown in Figure 2. See if you can locate it the next time you are in church.

Figure 1. Photograph of Rev. Creighton Wones circa 1907 from his Memorial Service Program.

Figure 2. The FUMC Memorial stain glass window panel that was donated in memory of former Pastor Creighton Wones.

Longest Serving Ministers at the Franklin Methodist Church – Part II

Last month I wrote the first of three articles on those ministers who have assigned to our congregation the longest. Before 1853 only the itinerant Methodist ministers (i.e., the circuit riders) held the services in Franklin even though there had been a wooden church built by the local Methodist congregation in 1832, which was replaced with a larger brick building in 1836.

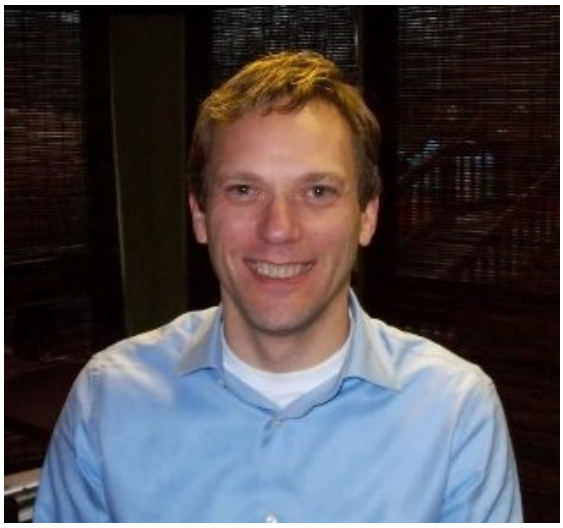
The two ministers, who served the longest prior to our soon-to-retire Pastor Bryan Lauzau, were Rev. W. Dale Lykins (1992-2000) and Rev. John W. Wedgewood (1966-1975)

Rev. John W. Wedgewood in circa 1970 photograph

John Webb Wedgewood was born in 1913 and his father was a clergyman. After graduating from Ohio Northern University and Garrett Biblical Institute, was ordained a Methodist Deacon in 1937 and an Elder in 1939. Beginning in 1938, he served parishes at Aberdeen, Maineville, Ripley, Trinity-Xenia, Mt. Blanchard, Waynesville, Marietta, Mt. Sterling, Franklin, and Fairfield St. Marks until his retirement in 1978. Franklin was his longest tenure. Rev. Wedgewood was active in a number of community organizations including the Lions Club, Kiwanis, and Rotary. He was also the district director of junior high school Church camps for a number of years.

Rev. Wedgewood and his wife Marie had two sons Richard and David. Following the death of Marie in 1986, he married Billie James the following year. The couple then resided at the Otterbein-Lebanon facility until his death on Nov. 22, 1999.

Rev. Wedgewood had diverse personal interests including painting, traveling, reading, shuffleboard, and bowling. He was also said to be a fine violinist.



Rev. Dale Lykins in circa 2015 Photograph

Rev. Dale Lykins was the pastor of our Church from June 1992 through December 2000. Prior to coming to Franklin his first pastoral assignment had been at the Port William OH church. After leaving Franklin, Rev. Lykins served for eight and a half years at the Christ UMC in Jackson followed by service at the Scioto Ridge UMC in Hilliard OH. Since June 2012, he has been the lead pastor of the Mason OH UMC.

Rev. Lykins and his wife Shelly have two daughters Beth and Elyse. While many members of the congregation certainly have memories of Rev. Lykins and his family, there are not too many items in the Church archives. However, there are photos of them in early American costumes for the Church's bicentennial celebration in 1998. During the summer of 1999, Rev. Lykins swapped pastor position with the Rev. Ian Bell of Sheffield England for six weeks. For several years, Rev. Lykins regularly published articles in the local newspaper. Dale and Shelly still drop by Franklin occasionally for special events and they always receive a warm welcome.

Longest Serving Ministers at the Franklin Methodist Church – Part III

This is the final of three articles on the ministers who have been assigned to our congregation for the longest periods since the first one was appointed in 1853. Before that year only the traveling itinerant Methodist ministers (i.e., the circuit riders) held the services for the Franklin Methodist congregation.

When Rev. Bryan P. Lauzau retires on April 30, 2017, he will have served as our pastor for nine years and ten months giving him the longest tenure in our church's history. His appointment had started in July 2007. The two photographs below show Pastor Bryan on the covers of the 2007 and 2017 Church directories. Doesn't look as though he aged too much over the years. We must have been pretty easy charge for him or else he ages very well.

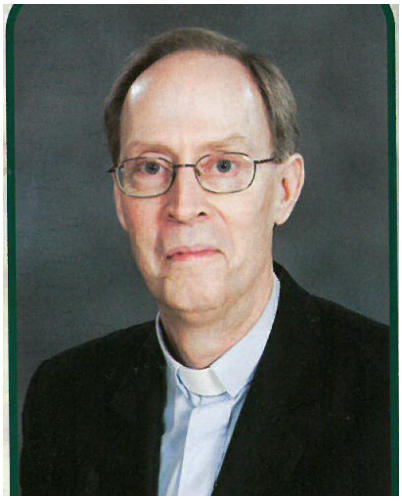


Fig. 1. Rev. Bryan Lauzau in 2007.

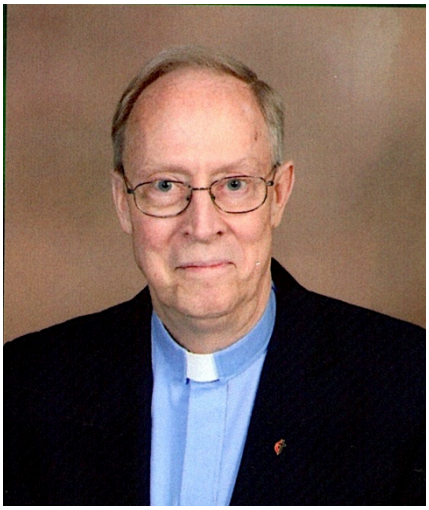


Fig. 2. Rev Bryan Lauzau in 2016.

Bryan P. Lauzau was born on June 23, 1952 in Syracuse, New York. He was baptized as an infant and a member of the United Methodist Church (UMC) since the time of his confirmation into the Church. After graduating from high school in 1970 he earned B.A. and M.S. degrees in Physics from the State University of New York College at Potsdam (1975) and Clarkson University in Potsdam, NY (1977), respectively. He then began a career in the nuclear industry, employed in federal government, private industry, and consulting positions dealing with nuclear safety and licensing, radiological controls, radioactive waste management, and environmental radiological monitoring and protection. He relocated from NY to the Washington, D.C. area in 1980 and subsequently moved to Columbus, OH in 1985,

After moving to Somerset OH in 1993, Bryan became active in the lay ministry at the Somerset UMC. In response to what he felt as the urging of the Holy Spirit to "do more," Bryan went to Dakar, Senegal in 1996, where he spent a year teaching high school science and mathematics at Dakar Academy, a Christian boarding school serving missionary families and other expatriates working in West Africa. Upon his return to the USA in 1997, Bryan felt that "At that moment, God spoke to every bit of my heart, mind, and soul, felt I should attend seminary". He began his seminary studies at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO) from where he graduated with the Master of Divinity degree in 2002.

Bryan served as the youth minister and assistant pastor at First UMC in Chillicothe during his first year at MTSO. He next served as pastor of Pottersburg OH UMC for three years before being appointed the pastor of the Essex Charge (Richwood Central UMC and Essex UMC) in 2001 serving for six years. Bryan was ordained as an Elder in June 2006, and began serving at Franklin First UMC in July 2007.

Our Congregation has been blessed to have Bryan and his wife Mary in our midst for nearly ten years. He has been a dedicated and caring Shepard ministering to our needs and reaching out to serve our community as well. Bryan and Mary will be missed but certainly not forgotten for their kindnesses and service. May they both enjoy their retirement in Albuquerque NM, the Land of Enchantment, for many years.

SECTION IV

CONGREGATION MEMBERS AND GROUPS

Congregation observing "social distancing" and wearing masks in worship service on June 7, 2020 due to the restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

Forms That Beckon Us From Over the Way

Pictured in Their Old Accustomed Places by Mrs. Charles F. Thirkield

"The following interesting sketch of the early local Methodist church has been kindly prepared by Mrs. Adah Trimball Thirkield [1855-1930] from her notes used at the recent services celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the church [which occurred on Sept. 18 & 19, 1860]. Our readers who knew the strong men of the Methodist Church of twenty-five years ago will read with tender reverence her references to these patriarchs."

For about three quarters of this newspaper article, which is preserved in the FUMC archives, Mrs. Thirkield summarized the history of the Franklin congregation from the first sermon given by the circuit rider John Kobler on Aug. 13, 1798 through the building of the three Methodist churches in Franklin, formation of the Sunday School and prayer classes, and naming some of the itinerant and assigned ministers. Regarding the construction of the church dedicated in 1860, Mrs. Thirkield writes:

"J. W. Thomas named as one of the trustees was the architect and builder. Many times have I heard it said by one who was associated with him in the work, "He was an honest builder; no poor material ever went into his work. He was a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." His daughter who is with us tonight, coming from her home in the southland, may well be proud as she looks upon this building which still stands after fifty years as a monument of her father's work."

The final portion of her article is quoted below:

"Friends, much that I have given you is written history. But what of the innumerable chapters of unwritten history made by the influence of the men and women who have sat in these pews; who by their labor and their sacrifices; their tears and their prayers; their sympathy and love have touched the hearts of many here tonight."

