

# **The History of the Methodist Church In Florence, Kentucky**

**Note:** This history of the Methodist Church in Florence, Kentucky, was compiled by contributions from Mrs. Hope Bradley, Mrs. Martha Dougherty, Mrs. Denise Dougherty, and Mrs. Carol Ackley. Much of the information was taken from minutes of Board Meetings held through the years. In the Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Methodist Church in Florence is known as Florence First United Methodist Church.

## 1830

City of Florence was incorporated. For the next twelve years Methodists of the area met in homes.

## 1842

Rev. Gilby Kelly, who presided over the Covington District, helped to organize our Church as part of the Burlington Circuit. A lot was purchased on Banklick Street from Samuel Craig, for \$80.00, deeded July 18, 1842 to trustees T.F. and M.B. Robinson, Will Respcss, John Stansifer, and Thomas H. and Lewis Conner.

A frame building was constructed of lumber carried from Craig's Mill, located nearby at the present junction of Banklick and Route 42. Most of the labor was donated by the congregation. The original floor was dirt, covered by straw, and the walls were bare hewn logs. Seats were logs also, guiltless of paint or upholstery.

Apparently, at the first meeting candles were used. These were stuck in spaces between the logs. The congregation got happy in typical Methodist fashion. When the service ended, everyone left without snuffing the candles. All that saved the new building from destruction was the fact that the logs, being green and sappy, couldn't ignite and the candles burned themselves out without damage. Kerosene lamps were added later.

## 1869

According to a list of members, the roll included forty- five white and three colored, so "integration is nothing new to the Florence Church.

The minutes of March 5 recorded the assessments were made against the members, and adopted by the Church Conference, totaling \$329.50 for the entire year, and asking that payment be made weekly by each family, varying in amount from 4 cents to 50 cents. Later, because the expenses had exceeded their estimate, they agreed to add 5% to the assessments. They promptly collected \$2.25, of which 75 cents was paid to the preacher, and the remaining \$1.50 retained as a balance.

In those days the rules of the Church were taken seriously, and to illustrate, three quotations are taken from the minutes of 1870, verbatim except to substitute "Mr. and Mrs. Blank" for the correct names of offending members. Two are from May 3rd, and the first reads thus: "Bro. Glasford reported a conversation with Bro. Blank, who had been intoxicated. Seemed very sorry for his sin and asked, through Bro. Glasford, that the Church forgive him. His request was granted and the Church agreed to pray for him". The second reads: "Bro. Tucker, with two others, a committee to see and inquire into the case of Bro. Blank, reported that Bro. Blank confessed he swore, but it was in an unguarded moment, was very sorry, asked the Church to forgive unguarded moment, was very sorry, asked the Church to forgive him, and promised to be more guarded in the future." The third is from August 23rd, and reads: Bro. Smith reported an interview with Mrs. Blank in relation to her dancing — resulted in her promise to do so no more."

Most of the minutes of those day were written in a business like and dignified style, so it is amusing to find this line at the bottom of a careful financial report of receipts from members, "donated by Old Sis Wilson \$5.00."

## 1872

The membership had grown to seventy-nine, and the Florence Church wanted the Circuit re-arranged. The Burlington Circuit had included at least East Bend, Mt. Zion, Richwood, Ashby Fork and Petersburg, in addition to Burlington and Florence. On August 20, 1872, Florence requested formation of the Florence Circuit, to include only Mt. Zion and Richwood. The Annual Conference of September 1873, granted the request. The other churches then formed the Petersburg Circuit.

## 1873

The minutes of October 15 showed the expenses of the Church had exceeded by 40 cents the amount of cash that should have been on hand. The treasurer donated this amount in order to

balance the books.

## **1897**

The minutes record that Mrs. Anna Bradford and Mrs. Lora Laile were elected delegates to the District Conference. Mrs. Bradford was the Mother-in-law of the Rev. Albert Stone, a long time member of the Kentucky Conference. Mrs. Laile was the mother of Mrs. Jennie Wood, and mother-in-law of Mrs. Ora Laile, two of the seven oldest living members of this Church (at this time). The other five were Mrs. Eva Miller, Mrs. Pearl Baker, Mr. Russell Mitchell, Mr. Ernest Robinson, and Mrs. Maymie Moss. All seven joined in 1919 under Rev. R. M. Criswell.

## **1900**

The grouping was again changed, and Erlanger, Florence, Big Bone and Verona then formed the Erlanger Charge.

## **1902**

A note in the minute's book stated that a quarterly meeting scheduled for May 17, was not held because the Presiding Elder had gone to Texas, the Pastor in Charge had Typhoid fever, and epidemics of scarlet fever and smallpox had caused the churches to be closed.

