

History of the Kenbridge United Methodist Church

The Rev. Robert Williams is credited with founding Methodism in Virginia. He was born in England, settled in Ireland, became a local preacher in the Methodist Societies and received from Mr. John Wesley license to preach in America under the regular missionaries. He first appeared in Virginia in 1772 in Norfolk where he preached his first sermon that same year and went out in 1773 preaching and forming societies in that section of Virginia south of Petersburg which no doubt included Lunenburg County as it was in Brunswick County that the first Circuit was formed in Virginia.

Between 1782 and 1784 the Methodist in America increased in large numbers and so in 1784, at the Conference held in Baltimore in December, the Methodist Societies in America took action and formed a church organization, in the strict sense, under the title, "The Methodist Episcopal Church."

There were other Methodist Churches located in Lunenburg County already built and thriving before 1829 but it was in that year that by deed dated October 15, 1829, recorded December 14, 1829 in Deed Book 29, at page 5, Henry Hardy, of Lunenburg County conveyed to Vincent Hardy, Joel Blackwell, Baxter Ragsdale, Spencer M. Peace, Joshua Featherston and Thomas Adams, Trustees, for the consideration of One Dollar (bargained and sold to the aforesaid Trustees and their successors to be appointed according to the rules and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church) one acre of land where now stands the meeting house called and named Olive Branch in the County of Lunenburg and surrounded by lands of the said Henry Hardy. This land was to revert to the said Henry Hardy, his heirs or assigns if and whenever the said house should cease to be of use as a public meeting house for the worship of God according to the rules and regulations of said Church and for no other purpose.

According to Mr. Leroy Marshall, while he was living, the foundation of the church was still there in the 1950's and that he remembered the church standing near the intersection of present day Ashtoin and Tomlinson Roads.

He added that the building was also used by the Baptist as services at Olive Branch were not held every Sunday.

Thomas Adams and Joshua Featherston were Methodist ministers living in the lower end of Lunenburg County not very far from Williams United Methodist Church.

Baxter Ragsdale was also a Methodist minister living in another section of the County. Joel Blackwell, one of the Trustees of the Church resided on land now owned by Edward Hall and was the home, before Mr. Hall purchased the land, of the Lail Family, however the Blackwell home burned some years ago. Spencer M. Peace was from the Dundas area and had purchased property and moved not far from the Church.*

1 Bennett: Memorials of Methodism in Virginia, pp 344, 353-4, 357.

Around 1899 the congregation divided, probably because it had outgrown the Olive Branch building, and one group formed Winn's Chapel, now Pleasant Oak Baptist Church on Pleasant Oak Road. The other members of the Church purchased, by deed dated October 27, 1899, recorded October 9, 1900, in Deed Book 28, at page 227, from W. F. Kennedy and L. T. Kennedy, his wife, of Lunenburg County and conveyed to W. B. Crafton, J. B. Marshall, L. A. Hardy, Jno. Hardy and D. Hardy, Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, all of the same county, for the consideration of One Dollar, one acre of land in Brown Store District, Lunenburg County, Virginia bounded on the south and east by W. F. Kennedy, on west by G. G. Taylor and north by Reedy Creek Road, now the road from Kenbridge to Victoria. This land was located in present day Kenbridge in the general area where the produce stand is now located. The area around the church was generally known to residents as "Church Hill". The land was to be held by the said Trustees aforementioned and their successors in office for the use and benefit of the congregation under the direction of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The church was known as Olive Branch. This church was of wood construction and painted white. The first marriage to take place in the new church was that of Mary Rickers and Dan Crafton on December 4, 1901.

Some of those Trustees named above have direct descendents who presently or in the past have belonged to and/or attended the present Kenbridge United Methodist Church. L. A. Hardy was the father of L. Atkins Hardy, who in turn was the father of Elizabeth, Eugenia and Lewis Hardy. John Hardy was the father of John B. and Judith Hardy. J. B. Marshall was the great-great grandfather of Leroy (Le) Marshall, III. Mary Fletcher (Mamie) Rickers was a daughter of the said J. B. Marshall, Louie Rickers, a grandson, Emma Rickers, a granddaughter, Charles Rickers, a great grandson and Rosanna, Conrad and Christian Rickers, great-great grandchildren. W. R. Kennedy, from whom the church property was purchased, was the grandfather of Lewis and Tinsley Crowder and of Joseph W.