"Can you see the picture I see in my mind as I stand here and look about me? Over there in that corner in front I see Mr. Dan Clutch, behind him is Uncle John Thirkield, back of him is Uncle John Chamberlain. On this side I see Layton Miltenberger; across the aisle sits Uncle Billy Stickleman; down here right in front, I see Seymour Tibbals; there is Father Bell and there is Richard Wilkerson. Over on that side I see David Deardoff; behind him is Henry Griftner and back there is William Miltenberger, and there is Uncle Tommy Van Dyke, and a host of others. Doubtless, you can see others I do not see. But I see two more. I am sure that every man or woman who ever looked into his face will join me in tribute I would pay to the memory of Robert Hovell. Humble in mind and heart, small in statute, quaint and homely in speech, yet with a great heart and a soul so filled with the power of the Holy Spirit that he stood a veritable Prince among men!"

"One more I hesitate—but I am sure you will pardon me, if pardon be needed, as I speak of him whom I loved and honored, scarcely less than those who bear his name by right of birth as I bear it by right of marriage. I see him there in that corner. I hear his voice singing the dear old hymns he loved so well. I see him the room below in the prayer service; I hear him as he tells of his Heavenly Father's goodness and love. I see him the Sunday School where for more than a quarter of a century he stood before our children telling the "old, old story of Jesus and His love"." [This is certainly her father-in-law Eden B. Thirkield who had died in 1905]

"Can the history of such lives as these be written? They gave us this building—a goodly heritage—but far better and more enduring is the heritage of their noble, Christian lives'

Mrs. Adah Trimball Thirkield (photo circa 1874) married C. F. Thirkield in 1873.

The Methodist Bishop from Franklin, Ohio

Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield date unknown.

Wilbur Patterson Thirkield, son of Eden Burrows and Amanda Thirkield, was born in Franklin Ohio on September 25, 1854. His grandparents James E. and Jane Thirkield were charter members of the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church when it was organized in 1825 and many members of the Thirkield family were highly active in this congregation for several generations. As an example, Wilbur's father was superintendent of its Sunday school for over 20 years. In 1850 E. B. became a partner of the Thirkield dry goods store founded by his elder brother John L. in 1832. The Thirkield family owned and managed this department store until 1955 when it was sold to others. The Thirkield Store was permanently closed in 1979. Although never actively involved in the store's business, Wilbur was a member of its board of directors for many years and was apparently very interested in its operation and growth.

After graduation from the Franklin public high school, Wilbur was educated at Ohio Wesleyan University, A. B. 1876; A. M. 1879 and received a Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree from Boston University in 1881. He was also awarded doctoral degrees from Ohio Wesleyan and Emory. In 1878 he began his pastoral service in the Cincinnati Conference of the Methodist Church.

Wilbur Thirkield married Mary Haven, the daughter of M.E. Bishop Gilbert Haven, in 1881. The couple had five children and his wife died in February 1935.

Rev. Thirkield was appointed the founding President of the Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta GA, in 1883. This was the first school established in the South to educate African Americans for the ministry and he served as its president for sixteen years. Between 1900-06, he was General Secretary of the Freeman's Aid and Southern Education Society of the M. E. Church. With the urging and support of Theodore Roosevelt and Booker T. Washington, he served as President of Howard University (Washington, D.C.) between 1906-12. He was elected a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1912. Bishop Thirkield served eight years in New Orleans, four years in Mexico City, and four years in Chattanooga TN until his retirement in 1928. As an educator and bishop, Rev. Thirkield devoted himself to uniting and to guiding the African American Methodists in the South during a period of racial intolerance and segregation.

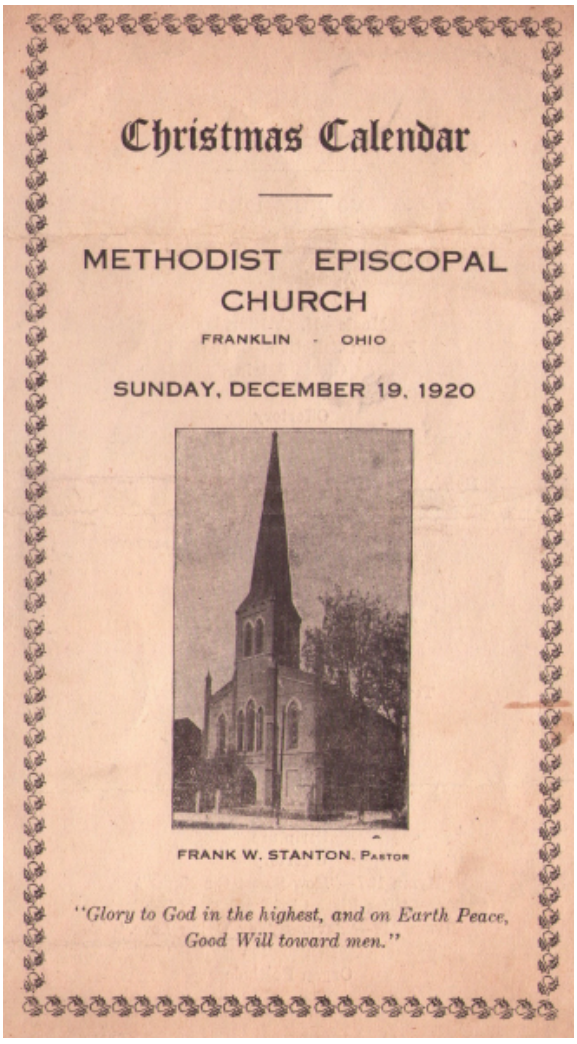
Bishop Thirkield was the author of seven books including "Higher Education of the Negro", "Service and Prayer for Church and Home", "The English Speaking Peoples—Will They Fail in Their Mission to the World?" and "Book of Common Worship for the Several Communions". Bishop Thirkield was editor of "Hymns of Faith and Life." He was also the trustee of a number of colleges.

Bishop Thirkield died from anemia after a lingering illness on November 7, 1936 in Brooklyn NY. Funeral services were held for him in New York City and Franklin. Although he spent nearly all of his adult life away from Franklin, he and his wife are interred in the Thirkield family plot at the Franklin Woodhill cemetery.

The Encyclopedia of World Methodism describes Bishop Thirkield as follows: "He was an energetic, progressive educator, an eloquent public speaker and man of great force of character, broad scholarship and high ideals".

Christmas Services at the Franklin Methodist Church During the 1920 Season

In our historical archives is the bulletin for the Christmas services that were held 100 years ago. A brief summary of these activities shows that while there are differences with today's activities the message and spirit remain much the same.



Christmas Calendar

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

FRANKLIN - OHIO

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1920

FRANK W. STANTON, Pastor

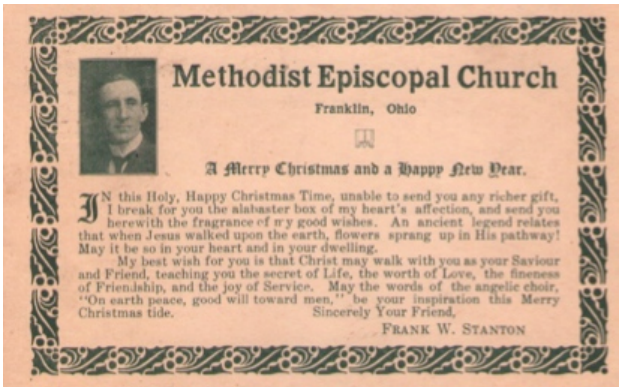
"Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, Good Will toward men."

During the 10:30 a.m. service on Sunday Dec. 19th, the hymns were "Christmas Song", "O Little Town of Bethlehem", and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing". Pastor Frank E. Stanton gave the sermon "The Timeless of Christ's Birth". As the choir director, Harry C. Eldrige led the music during the service.

The Epworth League met at 6:30 p.m. Sunday where the topic was "The Spirit of Generosity" lead by Miss Faye Vail. [Note: The Epworth League was (& still existing) a Methodist young adult association for individuals from 18 to 35 that was formed in 1889 at Cleveland, Ohio. At its conception, the purpose of the League was the promotion of intelligent and vital piety among the young people of the Methodist Church.]

The Sunday evening service started at 7:30 p.m. where Rev. Stanton presented the sermon "The First Christmas Gifts". The hymns were "Joy to the World", "How Sweet the Name", and "Savior, they Dying Love". Mrs. S. S. (Anna) Stahl provided organ music at both services. There were also collections during each of the services.

The Friday Christmas Eve service started at 7:30 p.m. and opened with singing "Joy to the World" followed by Pastor Stanton saying a prayer. Next came by the recitations, dialogues, and exercises by young people of the Church with titles "Song of Christmas', Christmas Gifts", and "Bill", which were interspersed with the songs "Silent Night" and "Jingle Bells" performed by the Primary Department from Sunday school. Helen Gerke and Gwendolyn Matthews gave an unnamed duet. A special Christmas Offering was collected for the starving children of Europe. In his appeal to the congregation, Rev. Stanton had written: "In the midst of our plenty let us make a liberal contribution to those who are dying for the want of food and clothing and medicine." The Christmas Eve service ended with a visit by Santa Claus.



Methodist Episcopal Church

Franklin, Ohio

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

IN this Holy, Happy Christmas Time, unable to send you any richer gift, I break for you the alabaster box of my heart's affection, and send you herewith the fragrance of my good wishes. An ancient legend relates that when Jesus walked upon the earth, flowers sprang up in His pathway! May it be so in your heart and in your dwelling.

My best wish for you is that Christ may walk with you as your Saviour and Friend, teaching you the secret of Life, the worth of Love, the fineness of Friendship, and the joy of Service. May the words of the angelic choir, "On earth peace, good will toward men," be your inspiration this Merry Christmas tide.