## **1903**

On June 13, a committee of five was appointed by the Presiding Elder to either repair the old church house, tear it down and rebuild, or sell it and buy elsewhere. At this time, they decided to repair it. However as time passed, age left its mark. This building was abandoned as unsafe in 1935 and the lot sold.

The site on Main Street was purchased during the pastorate of Rev. G. B. Traynor, from Ed. Newman for \$275.00. An adjoining lot that faced the Dixie Highway was purchased in 1940 for \$200.00.

Cardboard bricks were sold to help finance the building, the minute's show the first one was purchased by W. R. Miller.

The new building was erected under Rev. R.R. Rose, who was sent here with orders from the Bishop to ""revive or close"" the church. The actual cost of the building, exclusive of donated labor and material, was about \$10,000.00. It was not completed until 1938, but has been occupied since December 20, 1936. While without a church home, the I.O.O.F. Lodge kindly loaned its hall to the congregation for services.

## **1939**

The year of unification, the Church became a station, with Rev. W. B. Conn the first full-time pastor. At the time there were eight stewards and five trustees.

## **1940**

In November, Virgil Grayson was hired for \$1.00 per week to sweep the Church weekly, build the fire on Sunday, and ring the bell for Sunday School.

In August of 1940 the Women's Society of Christian Service was organized, with Mrs. Pauline Grayson its first president, replacing the Ladies' Aid and Home and Foreign Mission Societies. The pastor's report of December gave \$600.00 as total finances for all purposes for the quarter. The next pastor was Rev. P. B. Mosley, who with Mortimer Moss, C. A. McKibben, Owen Bethel and Carroll Washburn, led in observing the hundredth anniversary July 19. In the special services, Rev. J. E. Moss and Rev. R. R. Rose preached, and other former pastors "reminisced", led in prayer, etc., along with special music by members and visitors. ;

The church became free of debt and was dedicated October 31, with Rev. E. K. Kidwell as pastor. At this meeting Rev. R. R. Rose preached in the morning, followed by a basket dinner. In the afternoon Bishop U. V. W. Darlington dedicated the building and many of the other twelve

visiting ministers, including the District Superintendent, Dr. S. C. Rice, had part in the service. The mortgage on the Church was burned, the history read, and a freewill offering of almost \$1,100.00 was taken for a parsonage.

The Church was told to buy a parsonage if we wanted a pastor. So, in August a house on Sanders Drive was purchased for \$4,900.00 and Rev. Kidwell was its first occupant.

## **1946**

Rev. O. W. Robinson followed, and established a record by receiving seventy<sup>^</sup>five members during a three-year pastorate.

## **1948**

In November, due to his illness, Rev. Robinson was given a leave of absence. Rev. S.J. Bradley, a retired minister, was appointed by the District Superintendent, R. R. Patton, as interim pastor. Rev. Bradley served approximately three months until Rev. Robinson's return.

## **1949**

Rev. C. N. Ogg came next. Under Rev. Ogg, the educational building was added back of the original building, completed in July, at a cost of \$23,708.00.

## **1955**

Rev E. B. Scott came in June when Rev. Ogg was transferred between conferences.

## **1957**

Under Rev. Yates, the Sanders Drive house was sold in July for \$9000.00, and negotiations were begun to buy or build another parsonage. On August 27, the trustees were instructed to buy the parsonage at 10 Wallace Avenue, for \$15,600.00. Rev. Robert Pugh was the first occupant, remaining for a four-year pastorate.

## **1963**

Under Rev. J. Stanley Gwinn, the sanctuary was enlarged by pushing back the pulpit, and the interior was re-decorated, at a cost of approximately \$10,000.00

## **1965**

Rev. Gwinn H. Bierley became the next pastor. To this time, at least eight young men have gone out from this Church into full-time religious service. They are William Mitchell, Cecil Tanner, Ed. Tullis, Harry Barnett Jr., David Barnett, Jerry Munday, Kenny Munday and Roger Lambert. Mrs. Hope Bradley wrote the history to this date in 1967, on the occasion of the Church's 125th Anniversary.

## **1967**

Rev Cecil Tanner, a retired minister, was employed for visitation until 1968. Since then, several ministerial students, Billy T. Arnold and Stephen Toadvine, have assisted in this way.

## **1968**

Rev. Gwinn Bierly retired for health reasons; Under Rev. Bierly, the Board of Trustees contracted for expansion of the Church. For a cost of over \$118,000.00, four classrooms were added to the back, two classrooms added to the front lower level, the balcony extended and the narthex enlarged. Rev. James T. Wells became the next minister.

The Florence Methodist Church became the Florence United Methodist Church when the Methodist Church officially united with the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

## **1969**

During the remodeling, the Church bell was removed from the steeple to make room for chimes and public address system. The bell is dated 1859 and was placed in the Church's front yard.