(Joe) Blackburn and the great-grandfather of Penny Callis and her brothers and sisters, Mary Jane, Leslie, Ken, Jodie and Robert. Kristin Hodges is a great-great granddaughter and her children, Mary Lizzie and Samuel are great-great-great grandchildren.

There are others who may be direct descendants of those Trustees and should notify the church historian so that their names can be included.

Again the congregation outgrew the church building so purchased, by deed dated April 28, 1914, recorded April 30, 1914 in Deed Book 57, at page 683, for the consideration of Six Hundred Dollars, Lot No 10 in Block 23, according to plat No. 1 of Kenbridge Development Company, Inc., as drawn by J. E. Crafton, Jr. This property is located on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Church Street in the Town of Kenbridge. Said lot was conveyed by W. F. Kennedy and V. L. Kennedy, his wife, of the Town of Kenbridge, County of Lunenburg, State of Virginia to I. T. Wilkinson, E. G. Bagley, C. N. Dupriest, John E. Hardy, L. W. Bridgforth, as Trustees of the Kenbridge Virginia (Kenbridge Circuit) Methodist Episcopal Church, south of the Virginia Conference, and to their successors in office as from time to time are appointed according to the laws and usage of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and under and pursuant to the laws of the State of Virginia. This land was conveyed in trust that all of said premises should be used, kept, maintained and disposed of as a place of divine worship for the use and the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, subject to the usage, discipline and ministerial appointments of the said Church as from time to time be authorized and decreed by the General Conference of the said Church. Since this church was called Kenbridge Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the name must have been changed from Olive Branch when the new brick church was erected at its present location on the corner of Fifth Ave. and Church Street and the one in which we worship today.

Some of the descendants of the first Trustees of this Church who have belonged and/or attended are Nancy and Thomas C. Wilkinson, children of I. T. Wilkinson. Thomas Wilkinson, Jr. and Mary Lee Wilkinson, children of Thomas C. Wilkinson and grandchildren of I. T. Wilkinson. Grace,

Katherine and Nancy Wilkinson, children of Nancy Wilkinson and also grandchildren of I. T. Wilkinson. Sue Bagley Bridgforth and Mildred Bagley Garden were daughters of E. G. Bagley and Nelson DuPriest was the son of C. N. DuPriest.

The church built on the above described lot No. 10 was brick, small in size and had on it a white wooden cross carved by hand by W. F. Kennedy. The architect used for this project was Richard A. Munding of Petersburg, Virginia. The pulpit was in the corner facing the pews which were arranged in semi-circles. The choir was in the small room to the left of the minister and had an outside door leading into it. A folding partition was between the sanctuary and Sunday School rooms. When the Church moved to the present location it had 28 members and soon grew to 63. According to the minutes of the 2003 charge conference there were 264 baptized members of the Church.

The Rev. Bart D. Stephens, who came from Alabama and joined the Virginia Conference, was the first minister of the church, serving from 1912-1915 and later married Miss Laura Cannon. The first wedding performed in the new church was that of Miss Bertha Bridgforth and Walter Scott Irby in 1915.

In the early days of Methodism the ministers were called Circuit Riders because they preached in many churches and often were assigned to more than one county. Because of the size of the circuits, services were not always held on a regular schedule. As time passed more and more people joined the Methodist Churches and more churches were built which led the Conference to begin to assign the ministers to smaller areas, often to only one to five churches to a circuit, now called a charge. A list of the ministers of this church appears at the end of this history.