Sincerely Your Friend,

FRANK W. STANTON

Rev. Stanton had also sent out Christmas wishes postcards with the one to Mrs. Hazel Matthews kept in the Church's archives. The postmark is dated December 23rd and has a one-cent stamp.

Story of Franklin's Missionary Nurse

Marion Elizabeth Childress was born on December 16, 1914 in Chicago Illinois, but her parents Orvis A. and Ethel Childress moved the family to Franklin when she was a small girl. The family attended the Franklin Methodist Church where Marion was baptized in 1920 and where she decided at age eight that she wanted to "become a missionary". During her childhood and youth, Marion spent much time at home of the retired Methodist minister Rev. Frank W. Stanton and his family and emerged herself in bible studies and classes conducted by Florence Stanton. In the bible given to her by Rev. Stanton, she recorded "Saved June 22, 1932 – Summer school of Foreign Missions, Chautauqua, Ohio".

After graduating from the Franklin High School in 1932, Marion went into nurse's training at the Miami Valley Hospital in Dayton Ohio graduating as a registered nurse in 1935. She also attended Wheaton College for two years before working as a nurse in Dayton. Marion applied to the Woman's Union Missionary Society (WUMS) and received an appointment to India from WUMS in April 1941. After several months of training, Marion sailed from San Francisco in November 1941 bound for India. On December 4, 1941, the ship arrived in Manila, Philippines, en route to India. Due to the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor then immediately afterwards their attacking the Philippines, her ship could not leave Manila. On January 3, 1942 Marion and all other U.S. citizens were taken as prisoners of the Japanese and she was interned at the Santo Tomas University, Manila, until liberated by the U.S. military forces on February 3, 1945. This was a period of hardship, tragedy, and privation with only very limited communication to her family. Marion wrote that "When the U.S. Army came we were on a 600 calorie rice diet." Within a few weeks she was back home in Franklin to recuperate, but she stayed only months before applying and receiving a missionary appointment from WUMS to India. On October 27, 1946 Marion arrived in Fatehpur, India where she worked at the Broadwell Hospital as both a nurse and missionary in the surrounding villages. Marion was to live and work there for ten years with only one furlough in 1952-53 to visit her family.

In 1956, WUMS opened a hospital in Multan, West Pakistan, with Marion serving as the supervising nurse and also the head of the nursing training school.

While on vacation in the mountains of Kashmir, a log released by loggers working a hillside above where a group of nurses from the Multan mission were picnicking accidentally struck Marion and she was fatally injured on June 1, 1963. She was buried in Pahlgam, Kashmir. In 1964, the WUMS dedicated the Childress Memorial Nurses' Home in Multan, Pakistan in her honor.

Marion Childress while taking graduate nursing classes in Dayton, Ohio (1946)

Story of the Franklin Methodist Quilters

Nearly every Wednesday morning for about 50 years, women of the Franklin Methodist Church gathered to spend the day making quilts. By exercising their nimble fingers, these ladies provided many benefits to the church from the gifts they donated using the proceeds of their craftwork. The group started around 1920 to raise money for the church, Sunday school, and parsonage while providing a highly valued social outlet. Although they initially worked in homes, the group soon met exclusively in the church basement where lunches of donated and purchased food were prepared by other women. These meals, which cost about $0.50 per person, were greatly enjoyed by the quilters and the frequent visitors who seemed to show up in time for lunch. The minister was always invited and fed for free, but a small profit was usually made each week. Special celebrations for birthdays and other events were apparently common, but quilting was always the main goal. As viewed from the 21st century, much social networking also took place with formation of many life-long friendships while working together.

There were no bosses or organization of these ladies. They just met and quilted! The group usually made the quilts to order where the customer would provide the top with the option of supplying the other materials and thread. The quilting ladies took over from there. There were usually two quilts in process at a time often with backorders of 10-20 more during the 1950s. Sizes differ somewhat although the average quilt was usually about 81 by 99 inches. Some patterns were simple and others were rather intricate. It usually took around six to eight sessions to compete a single quilt where the cost was based upon spools of thread used. The average charge for making a quilt was $20 back in the 1950s. Between 1940 and 1965, for example, over $4000 had been donated for banquet dishes, a refrigerator, bibles, carpeting, tables, a furnace, and other needed items.

Anyone interesting in quilting was welcomed to join the group. Ladies from the First Baptist, Lutheran, and Carlisle New Jersey Presbyterian churches were active members for many years and some traveled from more distant cities including Dayton and Eaton to participate. A number of mother – daughters and daughters-in-law members were long time quilters. The number of active quilters ranged from about a dozen to over 20. However, by the end of the 1960s many of the quilters were now in their upper 70s and 80s and it was decided to end the group. On June 15, 1969 a Sunday morning dedication service for the quilters was held. The minister Rev. John W. Wedgewood presented each quilt member with the following note: "This note of appreciation is given to you for your devoted and faithful service given through your talent of hands to Franklin United Methodist Church as a quilter. May abiding satisfaction be yours for a work well done, and may your days be filled with God's Blessing".

The group was disbanded in 1970 ending a 50-year tradition. The final gifts from the quilters were two reproduction paintings for the church's dining room: "Autumn in Vermont" by Robert Wood and "The Last Supper" by Leonardo Da Vinci. To close their bank account a check for $500 was given to the church.

In 1981 Mrs. Orrel Childers, then 76 and one of the younger original quilters having joined them in 1956, organized a new quilting group that met on Mondays. This group worked on a "pot of flowers" quilt that was finished and sold at the October church bazaar held that year. Among the new generation of quilters were Mrs. Nell Dicken and her 16-year old daughter Mishelle, who had the opportunity to learn this historic craft under the guidance of Mrs. Childers. While the new quilting group did not continue after that year, the spirit and goals were passed along.

Quilters at work circa 1955. Their names starting from left are: Elizabeth Rickard, Nettie McCarthy, Martha Hudson, Orrel Childers, Stella Conover, Ida Hetzler, Margaret Gerke, mother of Mrs. Strader, and Lillie Tick.

Brief History of the Franklin UMC Noodle Makers

As surely as the leaves fall from the trees during October and November, the women of the Franklin First United Methodist Church have been holding their Annual Bazaar to raise funds supporting missions and other needs for over four decades. A key component of this annual event is a luncheon featuring homemade chicken and noodles. In fact, selling packages of these frozen noodles have attracted people throughout the area to stop by on that Saturday to purchase a few or several bags for their personal larders.

According to the article entitled "Women using their noodles to earn money for the church" published Oct. 16, 1987 in the Middletown Journal newspaper, this process of making noodles by hand for selling and serving during the Bazaar luncheon started in 1972. In the previous several years, two groups formed from the United Methodist Women (UMW) and calling themselves the "Rotary Women" had been preparing weekly lunches for the members of the Franklin Rotary organization who met at the UMC church. As plans were formulated for hosting that first bazaar, it was decided to serve chicken with homemade noodles as the focus of the luncheon. Hence, these "Rotary" ladies started making noodles and the legend began.

Area businessmen enjoying their chicken and noodle lunch at the FUMC Fall Bazaar (Photo was published 10/31/84 in Franklin Chronicle)

Noodle making starts about a month before the bazaar using donated flour and eggs in their simple time-honored recipe where each batch consists of the yolks from three eggs along with one whole egg mixed with two cups of flour, a teaspoon of salt and three tablespoons of water to form the dough. Hundreds of batches are made every year. Next, each ball of dough is rolled out according to "the thinner the better" approach. After two hours of drying, the rolled dough is shaped into long strips, and then cut, separated, and allowed to dry for two days before weighing and bagging the finished noodles. Finally, the noodles are frozen and stored until bazaar time.

Mary Lucas, Joyce Gabbard, Agnes Etter preparing the noodle dough (Photo from 10/16/87 issue of Middletown Journal)

The UMW members prepared the noodles and hosted the fall bazaar until 2006 when this group was dissolved. Another church organization called Women Outreach Workers (W.O.W.) took over the responsibilities for both the fall bazaar and Spring Salad luncheon for the next several years. When the W.O.W. members decided they couldn't continue performing these events about five years ago, the FUMC Women's circle took over the noodle making and hosting the fall bazaar.

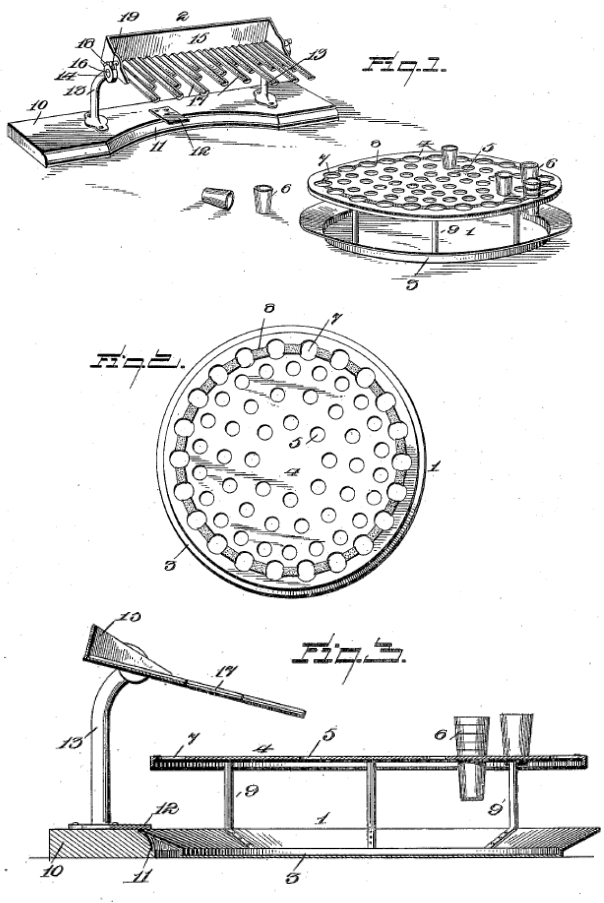
The noodles have been made for 2017 and are now ready to be cooked for the luncheon on Saturday November 4th and sold during and after the fall bazaar as long as supplies last.

