

MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS (1846-1974)

1846-1847: S. A. Miller
1847-1848: William Sleagis
1848-1849: W. H. Kelley
1849-1851: L. C. Waters
1851-1852: J. S. Edwards
1852-1853: Charles Mitchell
1853-1854: No Appointment in Minutes
1854-1855: L. W. Crouch
1855-1856: W. K. Foster
1856-1857: J. P. Gibson
1857-1858: W. W. Neel
1858-1859: Josiah Torbitt
1859-1860: George Stewart
1860-1861: B. W. S. Bishop
1861-1862: J. M. Chrismond
1862-1863: Princeton, and the church was burned in 1862
1863-1864: J. R. Payne
1864-1865: G. W. Penley
1865-1867: G. W. Martin
1867-1869: No Appointment in Minutes
1869-1870: G. W. K. Green
1870-1871: F. P. Darr
1871-1872: R. A. Giddens
1872-1873: L. W. Crouch
1873-1875: Ayers Kincaid
1875-1876: L. N. Renfro
1876-1877: P. S. Sutton
1877-1878: W. H. Barnes
1878-1879: L. W. Thompson
1879-1880: A. T. Brooks
1880-1882: D. H. Carr
1882-1884: P. S. Sutton
1884-1885: J. T. Stover
1885-1887: E. F. Kahle
1908-1909: J. M. Paxton
1909-1910: D. E. Carr
1910-1911: J. E. Lory
1911-1913: J. A. H. Shuler
1913-1916: J. E. Wolfe
1916-1920: Thomas Priddy
1920-1923: S. B. Vaught
1923-1924: E. H. Cassidy
1924-1926: Z. B. Randall
1926-1928: T. C. Shuler
1928-1933: W. M. Morrell
1933-1934: J. M. Carter
1934-1938: P. P. Martin
1938-1941: Hugh E. Kelso
1941-1945: J. B. F. Yoak, Jr.
1945-1950: L. D. Roe
1950-1954: B. W. John
1954-1962: R. S. McClung
1962-1965: J. H. Parks
1965-1970: J. C. Fisher
1970-1974: C. S. McMillion



The Full History of First United Methodist Church, Princeton WV

Provided by First Church Historical Committee

1837-1900: The Beginning

Mercer County was formed in 1837, and soon thereafter the little village of Princeton was established as the county seat.

R. A. Claughton, a Methodist minister for the Tazewell District, preached at Princeton in the courthouse and in homes. There was no church in Princeton at that time; the closest church in existence was an old log church known as Johnston's Chapel, near Graham (Bluefield), Virginia. Itinerant Methodist ministers frequently came through the area, and there was an annual camp meeting near the residence of Colonel John S. Carr. The area was also served by Methodist class leaders and exhorters who would go on the Sabbath to different neighborhoods and take a position near the speaker to frequently call "Amen! Amen!" during the service. Among Methodist ministers in this area during the early years of Mercer County were Rev. George Eaken, Thomas K. Catlett, and Jacob Brillhart. In 1846, S. A. Miller was appointed to this area by the Holston Conference. W. H. Kelly was the last minister to serve this section as a part of the Tazewell Circuit.

In 1848, the Princeton Circuit was formed and extended from Abbs Valley to the New River, embracing all of Mercer County and parts of Tazewell and Summers Counties. L. C. Waters was the first pastor of this new circuit.

In 1855, a log union church was built in Princeton; it was located on Main Street, about two hundred yards west of the Court House, near the site of the present Memorial Building. This log church was destroyed during the Civil War when Princeton was burned on May 1, 1862. Another log church was built on the same site shortly after the Civil War. This church remained a union church until about the year 1885, when the Methodists purchased the interest of the other denominations.

Little is known of the development of the Princeton Circuit from the Civil War until 1886. However, the Methodist Conference was active during this period, as evidenced by the establishment in 1883 of the Holston Conference (Princeton) Academy on College Hill. This academy, housing grades one through twelve, served the entire area and included students from Bland, Tazewell, Giles, Monroe, Summers and Mercer

MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS (1974-PRESENT)

1974-1982: John Mendez
1982-1987: Charles Scragg
1987-2001: Clifford Schell
2001-2012: Randall Adkins
2012- : Scott Sears

ASSOCIATE MINISTER APPOINTMENTS

1966-1968: John E. Tenney, Jr.
1968-1969: L. Craig Michel
1970-1971: Harry G. Sawdey
1972-1975: L. Craig Michel
1975-1978: Emily L. Price, Director
Christian Education
1977-1979: William R. Young
1979-1980: Gregory L. Hayes

counties. This was a natural outgrowth of the day school that was established in the basement of the old log church when it was built.