Also in the early days of Methodism the churches did not furnish a home for the ministers as they owned their own, which was located on farmland owned by the minister. Mr. E. B. Loving, the minister of the Kenbridge Circuit from 1920-1924, and the congregation saw the need for a parsonage in Kenbridge so the need was presented to the Virginia Conference. After approval from the Conference was obtained, the Kenbridge Church, by deed dated November 12, 1921, recorded November 19, 1921 in Deed

Book 64 at page 290 C. S. Bagley and S. Lee Bagley, his wife, of Kenbridge, Lunenburg County, Virginia conveyed to L. W. Bridgforth, I. T. Wilkinson, J. S. Hatchett, C. N. DuPriest, E. G. Bagley, E. M. Gills, L. A. Rash and George T. Bridgforth, Trustees of the Methodist Parsonage of Kenbridge Charge, Methodist Episcopal Church, South of Kenbridge, Virginia and their successors in office, for the consideration of \$145.00, two certain plots or parcels of land known as Lots No. 17 and 18 in Block 3 of the Park Place Realty Company according to the plat and survey of same as made by J. E. Crafton, Jr. on November 12, 1910. The above conveyed lots or parcels of land have a frontage of 50 feet. Lot No. 17 on Fifth Avenue, Kenbridge, Virginia and a depth of 250 feet at right angles thereto and Lot No. 18 fronts on Sixth Avenue with a frontage of 50 feet and a depth of 190 feet at right angles thereto.

A short time after the lots were purchased a parsonage was built on Lot 17. According to Rev. Arthur L. Stevenson in his book entitled, "Native Methodist Preachers of Richmond, Virginia", it was stated at a meeting of the Virginia Conference that this parsonage was one of the best in the conference. This wooden structured building remained the parsonage for this church until 1970 when by deed dated December 21, 1970, recorded December 31, 1970 in Deed Book 117, at page 133, E. C. Johnson, Jr. and Margaret M. Johnson, his wife conveyed to the Trustees of the Kenbridge United Methodist Church, Kenbridge, Virginia, for the consideration of \$25,130.00, certain lots or parcels of land with improvements thereon situate in the Town of Kenbridge, Lunenburg County, Virginia, designated as Lots 23, 21 and 20 feet of Lot 19 adjacent to Lot 21 and Lot 24 in Block 3A, as shown on the official map of the Town of Kenbridge, drawn by A. D. Kaylor and approved by the Town Council of said Town in 1914. Lots Nos. 23, 21 and 20 feet of Lot 19 have a combined frontage on Fifth Avenue of 120 feet and run back between parallel lines at right angles thereto 250 feet to an alley; Lot 24 has a frontage of 50 feet on Sixth Avenue and runs back at right angles thereto between parallel lines a distance of 150 feet to an alley; this being the same property which was conveyed to the parties of the first part by two deeds from C. T. Ripberger, Jr. and wife. The house located on the

lots fronting on Fifth Avenue remains the present parsonage.

The Church having no further use for the previously used parsonage, the Trustees of the Church, by deed dated December 21, 1970, recorded December 31, 1970 in Deed Book 117, at page 134, C. A. Garden, Jr. and E. G. Terrell, Trustees of the Kenbridge United Methodist Church, Kenbridge, Virginia conveyed to Edward J. Leary and Florence A. Leary, his wife, for the consideration of \$12,500.00 the said parsonage.

The membership continued to grow and in 1941 the Sunday School plant was built and in 1943 the renovation of the Church was completed. On Sunday, July 25, 1943 the following was in the bulletin: "Your loyalty and sacrifice stand as a memorial to your interest in the things of the Kingdom and may the gracious God continue to bless and guide you in the years that are ahead." "Signed: Rev. and Mrs. R. A. White." In the winter of 1945 the Rev. Richard A. Bergdoll invited Dr. W. W. Peale, the Resident Bishop and the Rev. Starke Jett, the District Superintendent to the Church to bless our redecorated church, including the stained glass memorial windows which were given by the various members of the Church.

In November, 1967, after many months of study, the congregation was invited to examine and discuss changes as suggested by the building committee. This study had been made because the church needed repairs from the roof to the basement as no major repairs had been done for 25 years. The Board of Stewards resolved to renovate the church with the congregation's approval. Plans were drawn by C. W. Huff, Jr., a church architect from Richmond and estimated that the renovation would cost around \$70,000.00 for the work planned in the sanctuary. The members gave of their talents, money and time, and the project was completed in a short time.