Explanation of Mystery Item in FUMC Cabinet

The above display cabinet in the church's dining room contains a number of items relating to our history such as the bible used during the dedication of our sanctuary in 1860, communion vessels, candlesticks, several commemoration documents, crucifixes, memorabilia from missionaries, etc. However, there was an item, which is shown on the front page of this newsletter, in the cabinet whose meaning or purpose is not immediately apparent.

One of the attendees to the 2015 Annual Meeting of the United Methodist History Society of Ohio, which was hosted by our church on April 25th, said this item was a server used to fill a number of glasses simultaneously for the communion services. Since our congregation has been celebrating the Eucharistic for many years with the intinction method of partly dipping the consecrated bread into the consecrated grape juice in a common chalice before consumption by the communicant, the filling individual cups is not usually needed.

Because the communion service had the patent date of July 16, 1901; an Internet search reveals this device had been awarded Patent No. 678699 issued to John G. Thomas of Lima Ohio as the inventor. Illustrations from this patent indicate how it was supposed to be used facilitate multiple filling of communion cups.



Rev. John Gerhin Thomas (1842-1913), a Welch born physician and a Congregational minister who was for a time a chaplain in the British Army, started the Thomas Communion Service Company in 1893. John Thomas was also the originator of the individual communion cup, (Patent No. 516065 issued on March 6, 1894). The creation of individual wine cups for church usage came in response to a controversy over the public health risk of communicants sharing one cup. The invention was embraced by health conscious churchgoers and the Lima, Ohio based business distributed their products throughout the world. Thomas' children and grandchildren operated the business until it was sold to the Sweet Publishing Company of Austin, Texas in 1972.

A question to the congregation: Does anyone actually remember this device ever being used to prepare for a communion service at our church? Please let us know if you do.

Tom Burns' Miniature of the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church

Thomas S. Burns (8/18/1928-6/9/2014) joined the Franklin Methodist Church on April 2, 1939 and remained a member throughout the rest of his life. In August 1939, he wed Sara E. Murphy (3/6/1928- 6/21/2013) and they were married until her death. The couple raised two children and both were active in our church and the Franklin community. Tom was also a life member of the Franklin Area Historical Society.

Upon his retirement as a maintenance supervisor with the Dayton Power and Light Company circa 1990, Tom began creating scale models of the structures and historical buildings located in Franklin. This hobby combined his interest in the history of his hometown and woodcarving. At the time of his death, Tom had produced approximately 36 models from the early part of the twentieth century that included city buildings, businesses, train depots, canal locks and boats, banks, the 1874 suspension bridge with the statues of the lions, schools, churches, and more. As reported in a 1995 interview published in the Franklin Chronicle, Tom explained "I draw the four sides of a building, cut them out in wood, and then add the details to it." The buildings are painted in the conservative colors of the early 20th century with the minute details in the architecture of that time.

Many of the original buildings and structures have been gone for decades. However, one building still remains standing, although altered by the addition of the rear educational wing in the mid-1950s. This, of course, is the third Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church as it was built in 1860. Two views of Tom's model of our church showing the fine details are included in this article. According to the label mounted on the bottom of this miniature, it was completed in 1994.

The family of Tom and Sara Burns donated the entire collection of his models to the Franklin Area Historical Society (FAHS) in 2014. These detailed and fascinating miniatures are now permanently displayed in the FAHS Harding Museum located at 302 Park Ave. Franklin. The museum is open Fridays 10 to 3 and Saturday, 11 to 2 from April thru October and by appointment. Admission to the museum is free.

Tom Burns' model of the Franklin Methodist Church viewed from the southeast.

Tom Burns' model of the Franklin Methodist Church viewed from the north side.

Remembrance of Holy Weeks Past at the Franklin First Methodist Church

Since Easter falls most often during April, this month's Historian's article will reflect upon a few images recorded during the Holy weeks from some years ago. The first photo was taken on Easter Sunday April 15, 1949 with the Sanctuary choir standing in front of the church's organ pipes and surrounded by lilies.

BR: Huber Newcomb, Siebert Matthews, Wilhelmina McLane (organist), Gwen Matthews, Phyllis Darragh, Mary Cafferty, Cy Cafferty, Cliff Berger
FR: Ruth Ann Barnhart, Flossie Berger, --, --, --, Betty Marie Newcomb
Pastor J. R. Stanforth

Lilies on and in front of the FUMC Altar Easter April 22, 1973

Occasionally, a special Easter celebration service was held such as the one over thirty years ago on April 3, 1988 when the sanctuary choir performed the praise musical "It Took a Miracle" as was advertised in the Franklin Chronicle newspaper.

The soloists were Phyllis Darragh, Mishelle Dicken, Diana Geiger, Mary Jane Layman, Betty Marvin, Bob Marvin, and Bill Waldron. Cast included: priests—Sam Steadman Sr., Bill Riley, & Mike Geiger; Pilate—Bob Marvin; Jesus—Ron Philpot; Roman soldiers—Rick Chamberlain and Robert Maine. Pastor Lenn E. Geiger was the narrator.

Pastor Pat King given the children's sermon on Palm Sunday April 5, 1992 to Emily Chewning, Jessica Chewning, Tara Chamberlain, Craig Brenan, Eric Branan, Jennifer Chamberlain, Ryan Chewning, and Jake Chamberlain, and Adam Osborne (from the left)

FUMC congregation in the pews on Palm Sunday April 5, 1992.

Brief History of Our Church Organs & Organists

Because music traditionally plays a major role in Methodist worship services, it is likely that some instrumental accompaniment such as mechanical or pump organs were present for hymn singing and other activities in the Franklin Methodist church buildings during most of the 19th century. However, the first specific description that we have located regarding an organ in our Church appeared in 1894 when the congregation authorized the purchase of a large pipe organ. While the actual cost for purchase and installation of this substantial instrument is not documented, a number of other major renovations including the addition of stained glass windows in the Sanctuary occurred at nearly the same time. A 1949 photograph of this organ and the choir is shown below.

Easter Sunday 1949 with Rev. J. R. Sanforth, the Sanctuary Choir, and the Pipe Organ.

By the mid-1950s, many believed the Sanctuary was looking too old-fashioned and badly needed modernization. Among the changes made was the replacement of the old pipe organ with a state-of-the art electronic console organ. This organ is an Allen Model C-3 with two consoles; pedal, including an additional percussion section that consisted of harp, glockenspiel, celesta, carillon, and an extensive number of stops. Hence, a "modern" organ with "All the bells and whistles" was purchased from the Fitzsimmons Company of Dayton and installed. The total cost was $8100 for the Organ and its installation as well as necessary remodeling of the Chancel, which is about $69,000 in 2016 dollars. The funds were from gifts and donations by church members and friends along with generous $5000 bequest from the Mrs. Julia McC. Zartman estate.

The dedication of the new organ was held on Sunday evening April 28, 1957 where the guest organist was Paul Ray Jones from the First Lutheran Church of Dayton OH performed. Mr. Jones' recital included "Jesu, Joy of Man's desiring" and "Toccata and Fugue in D minor" by J. S. Bach as well as several other classic pieces.

The nearly 60-year old organ console was photographed on June 29, 2016.

Our first documented organist was Miss Edna Thirkield, whose occupation was listed as "organist" in the 1900 United States Census. Other organists included Mrs. Anna Stahl, Mrs. Elizabeth Frieze, Mrs. Marjorie Squires Humphrey, Mrs. Wilhelmina McLane Vinnell from 1946-until circa 1984, Joyce Heminiger, Alan Bush, and Mrs. Nancy Osborne from 1986 until her "retirement" in 2013. We are blessed that Nancy continues to play our organ periodically during services throughout the year.

Earliest Known Photograph of a Franklin Methodist Choir

Florence Berger, Bernice Culp, Ernestine Roudebush, Alverna Newcomb, Elsie Basore, Mrs. Stahl, Edith Cafferty, Clifford Berger, Harry Eldridge Director — First Row

Jane Carpenter, Rebecca Weaver, Edna Mintuan, Peg Augenstein, Grace Klever, Gwen Matthews, Mary Cafferty, Wayne Morey — Second Row

Bob Eaton, Frank Croll, Dr. Stahl, Marshall Miller, Dorothy Weaver, Pastor Dr. Smith, Josiah Cafferty, Siebert Matthews, George Basore — Third Row

1925

The above photograph was shown as part of the Homecoming Event held on Sunday 9/9/12. To extend our remembrance of music programs at FUMC, a few more details concerning these choir members are presented in this month's Historian article.

Harry C. Eldridge, Sr. (1872-1946), Choir Director for many years, was a music teacher in Franklin and Miamisburg schools and formed the Eldridge Entertainment House publishing company in 1906, which now operates in Florida. He wrote plays, songs, and operettas as well as performed extensively.

Mrs. Anna Stahl (1868-1947) was the church organist starting sometime after 1907 until at least the late 1930s. Her husband, Dr. Silas S. Stahl (1869-1942) was in the choir and was a prominent surgeon and physician in Franklin who was very active as a layman in the Methodist church until his death.