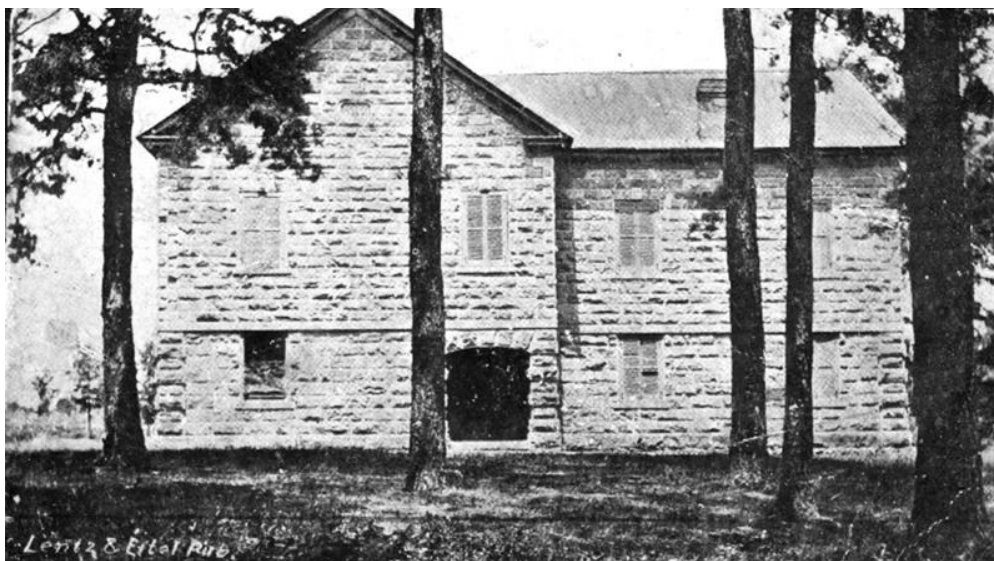
A different account of the second log church with some information on the post-Civil War church is found in "Memoirs of Old Princeton" written by Harrison W. Straley II, which was originally published in 1925. In his writings he states that "for fifteen years after the Civil War there was no church building of any character in Princeton. Divine worship was held by itinerant ministers of all denominations, when they passed through at rare intervals, sometimes in the old Thompson tanyard property on Walker Street and sometimes in the courthouse. The Methodist constituency during this period was composed of Dr. Robert B. McNutt and wife. Colonel Napoleon B. French and wife, William C. Oliver and family, and Joseph H. Alvis and his wife."

"Sometime in 1881 or 1882 the Baptists and the Methodists, realizing their spiritual dearth in Princeton, united their forces and constructed a union church on West Main Street. This was an unpretentious frame

building and cost possibly eight hundred dollars. It was jointly dedicated by the two denominations. This church partnership proved very unsatisfactory and about the year of 1885 the Baptists sold their half interest in the church building to the Methodists. Church worship in Princeton during these bygone days was primitive and devoid of ostentation. The church bell tolled the hour of worship and the congregation gathered early. Husbands escorted wives to the door of the church; here the family divided, the men passing down one aisle, the women another. There was a complete separation. The message was plain and full of power."

There is an unbroken record of Quarterly Conference proceedings, starting with 1886, which gives accurate and valuable information. In 1886, the Princeton Circuit was composed of the following churches: New Salem, New Hope, Green Valley, Princeton, Nebo, Carper's School House, Log Church, Pisgah, and Cross Roads. It was within the Jeffersonville District of the Holston Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South and E. F. Kahle was the pastor. The salary for the preacher was \$600 per year, but only \$515.23 was paid.

Evidently there was no parsonage at that time. The December 10, 1887 Quarterly Conference session reported "R. C. McClangherty, C. R. McNutt,



Andrew Gott, Thomas Gooch, W. B. Carr, and J. P. Thorn were appointed as a committee to build or buy a parsonage which was located in the area of the 1400 block of North Walker St."

In 1887 there is a record of the organization of six Sunday Schools which were supplied with Methodist literature. However, over and over again in Quarterly Conference reports the pastors speak of the Sunday Schools going into "winter quarters" and having to revive them in the spring.