As soon as the sanctuary was completed work was begun on adding more Sunday School class rooms, a fellowship hall and a kitchen.

In 1968 the Methodist Episcopal Church changed its name to United Methodist Church as it joined with the United Lutheran Brethan, therefore the name of this church became the Kenbridge United Methodist Church.

In July, 1982 the note burning ceremony was held to celebrate the payment of the funds borrowed for the addition to the Church. Bishop Blackburn, representing the Virginia Conference, and the Rev. Charles Winfree, Farmville District Superintendent, joined the then minister of this Church, Rev. Jim Meredith and the building committee conducted that ceremony. It was a happy day for the congregation and the sealed glass container, which contains the ashes of the note, is now located in the ladies' classroom.

Much credit should be given to Mrs. Clarence Love, Mrs. R. B. Bridgforth and Mr. James Bagley, Jr. the decorating committee of 1982.

In 1975 Fletcher's Chapel United Methodist Church, located about 5 miles out of Kenbridge at the intersection of Fletcher Chapel and Chapel Roads closed and its members transferred to this Church as the two churches had made up a charge for many years. As the years had passed the people had moved from the neighborhood and membership had gotten smaller and smaller until it was decided to close the Church. It is always extremely sad when a church is forced to close its doors and since this happened to Fletcher's Chapel, the Kenbridge United Methodist Church was glad to receive its 37, active and loyal members into its congregation. The church building was sold to Mr. and Mrs. L. B. Barnes who moved it onto land owned by them and remodeled it into the home in which they now live.

As the years have passed, the women of this Church have been active in many projects, among them stews, serving suppers, bazaars, yard sales and the like in order to raise money for various projects of the Church and parsonage. In the earlier years, the women's organization of the church was called the Missionary Society and after many name changes is now known as the United Methodist Women.

The men of the Church organized a men's breakfast group and meet the first Saturday morning of each month for food and fellowship and carrying out projects for the Church.

The number of youth in the Church has sometimes been small and sometimes large. In the 1920's the youth organization was known as the Epworth League and after name changes through the years, is today known as the

Methodist Youth Fellowship. The youth had done odd jobs for the sick and shut-ins, had youth fellowship weeks, taken trips, cut the Church lawn, served suppers and the like. In the mid 1940's there were not many young people in the churches of Kenbridge so the youth in the Kenbridge Christian Church, Kenbridge Baptist Church, Ebenezer Presbyterian Church and this Church joined together and met each Sunday night, except the fifth Sunday, a different church for worship and fun. A youth choir was formed and sang at the revival services of those churches. In the summertime a young man studying to become a Methodist minister came for a week and the youth met every night for worship in a different place, ate together and had some form of entertainment. These weeks of fellowship and fun drew the community youth close and they learned more about the other denominations.

The Kenbridge United Methodist Church continues to survive and strives to do good work while looking to the future. Its mission statement being: "To serve as an extended family for our congregation, united in our common purpose of worshipping, studying and trusting God and living out our faith in Christian discipleship as we share the gift of God with others."

There is a memorial book in the bride's room at the right of the front entrance in which is recorded memorial gifts to the Church.

In 1982 Mrs. Mildred Gardner wrote a history of our church. In 2004 Mrs. Grace Marshall revised and added to our history.

- Mrs. Jeanne W. Gee, Historian

THIS DEED made this 27 day of October in the year 1899 between W. F. Kennedy and L. T. Kennedy his wife of the County of Lunenburg State of Virginia parties of the first part, and V. B. Crafton J B Marshall L A Hardy Jr. Hardy and D Hardy, Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, of the same County and State of the second part. Witnesseth: that the said parties of the first part do and in consideration of the sum of One dollar cash in hand paid the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, do grant bargain sell and convey with title of General Warranty unto the said W. B. Crafton John Hardy L A Hardy J B Marshall and D Hardy Trustees as aforesaid, all that certain lot or parcel of land lying and being in the County of Lunenburg, in Browns Store District and bounded as follows: South and east by the land of W V Kennedy on the west by the land of G G Taylor and on the north by Reedy Creek Road and containing one acre. To be held by the said Board of trustees above mentioned of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and to their successors in office for the use and benefit of said Church under the direction of the general Conference of the South Methodist Episcopal Church free from the claim or claims of the parties of the first part their heirs Executors or Adms. and from the claims of all others whatsce WITNESS the following signatures and seals:

W. F. Kennedy (Seal)

L T Kennedy (Seal)

State of Virginia

County of Lunenburg, to-wit:

I, J. T. Tisdale a Notary Public for the County of Lunenburg in the State of Virginia do hereby certify that W F Kennedy and L T Kennedy whose names are signed to the within writing bearing date the 27th day of Octobe 1899 have acknowledged the same before me in my County aforesaid.