## **1970**

On completion of the remodeling, a formal opening was held by Rev. Wells, February 15. Bishop Roy Hunter Short was present to preach the morning service.

## **1972**

A robed children's choir was organized, which added greatly to the worship services from time to time. Mary Lee Pattison was the director of this children's choir. The Women's Society of Christian Service became known as the United Methodist Women.

## **1973**

In June, Rev. Albert C. Allen became the new pastor and worked with the Church for the next three years.

## **1974**

A "Book of Memory" was established, to which contributions were made "in honor of or "in memory of. With this fund we were able to pay cash for both an organ and a piano, in 1977 and 1978 respectively.

## **1976**

Rev. Walter L. (Pete) Arnold came for a seven-year pastorate. His wife Jean established and taught a young adult Sunday School class, The Pairs and Spares, and his son, Billy, worked with the youth during the time he attended Asbury College. Upon leaving this pastorate, Pete became the District Superintendent in the Frankfort District.

## **1977**

The Trustees approved purchase of a parsonage at 130 W. Dilcrest Avenue, priced at \$72,000. The debt was paid in full by November 1982.

Pew cushions were added to the church sanctuary, with more than half the cost covered by a special donation, and new pulpit furniture purchased.

## **1979**

One of the downstairs classrooms was remodeled to make it a combination classroom, small assembly room, and bridal room.

## **1980**

Indebtedness on the Church building was paid off and the note was burned at a Sunday morning service. The Building Fund continued to provide for church maintenance.

## **1981**

In May, a fifteen-passenger van was ordered, for use by the youth and other groups, at the cost of \$10,700. It was paid within a year. The Church now had regular bus service for Sunday worship. By September, all of the Church's debts were paid off. The Trustees were now looking for nearby land suitable for additional parking. The "stained" glass windows were refurbished and outer coverings were added for protection and additional energy conservation.

The American Red Cross conducted Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation classes for the public and "Christmas in July" was observed and is still observed for the benefit of the Methodist Home.

## **1982**

Doug Markesbery was hired as a full-time youth minister; Shelving was completed for the Church's library and many of the books donated by Hope Bradley were more easily available.

## **1983**

Dr. Larry Buskirk became the minister in June. That summer he held his own revival rather than inviting a visiting minister.

## **1984**

The Church purchased additional air conditioning units at a cost of \$28,401, money it had in bank certificates. The entire building was now air-conditioned. The congregation dedicated the new offices for the minister and Church secretary.

## **1986**

The Church sponsored Quintet, the Stringtown Gospel Five\* made their debut. Within a year, they are making a recording.

## **1987**

The kitchen was updated with new cabinets and a dishwasher. The hand bells were purchased for starting a hand bell choir.

## **1989**

In June, our new pastor was Rev. Owen Dolin. New Hymnals were ordered and members were allowed to sponsor them. The Church newsletter is revised\* the hand bell choir restarted\* a monthly Fellowship Night instituted, and early service on Sunday continued year around.

## **1990**

Rev. Robert C. Pugh became the Visitation Minister, assisting Rev. Dolin. The Church purchased the lots on Dortha Avenue for parking expansion and a computer and software for church business.

A Vision 2000 Committee was formed, met, and reported on the strategy to help the Church extend its mission. By December, the focus of the Church's growth was redirected to 15 acres just outside of Florence on Old Toll Road. This was the beginning of the relocation plan that was approved by the vote taken at a called Church Conference.

## **1991**

An agreement was reached which allowed the Church to purchase the 15 acres, with the District's assistance of 2.8 acres located nearby going toward the purchase price.

Average attendance was 43 in the early service and 193 in the late service. Sunday School attendance was 167.

## **1992**

This was our Sesquicentennial year and plans were in place for a year-long celebration. Members, friends, and former pastors of the Church compiled devotions for a Lenten devotional booklet. Home Lenten Bible studies were held in 10 locations during the Lenten Season. On Sunday, April 26, retired Bishop Edward Tullis gave the Morning Worship Service message commemorating Heritage Sunday.

Work and planning for the relocation of the Church to Old Toll and Pleasant Valley Roads is underway. Doug Bickers and his wife Peggy moved to Cynthiana, and Don Markesbery became the new Chairperson of the Building Committee.

## **1993**

Sunday evening worship services were discontinued due to low attendance. Church participated in the Florence Y-All Festival to raise money for the Vision 2000 Campaign. Church sold bean soup, corn bread\* and apple pies with ice cream.

Land was purchased on Old Toll Road for the new site of Florence United Methodist Church. FUMC gets HUD approval grant of 2.3 million dollars to build Senior Housing on the new church facility site. HUD will also provide 114,000 per year for the next 20 years for rental assistance for low-income residents.

Bill and Leslie Brown were hired as the new Youth Directors.

## **1994**

Jay Fredstrom succeeded John Dutill as Chairperson of the Administrative Board. Training was started for teaching the Disciple Bible Study Classes.