In 1890 the Princeton Circuit was taken out of the Jeffersonville District and put in the Radford District. The first membership record is dated 1892 and there were 445 church members and 252 in the Sunday Schools. At this time the appointment became known as the Princeton Charge and was composed of three churches: Princeton, Pisgah, and New Hope.

The reports of various pastors reveal some interesting facts regarding the state of the church. In 1889, J. H. Kennedy wrote, "Our people are lamentably deficient in missionary spirit and enthusiasm. We are doing nothing in an organized effort, but in 1891, "A Women's Missionary Society was organized in the Princeton Church which promises much."

J. C. Prater, in 1892, was discouraged when he reported, "The church is not what it ought to be, either spiritually or financially." No wonder! For his services that year, they paid him the sum of \$517.20.

However, there was slow but steady progress, In 1897 the pastor's salary was set at \$625 and for the first time was paid in full. There were four Missionary Societies, one for women, two for young people, and one for juveniles. Another little church was started named Shiloh, which the charge mothered for several years.



1900-1987: Growth and Expansion into the Twentieth Century

In 1909 the Princeton Church stood alone as a station church. The salary of the pastor was set at \$1,000 and was paid in full by the 434 members. In March 1909 the church bought two lots at the intersection of Park Avenue and Center and Mercer Streets for the sum of \$1,000 for the erection of a new building. In May 1910 the Board of Trustees was instructed to sell the old church situated on Main Street with the proceeds directed into the new church then under construction; also, the trustees were to sell the parsonage property on Walker Street and provide a new parsonage. In the

same month the trustees of the Princeton Collegiate Institute (Princeton Academy) were ordered to sell that property and these proceeds were applied to the new church building.

From that time the church began to advance. By Quarterly Conference action in 1913 a committee (composed of the pastor, the Reverend J. A. Shuler, and members W. D. Pendleton, W.V.Peck, W. S. Dangerfield.W. C. Oliver,and W.A.Nelson) was directed to look after the establishment of a mission church in East Princeton. By January 1914 the East Princeton M. E. Church, South was organized by the Reverend E. H. Cassidy and the Reverend George B. Halstead. This church is now Kee Street United Methodist Church.

By Quarterly Conference action April 12, 1914 the Center Street Church was officially named the First M.E. Church, South of Princeton, W.Va.

Of tremendous interest is the record of a four-week revival held in the spring of 1914 while J. E.Wolfe was the pastor, resulting in 165 professions of faith, thus increasing the membership to 602.

Soon the church was overcrowded and more room was necessary. A committee composed of W.S. Dangerfield, W.D. Pendleton, and J. L. Caldwell was named in July 1919 and charged with the excavation under the main auditorium. Later a committee was appointed to purchase the first pipe organ. Thomas Priddy was then the pastor.

In the conference year 1924-25, during the pastorate of Z..B. Randall, 255 new members were added to the church: 181, by profession of faith and 74 by certificate, bringing the total membership to 1,246.

The first Boy Scout Troop within the church was organized in the spring of 1928. In October of the same year the Holston Annual Conference was entertained by First M.E. Church, South, Princeton.

In 1933 Princeton was removed from the Radford District and placed in the Bluefield District. The unification of the three great branches of Methodism (Methodist Protestant, Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Episcopal, South) came in 1939 and again the church experienced a boundary change when it became a part of the West Virginia Conference of The Methodist Church. The church was officially named First Methodist Church in 1939.



In 1944 the membership was 1,152, the pastor's salary was \$4,000, and the church was well organized according to the plan following unification. Under the pastorates of Hugh E. Kelso and J.B.F. Yoak, Jr. the church purged its membership roll, increased its budget and reached a high water mark both in giving and in church attendance. A notable record was established at the midweek prayer service especially, averaging 200. In 1945 the total amount raised by the church for all purposes was \$25,662.

In September 1945 Dr. L. D. Roe recommended that a building program be launched in the near future while money was plentiful and the people were interested. On August 31, 1947 the Fourth Quarterly Conference approved the purchase of a lot on Park Avenue and approved the building of an educational building at the cost of approximately \$77,000. A new pipe organ was purchased and installed in 1948.

At a called session of the Quarterly Conference on February 21, 1949, the church trustees and Building Committee were authorized to proceed with the excavating and building of the new educational unit. This beautiful addition to the church was opened for use on Sunday, January 15, 1950.