Given under my hand this the 27th day of October 1899 .

J. T. Tisdale N.P.

In Lunenburg County Court Clerk's Office October 9th 1900.

This deed was presented and together with the certificate annexed admitted to record.

Teste:

Jno L Yates Clerk

Recorded: Deed Book 48, pages 227-228

A Copy Teste:

W. R. Moore, Clerk

By Grace J Marshall,

Deputy Clerk

THE UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The women of our church have always had a very strong organization with wonderful leaders. It was first called the Missionary Society, later the Women's Society of Christian Service, and when the church became united, it was again changed to the United Methodist Women. At first the ladies were divided into two groups, the older and the younger. This did not last very long; it was divided into four circles which have continued each young-at-heart. It is a working group, and in times of need, the other church ladies will join with the organization to help with bazaars, food sales, special meals and other projects.

The following women have served as President of our UMW:

Mrs. C. T. Ripberger
Mrs. John Wingold
Mrs. W. S. Manson
Mrs. H. B. Powers
Mrs. R. G. Webb
Mrs. Dave Carson
Mrs. Rex Wolf
Mrs. Mel Downey
Mrs. Jean Enos
Mrs. C. J. Martin

Ministers for Kenbridge United Methodist Church

1907-1910 B .T. Thrift (Olive Branch and Victoria Charge)
1910-1911 Supplied
1912-1915 B.D. Stevens
1915-1916 A.A. Whitmore
1916-1920 H.C. Gregory
1920-1924 E.B. Loving
1924-1926 Arthur L. Stevenson
1926-1934 R.L. Wingfield
1934-1938 Carlos O. Gardner
1938-1939 W.R. Evans
1939-1943 R.A. White
1943-1946 Richard A. Bergdoll
1946-1952 E. Edward Derby
1952-1963 Stephen G. Cowan
1963-1967 L.R Bland
1967-1971 Ardell F. NcClung
1971-1976 P. Edward Leonard, Jr.
1976-1980 David C. Morefield
1980-1982 Robert E. White, Jr.
1982-1986 James W. Meredith
1986-1990 Joseph H. Klotz, Jr
1990-1993 John S. Davenport
1993-1997 Norman Tippens
1997-1999 Barry Throckmorton
1999-2004 Ronna L. Swartz
2004-2008 Phyllis Piluso
2008-*Present* Tim Beck

LOCAL METHODISTS WHO HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS

LAURA GERTRUDE KENNEDY

Laura Gertrude Kennedy, born September 1, 1881, was one of six children of Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Kennedy. She received her B. A. Degree from the State Normal School for Women (Later Longwood College) in 1916; from Randolph Macon Women's College her master's Degree, and her Ph.D. Degree from Columbia University.

Miss Kennedy became a missionary in Santa Maria, a town in Rio Grant DuSol, South America, where she spent 34 years teaching and lecturing to those who needed her talents.

She returned to the United States to spend her last years at the Hermitage in Richmond.

She died June 18, 1950, and was buried in the family plat in Kenbridge.

Several years ago, the Women's Auxiliary named our zone in her honor - called the Armstrong-Kennedy Zone.

The Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone has her portrait hung in a special room in loving memory of her.

ELDRED GUNN

Eldred Gunn was raised in Kenbridge and after graduation, attended Blackstone College as a day student. He went to Ferrum College for two years and Lynchburg College one summer.

He went to American University and received a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and Psychology and a Theological Degree from Westminster Seminary in 1947.

He taught for ten years at Victoria Elementary School, then went back to school for a Master's Degree in Sociology.