There isn't enough space to discuss all of the choir members in this brief report. We focus on a few. Dr. George H. Basore (1906-1999) was a Franklin native and osteopathic physician who started his practice here in 1933 and continued in town for forty years. His wife, Elsie D. Basore (1909-1973) is also seen in the choir. Gwendolyn S. Matthews (1914-1989) was a church member for nearly 70 years and was very active in the music program. Her brother Siebert Matthews (1912-1985), who is also in the choir, was a church member over 60 years. Clifford Burger (1892-1975) and his wife Florence (Flossie) Berger (1895-1989) owned the Berger Grocery in Franklin and were church members for nearly 70 and over 80 years, respectively. Mary Margaret Cafferty (1904-1960) and her husband Josiah "Si" B. Cafferty (1893-1969), who was a 55-year church member, are in the choir. Gwen Matthews and Si Cafferty are both seen in a circa 1967 photograph of the Sanctuary choir.

A handwritten "1925" seems to date the photograph. The Pastor is identified as a Dr. Smith. However, the Methodist church records indicate George H. Smith was the Franklin minister between 1931-1936. While it's difficult for me to distinguish between the 1920s and 1930s from the fashions and hairstyles of the women, the very mature appearances of Mr. Eldridge and Mrs. Stahl seem more consistent with about 1935 rather than 1925. Also, Miss Matthews and Mrs. Basore do not look like teenage or younger girls. Hence, this photograph was probably taken circa 1935, but it remains the earliest picture of our choir.

Celebrating 220 Years of Methodism in Franklin Ohio

In August 1798, the Methodist Episcopal circuit rider Rev. John Kobler held the first formal religious services in Franklin at the cabin of Robert Ross. Our congregation regards this seminal event as the founding of our Church. Anniversaries for a number of other significant events in the history of the Franklin First United Methodist Church (FUMC) are also occurring during 2018. Throughout this year we will provide the background and summaries of these events in the Historian monthly articles.

Key Events in History of FUMC that will remembered and celebrated during 2018

Year	Anniversary	Event
1798	220th	Methodist circuit rider Rev. John Kobler held first religious service in the hamlet of Franklin.
1833	185th	First Sunday School classes were organized with Daniel Harper as the Superintendent
1853	165th	Franklin became a Methodist station with Rev. G. C. Townley being its first assigned pastor.
1868	150th	Wilbur Thirkield was admitted at age 13 into full church membership. He was later ordained a minister ultimately becoming a Methodist Bishop in 1912.
1893	125th	The clear glass windows in the sanctuary were replaced with Charles Smith designed cathedral style memorial stained glass windows.
1913	105th	The church was a temporary haven of shelter and food during the Great Miami River flood.
1918	100th	In 1918 the parsonage on River Street that had been built in 1881 was wired for electricity, Due to a fuel shortage during World War I, the Presbyterian Sunday School met in the Methodist rooms during the cold winter of 1917-1918.
1958	60th	The sanctuary was completely remodeled and rededicated
1968	50th	The Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) denominations became the United Methodist Church.
1973	45th	The 175th anniversary was celebrated with several special banquets and services including an “Early Settlers’ Night” with a “Singing School” and a visit by a “circuit rider” preacher.
1988	30th	The United Methodist Men’s group was initially organized. After becoming inactive during the mid-2000s, the FUMC Men’s group restarted in 2009 and has revived the tradition of a Chili Cook-Off dinner as fund raising event.
1998	20th	The 200th anniversary of Methodism in Franklin was celebrated for entire year with special events.
2008	10th	Serving of the Community Outreach dinners were started and continued for nearly ten years.

Other covered topics will include our three church buildings, historic church families, and the music programs over the decades. 2018 will focus on discovery more about the Methodists in Franklin OH.

SECTION V

COMMUNITY EVENTS & ORGANIZATIONS

FUMC 220th Celebration Float in Franklin's July 4, 2018 Parade

Relationships of Methodists to Miami Valley Chautauqua: Part I

The Franklin, Miamisburg, and Chautauqua historical societies are currently collaborating to produce three videos on the Miami Valley Chautauqua Association. While researching the history of Chautauqua movement, we learn that Methodist ministers and laypersons had prominent roles in the formation of both the national and Miami Valley Chautauqua organizations. This is the first of two articles on the connections of the Franklin Methodist church to the Miami Valley Chautauqua.

The Chautauqua Institution was founded in 1874 on the western shore of Chautauqua Lake in western New York as the Fair Point Sunday School Assembly, a vacation school for Sunday school teachers. Founders were an Ohio industrialist Lewis Miller and the Reverend John H. Vincent a Methodist minister and later a bishop. Within just a few years, this initially primarily religious program had evolved into an adult education movement featuring lectures, plays, recreation, and musical performances. The Chautauqua Institute Programs were extremely popular and became a vacation destination for the middle and wealthy classes throughout the later part of the 19th century. By 1904, there were about 150 independent Chautauqua at various locations in the United States and dozens of traveling "Big Top" tent Chautauqua shows.

Fig. 1. M. E. Bishop John H. Vincent (1832 – 1920)

Rev. E. A. Harper was a Methodist minister in Germantown Ohio when he organized the first two Miami Valley Chautauqua assemblies in 1896 and 1897. These 11-day camp meetings were held at the old Franklin fairgrounds located west of the Lions suspension bridge.

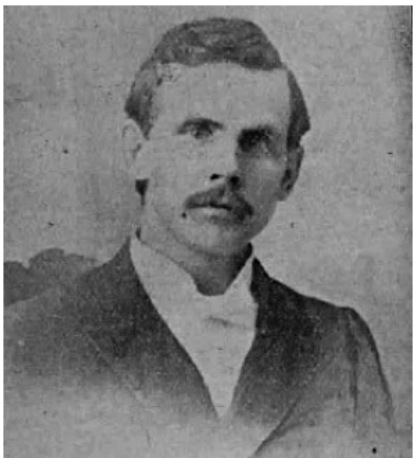


Fig. 2. Rev. Ellahue Ansile Harper (1866-1948) in the 1897 program for M. V. Chautauqua.

Rev. Harper had run the first two M.V. Chautauqua events essentially by himself and resigned after the 1897 meeting. A group of Franklin businessmen organized a stock company called the Miami Valley Chautauqua Company to continue operating the assemblies at the Franklin fairgrounds.

The 1898 Assembly program included a featured lecture by the Franklin native son Rev. Wilbur P. Thirkield, his family had been extremely active in the Franklin Methodist Church for three generations. He was a noted educator and champion for African American rights and became a Methodist bishop in 1912. Local talent included Miss Pearl DeNise, who was apparently a very accomplished whistler; the Eldridge brothers; and the Franklin Methodist Church vocal Quartet.

Fig. 3. Dr. Wilbur P. Thirkield (1854 – 1936).

Relationships of Methodists to Miami Valley Chautauqua: Part II

A few months ago, this column summarized the founding of the Chautauqua movement in upstate New York by Methodist bishop John H. Vincent along with the Methodist layman and industrialist Lewis Miller. Rev. E. A. Harper was the pastor of the Germantown Methodist Church when he organized the first two Miami Valley Chautauqua assemblies in 1896 and 1897 that were held in the Franklin fairgrounds located west of the Lions suspension bridge. Several individuals with ties to the Franklin Methodist congregation including future bishop W. P. Thirkield, choir director Harry Eldridge, and the church's vocal quartet participated in these first Miami Valley Chautauqua assemblies.

In 1898, several Franklin businessmen formed the Miami Valley Chautauqua Company to continue these events, which were exceedingly popular, and after the 1900 Assembly they purchased part of the Van Derveer farm on the west side of the Great Miami River north of Franklin just above the old hydraulic dam. Here a large open-air auditorium with a capacity of well over a thousand people was constructed. The Chautauqua Assembly opened on Friday July 26 1901 in the new Auditorium where 200 white tents were laid out in rows along the river. Over the next few years, a hotel, dining halls, and even a post office were added. Lots were plotted and sold for summer vacation homes that were built by the owners

Fig. 1. Postcard showing the crowd at the auditorium.

Soon the religious services, lectures, and bible classes were being supplemented with more entertainment events as well as swimming and diving in the river, sunbathing on a constructed beach, boating and canoeing,

Fig. 2. Strolling among the tents at M. V. Chautauqua

Fig. 3. Swimming in the Great Miami River and boating on the "Miami Queen" steamboat in the early 1900s

The great flood of 1913 washed away the footbridge to the interurban across the river and covered nearly all of Chautauqua except for immediate area surrounding the Grandview Hotel. Although no Assembly was held in 1913, the event was resumed in 1914. However, due to large debts accumulated the park was closed for 1915 and was reorganized as Miami Valley Chautauqua Association in 1916. After this reorganization, along with new management, Chautauqua continued and expanded slowly for next 30 years throughout the challenges of the Great Depression in the 1930s and during World War II. A Golden Anniversary Celebration for M. V. Chautauqua was held in 1946.

On Sunday May 22 2016, a program on Miami Valley Chautauqua was presented at Franklin FUMC. After a slideshow presentation on the general history of Chautauqua, a video was shown where Rev. Jerry Harmeyer led a narrative historic tour through the modern Camp Chautauqua grounds comparing the old and new.

Centennial of 1913 Flood of the Great Miami River

In March 1913, a series of storms caused one of the greatest natural disasters in U.S. history including flooding along the Great Miami River. Over 360 people died in the Miami Valley alone, tens of thousands were displaced from their homes, and property damage was more than a $100 million (over $2 billion in 2012 value). As shown in the map to the right; the north, west, and south sides of Franklin were flooded but the downtown region that included the Methodist church and parsonage was spared. The floodwater rose to within a few feet of the parsonage located and still standing on the southeast corner of Third and Front (now River) streets. Downtown Franklin was on higher ground and remained dry. In contrast, the downtowns of many cities including Piqua, Troy, Dayton, Miamisburg, Middletown, and Hamilton were extensively flooded in 1913. Eight deaths occurred in Franklin from the flood with nine buildings being destroyed and many more damaged.