Joan Morgan was elected President of the Covington District of United Methodist Women. Rev. Owen Dolin went to England for six weeks as an exchange pastor. Rev. Andrew McGuire came to FUMC from England.

Ground breaking for the Aldersgate Apartments was in October.

## **1995**

Plans were sent to Frankfort for the construction of a multipurpose building to be built on Old Toll Road so that bids can be sent out for actual construction.

Jim Erickson became the Vision 2000 Treasurer.

Main Street location of the church was put up for sale along with the lots on Dortha Street and Main Street.

The Aldersgate Facility was officially completed in December.

## **1996**

Victory Baptist Church bought the Florence UMC located on Main Street.

A formal Financial Campaign was put into place by hiring Resource Services, Inc. Consulting Firm.

Florence UMC shared the facility with Victory Baptist from September 1996 through March 1997.

Actual construction began on the new church facility in August. Bill and Leslie Brown resign as Youth Directors.

FUMC ranked as number one in the percentage of contributions per capita to the Methodist Children's Home and was awarded a plaque.

There were three Disciple Bible Study Groups meeting regularly. Sunday attendance was up to 266.

The Uniting Conference for the Kentucky and Louisville Conferences was August 18 at Rupp Arena in Lexington at 6:30 p.m.

## **1997**

Carol Ackley succeeded Jay Fredstrom as Chairperson of the Administrative Board. Congregation of FUMC met at Boone County High School until they could occupy the new multipurpose building on Old Toll Road. Bob Cain became the new Youth Minister.

The Congregation moved into the new multipurpose building in June. The Church Bell from the Main Street church was placed on the steeple and the altar rails from the former church became the altar rails for the multipurpose building.

The Trustees presented a detailed plan for the use of the new facility.

## **1998**

In June of 1998, Rev. Owen Dolin left Florence United Methodist Church to take the position of Treasurer for the Kentucky Annual Conference. Rev. Gary R. Gibson began his ministry at Florence UMC on June 21, 1998. Youth Director Bob Cain also left in June and Bill Delaney was hired as the new Youth Director. Deborah Kelley came on as Bill's Youth Assistant.

Hop Ewing became Treasurer of the Vision 2000 Fund succeeding Jim Erickson.

Land is sold at the price of \$170,000 for an assisted living complex to be built on the campus of Florence UMC. Due to the sale, the mortgage on the multipurpose building was reduced by \$150,000 and the remaining \$20,000 was put into the Vision 2000 Fund. Two members of Florence UMC will sit on the Board of this facility, and the church will have the first option to buy the land back if the building is ever put up for sale.

The Creative Beginnings Preschool opened for the first time in the fall under the leadership of Director Linda Wentz.

The program was started to buy a tree and a brick to honor someone or for a memorial to a special person; this helped with landscaping costs.

The amount still owed on the multipurpose building at the end of 1998 was \$830,143.70.

Many positive things were happening at FUMC. Gary initiated classes on discipleship, leadership, and elective Sunday School classes. The Youth Group under Bill Delaney continued to grow as did Sunday worship and Wednesday night attendances. The Creative Beginnings preschool was doing quite well.

## **1999**

A decision was made by the Administrative Board that the Board meet every other month starting in January of each year instead of having monthly meetings.

The assisted living complex built on the land sold became known as Panorama Plus and began accepting residents in April.

June Acree retired as Church Secretary after serving 34 years and Dixie Giaconi Rabenold was hired as the new Administrative Assistant

The *Vision 2000* Capital Financial Campaign ended this year, and a new Capital Financial Campaign under the direction of INJOY was put in place for the next three years. This Campaign will be entitled *Dawning New Horizons*.

A baptismal font and table were purchased from the Memorial Fund.

Active church membership increased from 297 in 1998 to 345 in 1999.

## **2000**

New programs were put in place—MOPS (Mothers Of Preschoolers), Boy Scouts, and on the first Wednesday of each month, a prayer and healing service.

The first woman ever to be Chairperson of Trustees was elected, Barbara Obenchain. The balance due on the mortgage of the multipurpose building at the end of 2000 was \$708,166.02.

Average worship attendance in 2000 was 355, an increase over 1999. Fifty new members were added in 2000.

## **2001**

A new Finance Committee Chair, Dale VanLaningham, succeeded Carlyle Ackley who had served on this Committee for over 25 years.

Ed Drennen succeeded Carol Ackley as the new Chairperson of the Administrative Board. Sherrie Gammie was now head of the Memorial Fund succeeding Glenn Todd who had served in this capacity.

Julie Kleckner was hired as the new Choir Director. Rev. Bob Pugh retired as Minister of Visitation.