He retired from ministry in 1986, but continued to serve another ten years.

His wife, Alda, is also a United Methodist minister and is serving at Evangelical Waited Methodist Church in Elkton, Virginia.

Eldred's Brother, Aaron Gunn, is a member of Kenbridge United Methodist Church.

ELIZABETH WINGOLD BAKER

Elizabeth (Betty) Wingold Baker, a native of Kenbridge, graduated from Radford College/University in 1970.

She taught for ten years at Giles High School in Pearisburg, Virginia.

She became Director of College Ministry at Drummond Chapel UMC in Morgantown, West Virginia.

She did her course work at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, and became certified in Christian Education in 1998.

In 1999, Betty was consecrated as a Diaconal Minister and in 2002, ordained as a full Deacon.

Presently, she is Pastor at Tyrone and Brookhaven United Methodist Churches in Morgantown, West Virginia, and is enrolled in a Spiritual Formation Certification Program at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Betty is married to Marty Baker who works at Clarion University in Clarion, PA. They have two sons; Bryan will be a student at Duke University School, and Ben

is attending Ohio State in the School of Veterinary Medicine.

NORMAN BURTON BROOKS, JR.

Norman Burton (Burt) Brooks, Jr. is a native of Kenbridge and a graduate of Virginia Tech. Before getting a degree from Duke Divinity School in 1989, Burt taught for seven years at Longwood College/University in the area of Business Administration.

He was ordained an Elder at the Virginia Conference in 1995.

Burt served the Nottoway/Lunenburg Charge for three years while in Seminary and has been at his present appointment for eleven years.

Burt's wife, Florence, is also a United Methodist and they have five children.

MARY ANN GILL GOOGINS

Mary Ann Gill Googins, a Kenbridge native, who grew up attending Fletcher's Chapel United Methodist Church, graduated from Kenbridge High School (1962) and Mary Washington College. She attended Northwest House of Theological Studies from 1998 to 2000 and then the Methodist Geological School in Ohio from 2000 to 2001.

Mary Ann graduated in May, 2001, with a Master's Degree in Christian Education.

She was ordained Permanent Deacon in June, 2001.

LEE WILKINSON WARREN

Lee Warren is from Kenbridge and, after high school, she went to Sweet Briar College in Amhurst, Virginia, graduating with a Degree in French.

Leefs spiritual journey has taken her on a number of teams with Emmaus and leading Spiritual Life Retreats and Workshops on the district and Conference levels.

She graduated from Duke Divinity School in 2004 and worked with the Stop Hunger Now organization.

She is married to Charles Warren, a General District Judge for Lunenburg and Mecklenburg Counties. They have two children: Campbell (Cam) and Paige.

Lee is also gifted in the area of music, playing the piano, and leading groups to worship through music.

MARTHA TURNER BUCHANAN

Martha (Martee) Turner Buchanan was raised in Kenbridge and graduated from Radford College/University in 1972 with a major in Special Education.

She taught school for a year, and went back to school for a graduate degree in Counseling while working part time with the Wesley Foundation.

When she finished school in 1975, she began working full time at the Wesley Foundation, and became its Director in 1994.

She is connected to the Holston Annual Conference.

Martee's musical talent includes playing the organ.

MARY STEPHANIE DOWNEY

Mary Stephanie Downey received her B. S. from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., in 1988 with a Degree in Elementary Education and has graduated from the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond and subsequently been designated as a Certified Christian Educator in the United Methodist Church.

From 1988-2003, Stephanie taught in Dinwiddie County, Norfolk Public Schools, and Lunenburg County Public Schools, all of which are within Virginia.

After eleven years as a member of Kenbridge United Methodist Church, Stephanie accepted the position of Director of Christian Education at Crenshaw United Methodist Church in Blackstone, beginning in 2003.

She is a certified lay speaker, active in the Emmaus Community, using her spiritual and musical gifts.

KUMC Church history 2004-2014

We Are The Church!!

Imagine yourself as "the church" with us.

"I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together!

All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we're the church together".

Come with us now as we hear how we were the church from 2004 to 2014!