In June 1950 B.W. John became pastor. At a special session of the Board of Stewards on January 4, 1951, it was decided to place the order for the steel needed for the remodeling of the sanctuary, and in June 1951 a Building Fund Campaign was conducted. In February 1952 it was decided to extend the church basement to the area under the Chapel.

In April 1952 the congregation of First Methodist Church moved to the Princeton High School auditorium on Straley Avenue for the Sunday morning worship services and united with the congregation of the Princeton Presbyterian Church for the Sunday evening services. The congregation watched with intense interest as the church became one of the finest and most beautiful in West Virginia. The cost of the remodeling was \$132,481. It became a dream come true and was officially opened again for public worship and the use of the congregation on Sunday, December 21, 1952.

At the reopening service on December 21, 1952, Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke ordained Deacon James M. John, a student in the School of Theology, Emory University. This is an event which seldom occurs—a son ordained at the altar where his father ministers and in the first service held at that altar.

The beautiful new sanctuary was an incentive to the members of the congregation to serve in many areas. The Altar Guild, organized at this time, added a spiritual atmosphere to the services of worship. Included in the many active groups were the Wesleyan Service Guilds, the Woman's Society of Christian Service, the



Methodist Men, Church School classes and choirs for all ages, and the Methodist Youth Fellowship. The church continued to grow in all areas. Chimes for the church tower were purchased at a cost of \$2,500, the Old Guard was organized in 1954 and met each week until 1999. The first women were elected to the Official Board in May of 1953.

Under the leadership of Dr. Ross S. McClung the church progressed — especially in the area of finance. The church roll was updated and through his ministry many were added to the membership. During his pastorate, with great vision and foresight for the church's future, the Wallingford property on Center Street and Hale Avenue (known as the old Princeton Hospital) was purchased by the church at a cost of \$45,000.

The continuing growth of the church under the leadership of Dr. J. Herbert Parks made it necessary to conduct a Crusade for Progress in 1963 for the purpose of (1) amortizing the church's indebtedness; (2) acquiring the Shumate property at 105 Park Avenue to house the pastor's study and the church office, and to allow for future expansion; (3) providing a new parsonage at 1024 Meador Street with appropriate furnishings; and (4) updating the church heating system. During the Crusade Mrs. C. P. Belcher made a gift of her home at 118 Magnolia Avenue to the church, reserving a life estate. A lot on the New Hope Road was also contributed by Mr. W. Grady Carper. The lot was sold and the proceeds were applied to the Crusade for Progress program. The parsonage at 806 Highland Avenue was sold in 1963 and an open house event was held at the new parsonage on December 15 of that same year.

Dr. Parks wanted something to involve the Junior High School students, both boys and girls, in church activities. The Handbell Choir was started in 1963 by Patty Linkenhoker. The students enjoyed playing the handbells so much another group was started for Senior High School students. A few years later an Adult Handbell Choir was formed. The church now has one complete 5-octave

set and two 2-octave sets of handbells with several extra bells. The handbells were donated by memorial gifts to the church in memory of their loved ones.

During the pastorate of Dr. Parks in 1965 a two-level church parking lot and recreation area was constructed on the Wallingford property providing parking facilities and an area for basketball, volleyball, badminton and tennis. The cost of this project was \$10,105.67.

Dr. Parks' ministry encouraged lay leadership and participation and placed an emphasis upon worship, missions, and the youth program. During his pastorate the church roll was updated and many new members were added.

During the pastorate of Dr. James C. Fisher the indebtedness incurred during the Crusade for Progress was paid in full and a note burning ceremony was held. Continued growth was evidenced by attendance at worship services and participation in church activities.

The Plan of Union, proposed to bring together The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church (two churches sharing a common historical and spiritual heritage), was consummated and the churches were united in 1968, forming The United Methodist Church. The local congregation became the First United Methodist Church.

In 1969, to allow for further expansion, the Barbor property at 104 Hale Avenue was acquired by the church for \$14,500. Two rooms in the Shumate house were remodeled to provide additional classroom space.

The church continued to experience growth during the pastorate of Dr. Cecil S. McMillion, who stated that the spiritual status of the church was good as evidenced by the warmth and spiritual depth in the worship services. In September of 1969 the first issue of a monthly parish paper called THE REMARKER was edited by Mrs. William N. McClaugherty and mailed to members of the congregation. In 1970 the Carter property at 107 Park Avenue was purchased for \$25,000 to be used as an associate pastor's parsonage. A Chrismon tree was decorated with Christian symbols made by members and friends of the Altar Guild and dedicated to the glory and praise of God at Christmas 1970. It has since become a Christmas fruition at First Church. In 1971 a Men's Prayer Breakfast Group was formed which continues to meet twice a month, along with other small groups within the church membership.