View of the 1913 Flood in Franklin looking southeast from the west bank of the Great Miami River with Methodist church steeple visible in center beyond the Lions suspension bridge.

In a June 1981 Franklin Chronicle newspaper article, Mrs. Florence (Flossie) Brehm Berger (1895-1989) reminisced on being trapped in her family home for four days during the flood. She was also a FUMC church member for over 80 years.

Franklin map for 1913 where flooded regions are shone in gray. Numbers 1 and 2 locate the Methodist Episcopal Church and parsonage, respectively. Center St. is now Main St. (Courtesy of Miami Conservancy District).

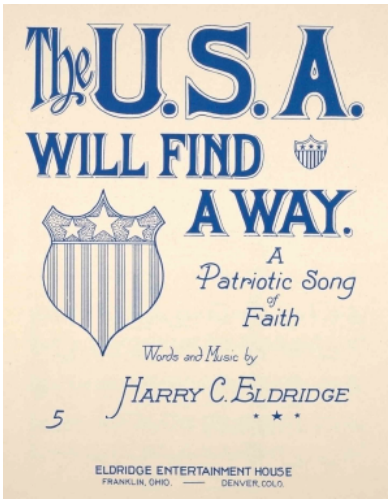
"The entire expanse from the Lutheran Church to Twin Creek was covered with water but the heaviest currents rushed under the suspension bridge and through the west side at the point between the Cincinnati Northern (railroad) and the old fairgrounds. This is where our house was – right between those two tracks."

"We were in the house from Tuesday until Friday and it was quite an experience. It was just like you were out in the middle of a roaring ocean."

The Franklin Methodist Church During World War One

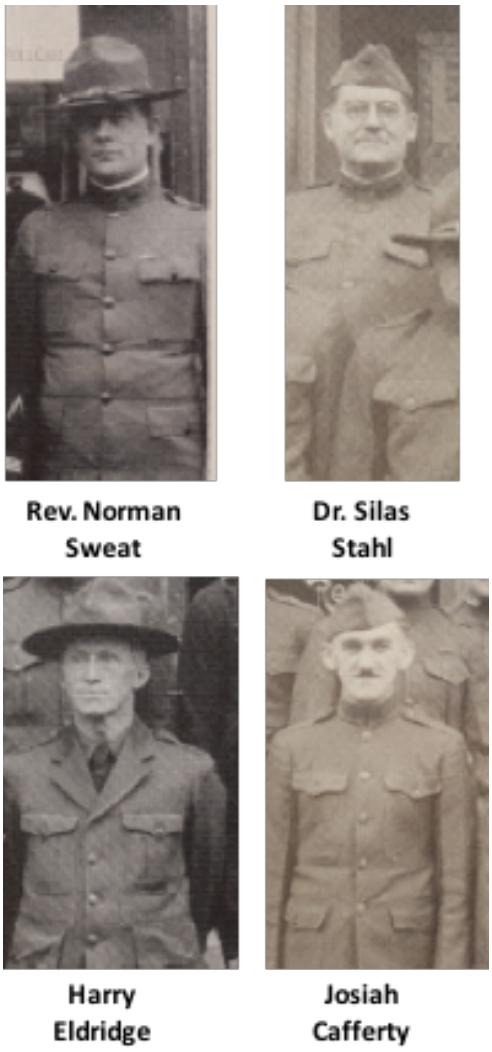
During the church services held at Franklin First UMC on November 11th this year, the church bell was rung for one minute at precisely 11:11 am to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One (WWI). The chancel choir also sang "Let There be Peace on Earth" when the ringing finished.

The people of Franklin and the surrounding area actively contributed to the war effort during WWI by sending over 100 men into various military and service organizations. Several men were affiliated with the Methodist congregation that included former pastor Rev. Norman Sweat who took a leave of absence from the church ministry to spend 1917 in the Army YMCA then spent 1918 as an U.S. Army Chaplain in France. Our choir director Harry Eldridge also joined the Army YMCA as well as composing and publishing at least seven patriotic songs. Dr. Silas Stahl, who was a choir member and active in the church leadership, served as a volunteer doctor with the Red Cross during the war. Other members of the Franklin congregation included Josiah Cafferty and Fred E. Robinson who had joined the army and marine corps, respectively.



One of the seven songs written and published by Harry Eldridge during World War I.

Mrs. Anna Stahl, a music teacher and the Methodist church organist for nearly twenty years, was one of the primary organizers of the Red Cross Auxiliary in Franklin that raised funds and supported many of activities throughout the war.



Methodist men in uniform from a photograph of those who served in WWI and published by the Franklin Chronicle in July 1919.

On the morning of November 11, 1918, the U.S. State Department made the announcement that an Armistice had been signed by Germany to take effect on the 11th month, on the 11th day, and 11 minutes past the 11th hour of 1918 bringing an end to the fighting in WWI. The Great War had been fought from August 1914 to November 1918 and resulted in more than 37 million military casualties and 8.5 million additional deaths worldwide. The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) casualties numbered 323 thousand with nearly 117 thousand deaths occurring between May 1917 and November 1918.

SECTION VI

GENERAL METHODIST DENOMINATION ITEMS

Where have Methodists Held Services in Franklin Ohio?

Since 1860 nearly all of the regular and special services of our Methodist congregation have been held in our current church building on the southwest corner of Main and Third streets. There have been numerous remodeling and modifications to this structure over the past 158 years including the major addition of the "Christian Education" section on the back of the Church in 1954 as described briefly in the historian's article published in the March 2014 issue of the Steeple Bell.

In the evening of Monday August 13, 1798, the Methodist Episcopalian circuit rider John Kobler held the first formal religious service in Franklin when he gave his sermon to six or eight families in the log cabin owned by Captain Robert Ross. Rev. Kobler was completing his first round trip journal in the Ohio Territory that established Miami Circuit from the Ohio River to Dayton His ministry in the Miami Valley lasted for about nine months where he rode 16 around the circuit. In his journals, Rev. Kobler noted that he preached in the Ross house. Although the visits by the next circuit-riding ministers were erratic, these services were held at the Ross cabin until at least his death in 1803.

The Methodist circuit riders preached not only on Sundays, but on other days as they travel along their routes. As the population of Miami Valley rapidly increased during the first decades of the 19th century, the Methodist circuits became smaller as more communities formed. While Franklin was in original Miami district, it later became part of the old Union Circuit, afterward of the Lebanon circuit, and finally the Franklin Circuit before becoming a station with a resident pastor in 1853. Sometimes these circuit riders held two-days meetings either in larger structures such as barns or in local groves or fields. At night, the men would be quartered in barns and other outhouses; the women, in the cabins. So far, I haven't located references to such large meetings within the Franklin limits, but it is possible.

The Franklin Society of Methodists was formed around 1825 consisting primarily of families named Thirkield, Rossman, Emley, Wood, Emerson, Clutch, Harper and later others. For about seven years church services and classes were held in their individual homes. In 1832, a framed church was built on the alley and fronting on Third street between Front (River) and Center (Main) Streets. No details have been located so far on the appearance of this first church, which was occupied for many years as a double residence. It was demolished finally sometime after the construction of the Educational addition in the 1950s.

A brick church of larger dimensions replaced the frame structure in 1836, just east of the original church, and fronting on Center (Main) Street. This was a more pretentious building, having class-rooms and Sunday-school room in the basement and the audience room above, reached by steps in front and at the sides. A good bell was in the steeple; but this building also became too small until, in 1859, it was torn away to make room for the present building. The services of the church were held at the town hall during the demolition of the old and the building of the new church, and the old Baptist Church was frequently placed at the disposal of the Methodist Episcopal Congregation. The class and prayer meetings were held at the residences of members. This site, of course, is the present church location. However, the vacant land between the back of the current educational addition and alley is where that first church had been located.

Second Methodist Episcopal church with its bell tower/steeple (built in 1836) on the right side, which is next to a commercial block along Main St. The small building on the extreme right is original Franklin Methodist church that had been built in 1832. This image was drawn by Henry Howe during his visit in 1846.

When & How Did We Become the Franklin United Methodist Church?

The circuit-riding preacher John Kobler (1768-1843) gave the first sermon held during a religious service within the village of Franklin in September 1798. Rev. Kobler had been sent into the Ohio Territory by Bishop Francis Asbury (1745-1816) of the Methodist Episcopal Church founded by the ordained Anglican clerics John Wesley (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788) of the Church of England. In 1825, a permanent Methodist Episcopal Society was formed in Franklin with its first church building being completed in 1832. A new brick church was constructed in 1836, but this building was demolished within 13 years and replaced with an even larger church that was dedicated on September 16, 1860, which remains our Sanctuary to this day. Throughout this period until 1939 the congregation in Franklin was known as the Methodist Episcopal Church. Since this was also the original Methodist congregation to form in Franklin, the Church has included "First" in its name that distinguishes its from other congregations such as the Free Methodist, Bible Methodist, or African Methodist Episcopal churches that have formed within the area over the years. In 1939 the name of the national Methodist denomination changed to The Methodist Church following the merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church with the Methodist Protestant Church (formed in 1830) and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The latter denomination had been formed in 1844 from a schism within the Church over the issues of slavery and its abolition prior to the U.S. Civil War.