Bill Delaney was appointed to his first charge as a probationary elder in June, and, therefore, left the church. Steve and Robin Blazina were hired as Youth Directors and began in July. Drew Bredenberg was hired to help with the youth during the transition period.



Melissa Burnett was named the new Director of the PreSchool replacing Linda Wentz whose family was transferred to Ohio.

An Endowment Fund was established for the church.

Several members went on the first Mission Trip to Bolivia where the Zimmerman's were serving as missionary teachers. Mrs. Zimmerman is the former Cynthia Toadvine, daughter of George and Shirley.

The mortgage debt on the multipurpose building was down to approximately \$625,000. The church was averaging over 400 in worship attendance.

## **2002**

An organ fund was established to replace the existing organ that was in need of repair. Rev. Lisa Schmidt was hired to become the church's new associate pastor since the Blazina's left when Steve accepted the position to become an associate pastor in another district.

The Creative Beginnings preschool was in its fourth year and continued to grow with a full enrollment of 98 students and long Waiting lists.

Visioning Committees met and formed SPAN (ministry) teams to help develop the various ministries of the church.

The third Financial Campaign kicked off in 2003 to help pay for the multipurpose building. The mortgage debt at the end of 2002 was \$500,095.

Average worship attendance was 460 plus.

## **2003**

The third Financial Campaign to pay off the mortgage on the multipurpose building began. It was called *Unfolding God's Vision*.

In May, the church was averaging over 510 in worship services and over 200 in Sunday School. Julie Kleckner, Choir Director, resigned her position.

The mortgage debt still owed on the multipurpose building was \$396,851.08.

Small groups are growing and thriving in the church.

## **2004**

Pam Wolfe succeeded Ed Drennen as Chairperson of the Administrative Board.

Kay Burney was hired in January to become the new Director of Music Ministries.

A second group of volunteers from FUMC went on a Mission Work Trip to Bolivia.

In October, Carol Ackley was elected the Kentucky Conference President of the United Methodist Women.

The United Methodist Women celebrated 135 years in mission. At FUMC, there are four circles that are very active in mission work and in mission giving through their pledges. The church parsonage was sold.

The mortgage debt on the multipurpose building was approximately \$162,000.

## **2005**

In June, Rev. Lisa Schmitt was ordained as an Elder in full connection with the Kentucky Annual Conference.

A new 14 passenger van was purchased for the church.

FUMC committed to starting a satellite ministry as proposed and presented by the Conference New Church and Congregational Development (NCCD) Team and DS Terry Reffett. Rev. D. G. Hollums came on board as the pastor of the proposed satellite ministry that is called *The Waters*. Beloved Nursery Director Flo McEntyre passed away.

Tracy Hare was hired as the new Nursery Director.

A Master Plan for construction of a new sanctuary was presented to the congregation.

A group of volunteers from FUMC go to Waveland, Mississippi to help with restoration efforts from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

The church was helping an evacuee family financially and in other ways who were victims of Hurricane Katrina and have settled in Northern Kentucky.

A note-burning Service was held on November 6 to commemorate the paying off of the mortgage on the multipurpose building—seven years before it was to be. Invitations were sent to former pastor Rev. Owen Dolin and former DS Harold Gardner who helped in the relocation of FUMC.

Sherrie Gammie came on board as the Director of Hospitality and Valerie Holland as the Scheduler of Church Events.

## **2006**

The satellite ministry under the direction of Rev. D. G. Hollums known as *The Waters* had its first Organic Gathering in January.

Long-time Trustee and Building Fund Treasurer, C. M. "Hop" Ewing suddenly passed away. Hop was a devoted servant and loved his church. Due to his efforts, the church was able to pay off the debt on the multipurpose building seven years before anticipated.

A new Allen Digital Pipe Organ was purchased by the church from donations made to the Organ Fund.

A new Ministry Team network was established under the leadership of Lay Leader Barry Holland.

*The Waters* ministry continued to grow with more Organic Gatherings and the establishment of a core leadership team.

The church was alerted by the Department of Transportation that a portion of our land (1.1 acres) would be annexed due to the widening of Pleasant Valley Road. This would affect the rear part of our church building.

Average attendance in the Sunday morning worship services was approximately 474.

## **2007**

Daryl Rainer succeeded Pam Wolfe as Chairperson of the Administrative Board.

Rev. Lisa Schmitt left the Florence United Methodist Church to become a Chaplain at the University Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky in January.

Rev. James (Jim) Bishop was hired and started March 1 to serve as Pastor of Congregational Care/Discipleship Scout. Rev. Tiffany M. Hollums was hired and started March 15 as Pastor of Children and Youth.

During the Lenten Season, Saturday night worship services were started.

In April, at a Called Church Conference led by DS Terry Reffitt, members voted to approve construction on a Narthex Addition to the present building at a cost of approximately \$711,382. This addition would include an elevator, welcome, hospitality and activities centers, classrooms, basement storage area, office space, and a covered "drop off area for members.