As the song says "The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people"

Over the past ten years we have been blessed with the spiritual guidance of the Reverends Phyllis Piluso and Timothy Beck. They saw us through joy and sorrow, happiness and grief; we have been fed and comforted by these good people.

Well, now our building has been up-dated. Much to the joy of our ladies and men who do some cooking we have a wonderful new kitchen (which enables us to do more community outreach), bigger fellowship hall, new choir room, robes, pew cushions, nursery (to care for the babies we now enjoy) three new, handicapped accessible bathrooms, an elevator and new Sunday school rooms!!

And due to the generosity of Margie Powers we do have a steeple. The carillon rings regularly to call people to prayer and worship.

There have been several parsonage up-dates as well.

"We're many kinds of people, with many kinds of faces, all colors and all ages, too, from all times, and places"

Our congregation has generously donated to the Lunenburg County ministries food bank, has served community dinners to all who would come, has given over six thousand dollars in scholarships from the Aubrey Wilkes Scholarship Fund, has sent funds and kits to victims of typhoons, hurricanes, floods and natural disasters here in the United States and all over the world. The children filled an ark for the Heifer Project and in an effort to bring malaria under control purchased nets for the Nothing But Nets campaign as VBS mission projects. We also cooperated with the Episcopal church in filling food bags for the Stop Hunger Now organization.

Kenbridge United Methodist Church has unapologetically stepped into the 21st century and now has an active Facebook page and a web page where seekers and members alike can visit to see what we're doing and how they may fit into the mission of making God's grace real to this community. There is an active email list to disseminate information and a snail-mail and phone list for those who are less internet savvy.

"Sometimes the church is marching, sometimes it's bravely burning, sometimes it's riding, sometimes hiding, always it's learning."

We have learned much in the last ten years, some of which is due to the election of two members, Rex and Susie Wolf, as delegates to the 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 General Conferences. They were the only lay couple so elected from any annual conference.

The men of the church hold Wednesday morning breakfasts where Carson Yancey and Stanley Spencer delight the guests with their culinary expertise with food for the body and Robert Ledbetter offers a devotion after the meal that is food for the soul.

The United Methodist Women support the issues of women and children around the world focusing on projects in the local area. We truly are a creative, supportive fellowship of

caring women and our schedule of visitation is well received by our homebound members and residents of retirement facilities.

"And when the people gather, there's singing and there's praying, there's laughing and there's crying sometimes, all of it saying";

There was laughter and singing when thirty one new members were received into this body of Christ as there was when we witnessed twenty one baptisms, one dedication and one blessing. We rejoice again as we welcome Ava Lynn Beck as a parsonage baby to our family!!!

Sadly there was praying and crying as we said farewell to a number of members who have gone on to join the church triumphant. Windows and gifts given in their memory are recorded in the red memorial book located in the narthex/brides room.

"At Pentecost some people received the Holy Spirit and told the Good News through the world to all who would hear it."

Now we aren't sure whether it was at Pentecost or not but in 2008 Kenbridge United Methodist Church began what has become a yearly mission of reconstruction, renovation and renewal of properties here in the county. The beginning was a trip to Marion and Saltville to rehab a home. There were twenty two people who painted, did roofing work, yard work, cut up trees and put up a new clothes line. There was nail gun work also but enough said about that!!

From this modest beginning Neighbors Helping Neighbors was born. Three young men, Cal Spencer, Emory Hodges and Pastor Tim Beck thought the group could do more and these men organized the members of Kenbridge United Methodist Church to become involved in helping people in the county. Over one weekend each year our local missionaries divide up into work groups and descend upon the local area armed with hammers, nails, drills, rakes, paint, and all manner of yard tools!!

All in all, over the last ten years ten projects have been completed and in 2014 seven more projects were finished with exterior painting, carpentry work, yard work and general maintenance with 104 helpers of all ages from at least five different churches participating.

This project has been the highlight of our last ten years.

“I am the church! You are the church!! We are the church together!!!

All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we're the church together!”

Close your eyes now and try to imagine what we will do to spread the Good News in the next ten years!!

- Jean Overman & Susie Wolf

Kenbridge United Methodist Church

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