So where does the name "United Methodist Church" come from? Well, the answer is: That on April 23, 1968 (forty-five years ago, now), The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) denominations merged to form the United Methodist Church (UMC). During the years of growth of Methodism, these two smaller denominations of evangelical Protestants that had been strongly influenced by the Evangelical Revival in continental Europe, the Wesleys in England, and the Methodist movement in America, had also been growing mostly in Pennsylvania and the Midwest. Many of their members were of German origin with the common language in both church and home being German rather than English. The names of these groups were the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association. These two churches merged in 1946 forming the EUB denomination.

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ began with the preaching of Philip William Otterbein (1726-1813) and Martin Boehm (1725-1812) in the 1760's. When they first met in 1767, Otterbein was so impressed with Boehm's passionate message that he embraced Boehm and declared, "Wir sind brüder" (We are brethren). Francis Asbury also asked Otterbein to be one of four clergy who laid hands on him when Asbury was ordained as Methodist bishop in 1784. The UB church was formally organized in 1800 at a meeting held in Maryland. The Evangelical Association (Evangelische Gemeinschaft) developed from the preaching of Jacob Albright (1759-1808) who had been licensed by the Methodist Church but was not permitted to preach in the German language. Because he felt called to take the message of Methodism to German-speaking people primarily in Pennsylvania, he set out on his own. A few years after his death, his followers independently organized the Evangelical Association in 1816 based upon Rev. Albright's preaching and messages. This church spread to various parts of the United States over the century and a half until it joined with the United Brethren church in 1946.

The formation of the United Methodist Church had minimal impact on the Franklin congregation other than a name change in 1968 as there were no EUB churches in town. However, many communities had both Methodist and EUB churches that now became the same denomination. In some places, such as Springboro, the local churches also merged to become a single UMC congregation. However, separate United Methodist churches still remain in many communities such as the St. James UMC and the Parkview UMC, formerly the EUB congregation, churches in Miamisburg.

In conclusion, I hope this article provides some little insights into why our congregation has been known as the Franklin First United Methodist Church since April 1968.

What Kind of Methodists are We? What other Kinds of "Methodists" are There?

Today's United Methodist Church [UMC] is the descendent of several predecessors that originated with the Church of England (which is now called the Anglican Communion where The Episcopal Church [TEC)] is the USA denomination) where both John Wesley and his brother Charles were ordained ministers. The previous USA Methodist denominations were: Methodist Episcopal [ME] Church (1784-1939), Methodist Episcopal Church, South [MEC,S] (1845-1939), Methodist Protestant [MPC] Church (1828-1939), Methodist Church (1939-1968), United Brethren in Christ [UBC] (1800-1946), Evangelical Association (1803-1922), United Evangelical Church (1894-1922), Evangelical Church (1922-1946), Evangelical United Brethren [EUB] Church (1946-1968), United Methodist Church [UMC] (1968- present). Several other protestant denominations also exist that are currently following general Wesleyan doctrines or had previously split from some earlier UMC organizations.

The circuit rider ME preacher John Kobler (1768-1843) held the first religious service within the village of Franklin in September 1798. Rev. Kobler was followed by a number of ME circuit riders over the next five decades. In 1825, a permanent Methodist Episcopal Society was formed in Franklin as part of a larger circuit. The first full time ME minister (i.e., Rev. Gilbert C. Townley) was stationed at the Franklin circuit in 1853. Throughout this period and also until 1939 the congregation in Franklin was known as the Methodist Episcopal Church. Since this was the original Methodist congregation to form in Franklin, our Church has included "First" in its name that distinguishes its from other congregations such as the Free Methodist, Bible Methodist, or African Methodist Episcopal churches that have existed over the years. In 1939 the name of the national Methodist denomination was changed to The Methodist Church following the merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church with the Methodist Protestant Church (formed in 1828) and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The latter denomination had been formed in 1844 during a schism within the Church over the issues of slavery and its abolition prior to the U.S. Civil War. The MEC'S rationalized the existence of slavery as being tolerated within biblical writings even though the Wesleys and most other ME leaders and members outside of the slave-holding states opposed the practice. In 1940, some more theologically conservative MEC,S congregations, which dissented from the 1939 merger, refused to join the Methodist Church and later formed the Southern Methodist Church that is still outside of the UMC communion.

During the growth of Methodism in the early 19th century, there were two smaller denominations of evangelical Protestants in America that also followed the Methodist theology and had been growing mostly in Pennsylvania and the Midwest. Many of their members were of German origin with the common language in both church and home being German rather than English. The names of these groups were the Church of the United Brethren in Christ [UBC] and the Evangelical Association [EA]. These two churches merged in 1946 forming the EUB denomination.

The United Brothers in Christ movement began with the preaching's of Philip Otterbein (1726-1813) and Martin Boehm (1725-1812) during the 1760's. The UBC church was formally organized in 1800 at a meeting held in Maryland. The Evangelical Association (Evangelische Gemeinschaft) developed from the preaching of Jacob Albright (1759-1808) who had been licensed by the Methodist Church but was not permitted to preach in the German language. A few years after Rev. Albright's death, his followers independently organized the Evangelical Association in 1816 based upon his preaching and messages. The formation of the United Methodist Church in 1968 had minimal impact on the Franklin congregation other than changing its name, as there were no EUB churches in town. However, many communities had both Methodist and EUB churches that now became the same denomination. In some places, such as Springboro, the local churches also merged to become a single UMC congregation. However, separate United Methodist churches still remain in many communities such as the St. James UMC and the Parkview UMC, a formerly EUB church, congregations in Miamisburg.

After the Civil War, when African American slaves gained freedom, many left the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. They joined either the independent black denominations of the African Methodist Episcopal [AME] Church founded in Philadelphia or the African Methodist Episcopal AME Zion Church founded in New York, but some also joined the (Northern) Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1870, most of the remaining African-American members of the MEC,S split off on friendly terms with white colleagues to form the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church [CME] adopting its current name the Christian Methodist Episcopal

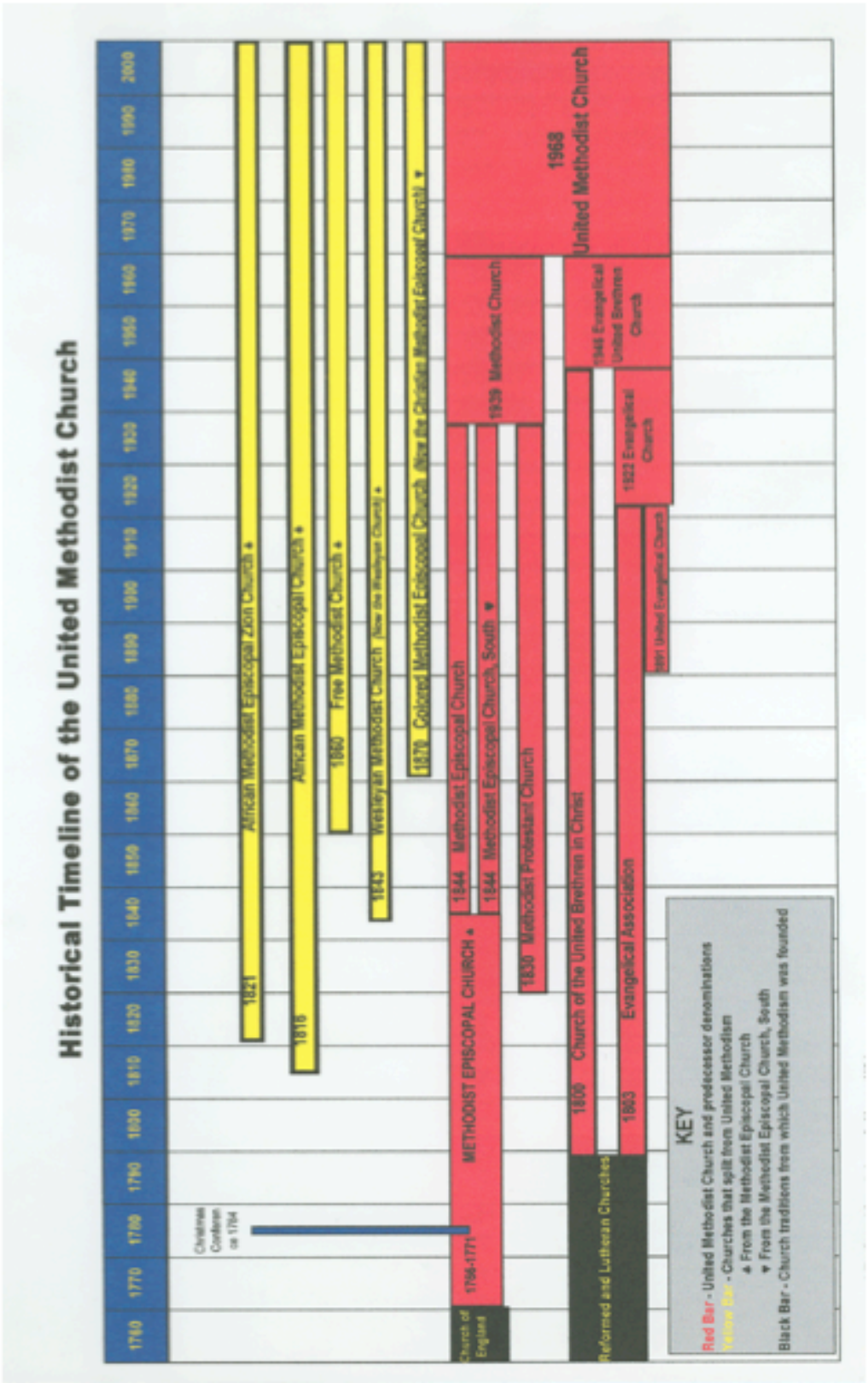
Church in the 1950s. This new denomination avoided the Republican politics of the AME and AME Zion congregations. In May 2012, The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church entered into full communion with the United Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, African Union Methodist Protestant Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Union American Methodist Episcopal Church. These Churches agreed to "recognize each other's churches, share sacraments, and affirm their clergy and ministries." While there are no current AME congregations in Franklin City or Township, there are active AME churches in Lebanon, Middletown, Trotwood, Dayton, and other nearby communities.