Alicia McAlister was recommended by the SPR Committee and ultimately hired by the church to become the new Administrative Assistant replacing Dixie Rabenold who was retiring.

Trustees recommended to the Administrative Board that the present kitchen facilities needed to be updated.

A new church fund was set up and entitled New Sanctuary Fund. This is separate from the Building Fund and Church Properties Fund. A Committee was also appointed by Pastor Gary to visit and look at churches that had recently built new sanctuaries.

Ministries such as MOPS, mission trips, many small groups, and the United Methodist Women and Men are well and thriving at Florence First United Methodist Church. The church is very supportive of the Zimmerman's who are missionaries serving in Bolivia.

Average church attendance for 2007 was 462. Average Sunday School attendance was 127.

## **2008**

A Hispanic ministry was started by Florence United Methodist Church. Nelson Figueroa is leading this congregation.

Pastor Gary Gibson and Rev. D. G. Hollums traveled to Orlando, Florida, to address the Large Church Initiative Group and address how "out of the box" ministries can be encouraged and started. During the last several years, Gary and D. G. have led workshops relating to the work of Th3 Waters Program not only in our own state, but in many states including Tennessee, Texas, Ohio, and Colorado. FUMC is becoming well known around the country due to this new, innovative ministry program. In the Spring of 2009, Gary and D. G. will have an article featured in the *Circuit Rider*.

In January of 2008, the Narthax addition was completed. This became known as the Gathering Place. The stain glass window installed was in memory of Jamie Jetter, a young member who was killed in an auto accident during her junior year (1987) in high school.

In February of 2008, Lee Howe, Church Treasurer, passed away after suffering from ALS for several years. Lee was a dedicated young Christian man who was such an asset to FUMC because of his commitment to serve and his willingness to be in missions and ministry.

In March of 2008, Barry Holland was asked, and Barry accepted to become a Supply Pastor at Boyer's Chapel in the Covington District.

In April of 2008, Carol Ackley, a member at FUMC, was elected a laity delegate at last year's Kentucky Annual Conference and traveled to Fort Worth, Texas, to attend the General Church Conference as a voting delegate.

In June of 2008, Carol Ackley, a member of FUMC, was elected the Kentucky Conference Lay Leader and Rev. D. G. Hollums was elected to be the Kentucky Conference Chair on Evangelism.

Trustees completed Phase I of the Kitchen Renewal Project. A special fund (Kitchen Fund) was set up to complete the total Kitchen Renewal Project.

The existing structure was brought up-to-date to be in compliance with the Safe Sanctuary Policy as adopted by the Kentucky Annual Conference.

Since 2004 up through 2008, the FUMC has donated anywhere from one to five arcs of giving to the Heifer Project. An arc is valued at \$5,000. From 1997-2008, the FUMC has given over \$26,000 to the Children's Home in Versailles due to the fund raising efforts of the Beacon Sunday School class under the leadership of John and Frances Dutillel when they sponsor the annual Holiday Fruit and Nut Sale. This is in addition to supplies and donations made throughout the year by various individuals and groups in the church.

The Wednesday Night Live programs offered at the church have continually grown in variety and attendance as the years have gone by. Programs are offered for all ages and all interests.

This shows that FUMC is dynamic in its outreach.

During 2008, the average Worship attendance was 488 and the average Sunday School Attendance was 160.

## 2009

In April of 2009, it was announced that Pastor Gary Gibson would be leaving FUMC to become the Senior Pastor at St. Paul UMC in Louisville. Gary served our church for 11 years. He stated that FUMC will always have a warm place in his heart because of the generosity of the congregation and the congregation's commitment to missions—Th3 Waters Ministry, the Hispanic Ministry, local missions such as Grace UMC and Ida Spence Missions, the Bolivian Ministry, and the list could go on and on. There have been two church-sponsored mission trips to Bolivia. Janette and Dale Van Laningham served as teachers in Bolivia during the school year 2003-2004.

Creative Beginnings Preschool has thrived from the very beginning. Each year classes are filled with children on waiting lists. The reputation of the Preschool is that it is one of the best in the area. Even those on staff at the Boone County Board of Education highly recommend our Preschool to newcomers to the community.

Through the years, FUMC has been a church that has gone through transitions which has included location moves. But, the focus has always been on Jesus and what he expects us to do and be as Christians. Our prayer is that Christ will keep us focused on how we, as a church, can best spread the Word and the love of a risen Savior. We are intentional about being hospitable. We pray we will always have *Open Minds*, *Open Hearts*, and *Open Doors* for those living in the community of Florence, KY, and beyond. In order to make *Disciples for the Transformation of the World*, we pray that God will keep us focused on what lies beyond our doors.