In 1972 a Lay Witness Mission, sponsored by the Commission on Evangelism, was held. During Dr. McMillion's ministry a task force was formed to study the physical and spiritual needs of the church in the future. Throughout the pastorate of Reverend John Mendez the church experienced spiritual and financial growth, making it outstanding in the district and conference.

In 1974 a building improvement program was responsible for the following: the installation of a new sound system in the sanctuary; replacement of the sanctuary carpet; a new roof and guttering on the Barbor house, and the addition of a family room at the parsonage.

In January 1976 a memorial gift was made by Mrs. C. B. Steorts in loving memory of her husband and sons, James and Eugene Steorts, for the purpose of establishing a Building Fund for future church construction.

In 1976 First Church participated in the GlenWood Park Campaign, pledging a total of \$43,158 for debt retirement.

To facilitate the church program, in 1977 a 15-passenger van was purchased to provide transportation for church groups.

Following a fire that was the result of an act of vandalism, the sanctuary was refurbished and restored to its original beauty in August 1978.

In the fall of 1978 the Wesleyan Fellowship Circle recognized the need for enhancing the church grounds and sponsored a landscaping project which featured attractive plant groupings and landscaping stone.

Planning retreats, special evangelistic services, and Old-Fashioned Days were included in the activities which highlighted the church program. Besides the effective local program, the extensive outreach of the church included the support of worldwide missions, the Reverend James H. Snedeker, Jr. (missionary in Argentina), several mission projects in Africa, and the Red Bird Mission in Beverly, Kentucky. In addition to the regular apportioned giving to World Service and Conference Benevolences, the church was at the top in giving to Golden Cross, World Hunger, and most of the other conference projects.

The Reverend Charles Scragg, Jr. became pastor at First Church in 1982, replacing the Rev. John Mendez who was appointed superintendent of the Bluefield District. During the tenure of Rev. Scragg a children's time was added to the morning worship service and children's bulletins were provided. The United Methodist Women refurbished the parlor after it had been used for a classroom for several years. The old office building and associate pastor's parsonage buildings were demolished (Shumate and Carter properties) and a new office/conference complex was added to the educational wing, providing ground level access at both the front and rear of the church. With previously donated building funds and the support of the congregation this \$265,000 project was paid for by the time the complex was completed. The conference room was dedicated to a dear departed member, Mrs. Etta Belcher, whose generosity provided for approximately 20% of the cost of the project.

1987-Present: Building Updates and the Construction of The Family Ministries Center

Upon Reverend Clifford Schell's arrival at First United Methodist Church in June 1987 it was determined that the church structure was in need of a major upgrade. In 1988 the Administrative Board appointed a committee to study major building and equipment improvements urgently needed by the church. Nine major projects were selected as the most important by the congregation and titled the Forward In Faith Campaign. The projects are listed in their order of priority.

1. Trustees Maintenance Package - (Sanctuary plaster repair. Kindergarten room repair. Fellowship Hall door replacement)

2. Panic door hardware for Sanctuary
3. Sanctuary air conditioning
4. Remodel Restrooms
5. Supplemental heating/cooling for Education Wing
6. Classroom furniture replacement
7. Pave and stripe parking lots
8. Office computer
9. Removal of Barbor house

The Forward In Faith Campaign had an initial goal of \$90,000. During a 24 month campaign a total of \$94,873.61 was raised which, when interest was added, totaled \$96,781.80. A transfer of \$16,148.64 from the Air Conditioning Fund gave total receipts of \$112,930.44. Disbursements for projects and campaign costs accounted for \$105,234.73, leaving \$7,695.71 transferred to the Building and Church Maintenance Fund. On November 14, 1991, the Forward In Faith account was closed, thus ending a very successful church project.

Ministries of the church grew in the 1990s as reflected in the pastor's report to the 1995 Charge Conference when he pointed out that the church bulletin for September 17 listed thirty-five different events scheduled Sunday through Saturday for the church.