The Bible Methodist Church [BMC] is a Methodist denomination within the conservative holiness movement that still remains outside of the UMC communion. In 1843, many Methodists who strongly supported abolitionism of slavery initiated a schism with the Methodist Episcopal Church, leading to the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church [WMC]. In this new denomination, the "Episcopal form of government inherited from Wesley and Anglicanism, was replaced with a loose connection of societies or churches which characterized the Methodist movement in its earliest days." In 1943, the General Conference of the WMC recommended the strengthening of the "central supervisory authority to oversee the work of our Church." The WMC adopted a proposal in 1966 to merge with the Pilgrim Holiness Church, forming the Wesleyan Church; those who strongly disagreed with the merger, as well as the trend of greater centralization, formed the Bible Methodist Connection [BMC] of Churches. After Wesleyan Methodist Church merged with the Pilgrim Holiness Church in 1968, the merged denomination became the Wesleyan Church [WC]. Several WMC conferences in both merging denominations refused to be a part of the merged church over differences about modesty and worldliness. One of the largest conferences, which refused to join the merger was the Allegheny Conference and became the Allegheny Wesleyan Methodist Connection of Churches. The Franklin Bible Methodist Church is located on the Dixie Highway.

The Free Methodist Church (FMC) was organized in 1860 whose founders had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church but were excluded from its membership for too earnestly advocating what they saw as the doctrines and usages of authentic Wesleyan Methodism. The word "Free" was suggested and adopted because the new church was to be an anti-slavery church, because pews in the churches were to be free to all rather than sold or rented (as was common practice), and because the new church hoped for the freedom of the Holy Spirit in the services rather than a stifling formality. However, the third principle has also been a "freedom" from secret and oath bound societies (in particular, the those associated the Freemasons). While there are a number of FMC congregations in Indiana, there appear to be none currently located near to Franklin or elsewhere in Ohio.

In 1889 there was a split within the United Brethren in Christ denomination when a majority of bishops, churches, & members accepted a "New Constitution" (Liberals) that allowed memberships in secret societies (e.g., the Freemasons, etc.) amongst other changes. The UBC bishop Milton Wright (i.e., father of Wilbur & Orville) led a minority group known as "Radicals" to separate forming the U.B. (Old Constitution) churches, which did not join in the 1946 merger with the Evangelical Church that created the EUB denomination nor in the formation of UMC in 1968. The nearest U.B. congregations to Franklin are located in New London and Dayton.

In summary, there are various flavors of Methodists today with the vast majority belonging to the UMC. While many common beliefs are shared that can be traced to John Wesley and those spiritual leaders from the 18th and early 19th centuries, a range of doctrine and practice still exist. In most respects, Franklin First UMC has been a traditional mainstream congregation throughout its history starting as a Methodist Episcopal Church in 1825.



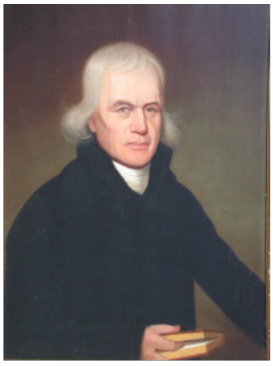
Source: http://s3.amazonaws.com/gcah.org/UMC_History/Timeline/METHCHART.PDF

Celebration of 50th Anniversary of the United Methodist Church

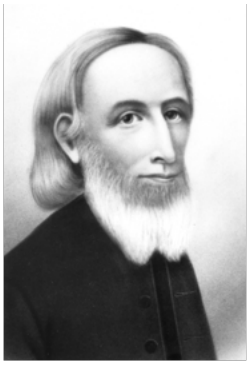
On April 23, 1968, The United Methodist Church was created when Bishop Reuben H. Mueller, representing The Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Church, and Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke of The Methodist Church joined hands at the constituting General Conference in Dallas, Texas and spoke "Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church.". The UMC had over 11 million members upon its formation in 1968.

Theological traditions of both the Methodist and EUB denominations were steeped in the Protestant Reformation and Wesleyanism, held similar ecclesiastical structures, and had relationships that dated back almost two hundred years which facilitated the union. In the EUB heritage, for example, Philip William Otterbein, the principal founder of the United Brethren in Christ, assisted in the ordination of Francis Asbury to the superintendency of American Methodist Church. Jacob Albright, through whose religious experience and leadership the Evangelical Association was begun, had been nurtured in a Methodist class meeting following his conversion. These two smaller denominations of evangelical Protestants had been strongly influenced by the Evangelical Revival in continental Europe, the Wesleys in England, and the Methodist movement in America and were mostly rooted in Pennsylvania and the Midwest. Many of their members were of German origin with the common language in both church and home being German rather than English. The Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association had merged in 1946 to form the EUB denomination.

Jacob Albright (1759-1808)



Francis Asbury (1745-1816)



Martin Boehm (1725-1812)

Philip W. Otterbein (1726-1813)

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ began with the preaching of Philip Otterbein and Martin Boehm in the 1760's. When they first met in 1767, Otterbein was so impressed with Boehm's passionate message that he embraced Boehm and declared, "Wir sind brüder" (We are brethren). Francis Asbury asked Otterbein to be one of four clergy who laid hands on him when Asbury was ordained as a Methodist bishop in 1784. The UB church was formally organized in 1800 at a meeting held in Maryland. The Evangelical Association (Evangelische Gemeinschaft) developed from the preaching of Jacob Albright who had been licensed by the Methodist Church but was not permitted to preach in German. Because he felt called to take the message of Methodism to German-speaking people, he set out on his own. A few years after his death, his followers organized the Evangelical Association in 1816 based upon Rev. Albright's preaching and messages.

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Brief History on Past Schisms within the Methodist Denominations

The 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC) was be held May 5-15, 2020 in Minneapolis MN. Various plans on the future of this denomination were scheduled to be presented and debated that may lead to formation of two or more separate church organizations. This likely schism is the culmination of years of division within UMC on same sex marriage and clergy. In a recent Internet posting, Ms. Rebekah Simon-Peter published the following comments: "The truth is, Methodist history is fraught with conflict. Two centuries of it. It's who we are. Splitting and reforming is woven into our very being. Truth be told, historically there are more divided Methodists than there are united Methodists." As background for these observations, this month's article will briefly summarize several examples of past separations that resulted in current coexisting "Methodist" denominations.

Today's UMC denomination had originated in the 1780s during a schism from the Church of England (which is today called the Anglican Communion where The Episcopal Church [TEC] is the USA denomination) by the followers of John Wesley and his brother Charles who were ordained Anglican priests. This new denomination was called the Methodist Episcopal [ME] Church and spread throughout America at the end of the eighteenth century and during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

The circuit rider ME preacher John Kobler (1768-1843) held the first religious service within the village of Franklin in September 1798. In 1825, a permanent Methodist Episcopal Society was formed in Franklin and was served by traveling circuit riders until first full time ME minister (i.e., Rev. Gilbert C. Townley) was stationed at the Franklin circuit in 1853. Since this was the original Methodist congregation to form in Franklin, our Church has included "First" in its name that distinguishes it from other "Methodist" congregations including the Free Methodist, Bible Methodist, or African Methodist Episcopal churches that have existed in town over the years.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) was formed in 1844 during a national schism within the Church over the issues of slavery and its abolition prior to the U.S. Civil War. The doctrine of the MECS rationalized the existence of slavery as being tolerated within biblical writings even though the Wesleys and most other MEC leaders and members outside of the slave-holding states vigorously opposed the practice. The MEC and MECS denominations remained separate until they finally reunified in 1939, which was over 80 after the US Civil War had ended, becoming renamed as The Methodist Church (TMC). In 1940, some more theologically conservative MECS congregations, which dissented from the 1939 merger, refused to join The Methodist Church and later became the Southern Methodist Church that is still exists outside of the UMC communion.

During the growth of Methodism in the early 19th century, there were two smaller denominations of evangelical Protestants in America that also followed much of the Methodist theology. A number of these church held services in German because many of their members were of German origin with the common language in both church and home being German rather than English. The names of these groups were the Church of the United Brethren in Christ [UBC] and the Evangelical Association [EA]. These two churches formally merged in 1946 forming the EUB denomination. However, in 1889 there had been a split within the United Brethren in Christ denomination when a majority of bishops, churches, & members accepted a "New Constitution" (Liberals) that allowed memberships in secret societies (e.g., the Freemasons, etc.) amongst other changes. One of the UBC bishops Milton Wright (who was also the father of Wilbur & Orville) led a minority group known as "Radicals" into forming separate the U.B. (Old Constitution) churches, which did not join into the 1946 merger of the UBC and the EA churches that formed the EUB denomination. When merger of the EUB and TMC created The United Methodist Church (UMC) in 1968, the U.B. also did not join and still remains independent and separate. The nearest U.B. congregations to Franklin are located in New London OH and Dayton OH.

The Bible Methodist Church [BMC] is yet another Methodist denomination that had arisen from the conservative holiness movement in the 19th century and still remains outside of the UMC communion. The Franklin Bible Methodist Church is located south of town on the Dixie Highway.

The Free Methodist Church (FMC) was organized in 1860 whose founders had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church but were excluded from its membership for too earnestly advocating what they saw as the doctrines and usages of authentic Wesleyan Methodism. The word "Free" was suggested and adopted because the new church was an anti-slavery church, held that pews in the churches were to be free

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Sunday Worship Service on July 26, 2020