In June of 2009, FUMC received a new Pastor, Rev. Mark Dickinson. We have been blessed that our last two pastors have each stayed 10 years or more. This has been a great opportunity to see growth in the FUMC, not only in people, but in programs that have helped members grow in their spiritual walks and journeys. As laity, people have been equipped to serve and to minister. We pray for God's continual guidance and wisdom, as our new Pastor comes to FUMC. Our prayer is that as a congregation we will strive to be in ministry with him and to serve as he leads, needs, and guides us.

Pastor Mark Dickinson, his wife Jennifer, and daughters Melanie, Rebekah, and Abigail arrived at Florence United Methodist Church after the 2009 Kentucky Annual Conference. The Dickinson's spent a busy summer purchasing a house, packing from their previous appointment (Pikeville UMC, Pikeville, KY), unpacking, and getting the girls settled at their new schools. Pastor Mark thanked the FUMC congregation for all their help, prayers, and support during this process. He also acknowledged that FUMC has a great staff that has been so helpful and responsible during this transition period.

Ministries continued. 20 mid high youth went on a Mission Trip to Virginia and 15 older youth went on a Mission Trio to North Carolina. Youth also helped in the 2009 Vacation Bible School.

Approximately 160 children participated in the VBS. The Mission Team and others from the church were active in helping ministries at Ida Spence Mission and Grace Mission.

Life Gathering groups continued to meet and D. G. Hollums, Associate Pastor of Th3 Waters Ministry, announced that Organic Life Gatherings were going strong at Ida Spence Mission. It was hoped that an Organic Gathering Group could be started in Indianapolis and in Toronto, Canada. Th3 Water Ministry will only be funded by the KY Annual Conference through June 2010 when it needs to become self sufficient to continue operation. D. G. will meet with Bishop Davis to discuss the future of this ministry. It was recommended by the Bishop that a coach/mentor (Paul Nixon) be hired by the Conference to help D. G. with this situation.

Sunday School participation is growing and a new Sunday School class for young adults became a reality with teachers Kevin Meyer and Pastor Mark. The United Methodist Women are busy with mission projects, attending Spiritual Growth Retreats, the School of Christian Mission, hosting parties at local nursing homes, supporting VBS, MOPS, and Creative Beginnings

Preschool, and helping out and donating to local ministries at Grace UMC, Fairhaven, Ida Spence, Community Action Center, Women's Crisis Center, Holly Hill, Hispanic Ministry, the Methodist Children's Homes, and Redbird Missionary Conference. UMW also participated in Operation Christmas Child.

After serving for 11 years as our Financial Secretary, Sherrie Gammie stepped down from this position and Julie Howe was hired to take her place. Sherrie did this job for eight years without any financial reimbursement. Her service to the church was greatly appreciated. Also during the last three years, Sherrie chaired the Hospitality Team. A job well done! We are grateful that Sherrie is still a vital part of our congregation.

The large cross at the front of the multicultural building has been relocated with lighted features thanks to Don Markesbery and a large, metal flower urn was placed between the pillars of the front driveway. Funding for this urn came from the Jamie Jetter Memorial Fund. The kitchen of the church is being upgraded as funds become available.

The big news of 2009 was the expansion of the lower end of Route 237 (Pleasant Valley Road) and how it would affect our church. Roger DeWolfe, Route 237 Expansion Committee Chair, advised that the initial offer from the State of Kentucky was received in August, 2009 and a committee was formed at that time. He recognized and expressed appreciation for diligent efforts of the Committee members on this project – Daryl Rainer, Lori Brandes, Mike Albrecht, Don Markesbery, Dale Vanlaningham, Carol Ackley and Pastor Mark Dickinson.

A Church Conference, led by DS Kevin Burney, was held on November 22 to consider the following Resolution. "On November 22, 2009, we, the congregation of Florence United Methodist Church, approve, by majority vote, the offer in the Commonwealth of Kentucky Transportation Cabinet letter of November 19, 2009, for the amount of \$582,500, for the transfer of 48,524 square feet of property, the granting of a permanent easement of 445 square feet, and the granting of a 2 year temporary construction easement of 19,432 square feet. This resolution directs and authorizes the Administrative Board Chairman and the Chairman of the Trustee Committee of Florence United Methodist Church to take all necessary steps to carry out the action and cause to be executed, as hereinafter provided, any necessary contract, deed, bill of sale, mortgage, or other written instrument." Kevin Burney asked if there were any questions regarding the resolution. Being none, a voice vote was taken to accept the offer and authorize certain persons to take all necessary steps. The resolution was passed by a unanimous voice vote. There were no "nays" or abstentions. Kevin Burney then declared the resolution as carried. He then expressed thanks to the Committee for their efforts.

In 2009, the average Worship Attendance was 425 and the average Sunday School attendance was 161.