A new format for children's ministries at First United Methodist Church began as the "Lively Learners Club" in February 1990. The "Close Encounters Club" replaced the previous club in September that same year. The Club taught children from grade one through grade 6 how to live the Christian life. The children experienced a series of Close Encounters with God's book through music, learning centers, activities, crafts and snacks. The Wednesday evening event has developed to include a Family Night Dinner, Adult Friends who listen to Bible verses, check attendance and are friends to the children, the stuffed "Church Mice" mascots, an awards program, and a CEC store were added to the program. The "Sonshine Kids Club", also begun in September of 1990, was developed to include children from ages 4 through kindergarten.

The Youth Scholarship Fund was established in 1990 to provide financial support for the youth of the church as they enter college. Assistance is based on participation in church activities during the middle and high school years. A total of \$46,475.21 has been provided in college grants during the first nine years of the program.

A Choirchime Handbell Choir was started in 1991 with choirchimes being donated by different groups of the church, individuals and memorial donations. The children in grades 1-5 play the choirchimes.

The Sanctuary underwent minor remodeling in 1992 to accommodate a new grand piano that was purchased through donations.

In 1993 the church purchased the C. Q. Bingham property for possible expansion of the church facilities for \$27,500.

The altar area of the Sanctuary was modified in 1996 to allow the choir to face the congregation. In that same year a church band was formed and a new sound system was purchased and installed in the Sanctuary.

Also in 1996, after several years of searching and prayer, Steve Misak was employed as the first full-time Director of Youth and Young Adults at First United Methodist Church.

The mission support by the church was also commendable in the 1990s. The church was a Covenant Relationship Church, supporting both world and national missionaries. In the World Division the church supported Rev. and Mrs. Douglas Crowder in Africa and later continued support in that country through Glenn Hupprich. Political volatility in Africa put the missionaries in life threatening situations many times as they served the Lord. For many years the National Division support has gone to Margaret Craven at Red Bird Mission in Beverly, Kentucky. The mission's work in this very rural area of our country is outstanding. Two church members. Dr. Jerry Bailes and his wife Jean, spent an extended period of time as volunteer missionaries at Red Bird Mission and returned on many occasions to bring supplies and provide personal support. Dr. Bailes also made several missionary trips to India and Bangladesh, not only as a physician, but as an evangelist as well. The youth were also very active by beginning annual week-long trips to McDowell Mission to repair houses for those in need.

In 1998 the church installed and dedicated The Singing Tower Carillon in memory of L. Clyde Caldwell, Mrs. Wilma H. Caldwell, and Emory J. Reasor. The automatic digital electronic system plays bell sounds that are reproductions of tuned cast bronze carillon bells. The music and Westminster Chimes can be heard all across the city of Princeton. Through monetary support by a member family the church organ received a major renovation to be completed in the spring of 2000. The renovation provided a new console, additional music capabilities and new pipes that are exposed to enhance the look of the already beautiful sanctuary.

As the 21st century approached, a new Family Ministries Center was envisioned and approved by the Church Council, Charge Conference and the Church Conference. A Building Committee was appointed to plan for construction soon after the turn of the century. After many months of planning, construction of the new facility began in the fall of 2000 with the demolition of the Bingham house, the apartments, the Scout building and the upper parking lot. A year later, on November 3, 2001, the new building was consecrated at a dinner held in the new gymnasium. In addition to a gymnasium, the new facility has a library, multipurpose classrooms, restrooms with showers, a kitchen and fellowship hall. At the dinner, the new fellowship hall was named Schell Hall in honor of Rev. Clifford Schell and his wife Mary Ann who gave 14 years of dedicated service and love to our church. The new Family Ministry Center will ensure that the church, through the help of God, can provide the needed ministries for the community for decades to come.



In June, 2001, Rev. G. Randall Adkins became pastor of First United Methodist Church. He and his family were known by many members of the church and were welcomed with open arms.

Pastor Scott Sears came to us in 2012 with his wife and two daughters. He now leads us into a new era for First Church.

It is a time to look at where we have been and where we are going. This written history, as each previous edition, lists the ministerial appointments made by the respective annual conferences to provide pastoral leadership for the church, but we must not forget all others who comprise the church. There are no lists for the Sunday School teachers, the choir members, the youth leaders, the committee members, the liturgists, the Sunday School superintendents, the pianists and organists, the acolytes, the ushers, and all those who sit in the pews to pray, sing and praise God. As we reflect on what has occurred during the history of our church, may God bless the members long forgotten, the members here today, and those who will follow in the future.