## **2010**

When 2010 arrived, all ministries of the church were in "full swing"—children, youth, Wednesday night activities, musical groups (Praise Team, Chancel Choir, Handbells), UMW, and mission work relating to Ida Spence, Grace UMC, and the Hispanic ministry. Th3 Waters ministry and Life gatherings were still going strong. However, it was announced again that funding from the KY Conference for Th3 Waters ministry would cease at the end of June. A mentor was hired by the Conference to help D. G. find ways for Th3 Waters ministry to become self funding.

In February, it was announced that Rev. Jim Bishop, who was the Congregation Care Pastor at FUMC, was asked to pastor Morning View UMC, and he accepted this position. His ministry to FUMC will be greatly missed. He did a wonderful job.

Keith Dixon was hired to help with custodial care, and Chris Cummings was hired to help Alicia McAlister with her Administrative Assistant duties and responsibilities.

The Committee dealing with the road expansion of Route 237 has been meeting regularly to make sure that the church is in conversation about what the road department will be doing with our church property. Roger DeWolfe and Daryl Rainer have been coordinating these meetings.

A church usage policy was updated and is on file in the main church office. Also, a policy

manual relating to church staff was revised and is on file in the main church office.

Because D. G. and Tiffany Hollums may be leaving the church at the end of June, a job description for children's ministry and youth ministry was written. Anna Merlo was very helpful in this project working with Tiffany.

FUMC is a very generous church in giving. \$7,452 was collected for the Haiti Relief Fund due to the recent earthquake. Our church ranked eleventh in the KY Conference. Since \$5,987 was collected for the Heifer Project, FUMC was able to buy another ark. Money from *One Great Hour of Sharing* and health care kits were sent to UMCOR for disaster relief.

A new Senior Adult Ministry was begun at the church and continues to grow and be very effective.

Several United Methodist Women from FUMC attended the Assembly in St. Louis, MO.

The Sunday School classes are growing in number, and a new Young Adult Class was begun and the membership of that class also is growing each week.

Word of witness and testimonials during the Worship Service had begun and are being well received by the congregations.

In April, it was announced that Tiffany Hollums would be resigning her position at FUMC. She and D. G. will be leaving the church at the end of June. Tiffany will become the Director of Ida Spence Mission and D. G. will go on a leave of absence from the Conference. Anna Merlo was hired to become the Children's Ministry Director at FUMC.

With the departure of D. G. and Tiffany, a new associate was appointed to FUMC. Jonathan Mann will be joining the staff at the end of June. Jonathan was commissioned by the North Georgia Conference, and he has had experience in leading Youth Ministry. He will also be available to help Pastor Mark with communion and visitation.

Travis Barrix, an intern in the KY Conference *Isaiah Project* worked with the church for several weeks during the summer. FUMC was proud that one of our own, Evan Vickers, was selected to serve this summer in the *Isaiah Project* at Chapel Hill UMC in Henderson, KY.

The Kentucky Annual Conference was held again in Covington, KY. Many members of our church were involved in volunteering and helping during the afternoon of service. The theme of the Conference was *Called by Christ, Sent to Serve*. Red Bird Missionary Conference received the Mission Night Offering. It was hoped to collect \$100,000. But, the offering amounted to well over \$200,000. This helped in enabling the Red Bird School to reopen in the fall.

Vacation Bible School's *High Seas Expedition* had over 150 children to attend.

Fall activities will begin again in September with new classes and new activities. FUMC is a church that has a vision for ministry and for missions.

## **MINISTERS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN FLORENCE, KY**

- 1842 Rev. Gilby Kelly—helped to organize the church
- 1919 Rev. R. M. Criswell
- 1920 Rev. G. R. Tomlin
- 1923 Rev. Paul Gillespie
- 1927 Rev. John Lewis
- 1931 Rev. G. B. Traynor
- 1935 Rev. R. R. Rose
- 1939 Rev. W. B. Conn—first full-time pastor
- 1942 Rev. F. E. Mosley
- 1943 Rev. E.K. Kidwell
- 1946 Rev. O. W. Robinson
- 1948 Rev. S. J. Bradley—interim pastor for three months
- 1949 Rev. C. N. Ogg
- 1955 Rev. E. B. Scott
- 1956 Rev. M. C. Yates
- 1957 Rev. Robert C. Pugh—a current member at FUMC
- 1961 Rev. J. Stanley Gwinn
- 1965 Rev. Gwinn H. Bierley
- 1968 Rev. James T. Wells
- 1973 Rev. Albert C. Allen
- 1976 Rev. Walter (Pete) L. Arnold
- 1983 Rev. Dr. Larry Buskirk
- 1989 Rev. Owen Dolin
- 1998 Rev. Gary R. Gibson
- 2009 Rev. Mark Dickinson