



50TH ANNIVERSARY

HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH

PART I

In the beginning Fairless Hills was a large farmland. This was soon to change as an entirely new community was suddenly born.

Ground breaking for the U.S. Steel's Fairless Works was held on March 1, 1951. Since homes for the families of the employees were a necessity, April 14, 1951 saw construction begin on a town to be called "Fairless Hills".

The Danhurst Corporation envisioned a community that would allow a man and his family to live in close proximity to the Steel Mill. By October 1951, 1100 houses had been built with 100 occupied.

Those hardy pioneers remember MUD, no churches, MUD, no stores, MUD, no schools, MUD, no sidewalks, MUD, few paved streets, MUD, one telephone located in the Sales Office, MUD, no trees, flowers, birds and endless MUD!!!

As work progressed on the houses and streets many aspects of a community were planned. Of vital importance was the need for a place of worship.

Since the future residents would be of various religious denominations, it was imperative to discover the preferences of the homeowners. Mrs. Frances Miller a new homeowner was instrumental in helping to achieve this project working with the Council of Churches in Philadelphia.

To this end, the Philadelphia Council of Churches and the Danhurst Corporation negotiated. A survey by Field Representatives was conducted and by January 1952, Reverend James J. Noland, Jr., was appointed to serve in Fairless Hills until permanent a church could be organized.

The first worship service was held on February 17, 1952 in the Mershon House. This was a small white farmhouse situated at the corner of Lake Caroline. Thirty people of all denominations were in attendance.

Chaplain Nolan continues to serve as spiritual advisor until Reverend Theodore Pavlidis was appointed as the Methodist Pastor.

A remodeled farmhouse – the Shaw House, located on Oxford Valley Road became a Community Center. Here on May 25, 1952 a worship service was conducted by Rev. Rev. Pavlidis for 70 adults and 100 children.

Since the Shaw House was of minimum space, the old Firehouse was pressed into service for the overflow Sunday School Classes. This building was located on Oxford Valley Road between Bedford Road and Coventry Road.

THE GUNNISON BUILDING

PART II

September 14, 1952 saw the Ground Breaking Ceremonies for the Methodist Church in Fairless Hills.

This new church, a specially designed building, was to be a Gunnison design, completely Pre-Fabricated. It would consist of a 200 seat main auditorium, 4 classrooms, Pastor's study, kitchen, supply closets, and restrooms. Once begun, construction was completed in 6 weeks.

The Danhurst Corporation had given the 4 – 8/10 acres of land free, with the stipulation it be used by a church for 15 years.

The Philadelphia Council of Churches allotted \$100,000 for the structure itself. Various Boards from the Council of Churches, plus private donations, contributed time, money and furnishings. Without the generous help of the Philadelphia Council of Churches our church may not have become a fact.

The official existence of the church began with special ceremonies on January 4, 1953; and on January 14, 1953 the first worship service was held with Rev. Theodore Pavilidis officiating. On February 1, 1953, 159 Charter Members were welcomed into the church. Each successive Sunday of that month Charter Members were received. By the last Sunday of February 258 members had joined the Methodist Church in Fairless Hills,. Of these there were 21 different denominations among the church school pupils.

Many organizations were formed before the building was habitable. Among these, the W.S.C.S. met at the home of Mrs. Ralph Klein on December 4, 1952, The Men's Club, Mr. & Mrs. Club, the Senior Youth Fellowship also came in to being.

The Parsonage was rented from Danherst for \$110.00 per month until such time as \$16,000.00 could be acquired to buy the house. As furnishings for both the Church and the Parsonage were a necessity, many activities were held to raise money for this purpose.

A Parcel Post Sale, Penny Suppers, Choral Concerts, Talent Night, Ice Cream Social, Bazaar and a Tom Thumb Wedding are a partial list.

The Congregation had out-grown the new building before it was completed. Thus on March 19, 1953 a Congregational Meeting was held to determine the style of the proposed sanctuary. By August 26, 1953, the building program for the new edifice became a reality.

HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH

PART III

A congregational Meeting was held, in the Gunnison Building on September 13, 1953. The purpose of the meeting was to vote on the proposed plans for the Sanctuary. The plans were approved for a building to consist, of a seating capacity for 550 and an overflow space for 100 people. An extended parking lot was also an order of business.

Now the "BIG JOB" began. The Philadelphia Missionary and Church Extension Society of the Methodist Church and the National Methodist Board of Missions would give substantial financial support, but we would be responsible for \$100,000. The estimated cost of the building was \$250,000.00.

In order to raise the first \$30,000.00 a Loyalty Crusade Fund Drive was designated for the weeks of April 25, 1954 to May 9, 1954. During this period, 100 women volunteers canvassed 600 homes for pledges. This initial start was most successful.

Countless hours were spent by the Building Committee, plus each member of the church, to reach our final goal. It was an outstanding effort by all, to raise the much needed funds.

Ground Breaking Ceremonies were held on June 27, 1954. Construction began on August 5, 1954 and continued through the Winter and Spring of '54 and '55.

The final plans for the Sanctuary were for a steel and native stone exterior. The seating capacity would be for 520 persons, overflow for 125, Pastors study, sacristy, utility room, storage room and rest rooms. The building would be 115 feet long, 48 feet wide and 31 feet in height. The choir stalls would provide space for 47 people. The Interior would utilize natural woods. In the Chancel, 8 Medallion windows would be placed.

The Cornerstone was cemented in place on April 17, 1977. Items placed in the Cornerstone were: a Bible, Cross, The Methodist Discipline, hymnal, various publications and a list of members of various church groups.

After 15 months the new Methodist Church of Fairless Hills was completed. On Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1955 the first service was held in the Sanctuary. It was a thankful and joyous occasion.

Three and one half years had passed since the organization of our church. Under the inspired leadership of Rev. Ted Pavlidis the membership had grown from 22 to 941 adults, and from 35 to 550 children in the Church School.

The "Community Church", as it had come to be called, now had 31 different denominations amongst its members. They had come from 25 of the 48 states and from 8 foreign countries. The budget had grown from \$8.00 per week to one of \$28,000 per year.

The tremendous amount of time, effort, ideas, money, and contributions of furnishings, that the Congregation contributed cannot be measured in words. Every organization – Choirs, W.S.C.S., Men's Club, to name a few, were all actively engaged in this mammoth undertaking

With regret we said Goodbye to Rev. Pavlidis and his family in May of 1957. He had been a "Tower of Strength" for 5 fruitful years.

May 29, 1957 saw Rev. Robert Pike and his family moving into the Parsonage. A new chapter was beginning in the growth of the Church.

HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH

PART IV

Under the leadership of Rev. Bob Pike, the years of 1957 – 1967 were most fruitful. We saw increasing membership in both Church and Church School. We saw a steadily declining debt of \$81,000 and an increase in Church affiliated activities and organizations.

By 1962 it was evident that an Education Building was necessary. Plans for this addition were formulated in March 1962.

The projected plans for the unit were for 8 class-rooms, Pastor's Study, Secretary's office, a 2 story Fellowship Hall, soundproof Choir Room, kitchen and restrooms. A glass doored vestibule would link the two buildings.

The final cost would be \$224,000. Since there remained a debt of \$34,000, from the Sanctuary, the complete indebtedness would amount to \$258,000. Once more we had a "Big Job" to do. This time the congregation must pay for the building without any outside assistance.

After two years of planning, a Ground Breaking Ceremony was held on March 8, 1964. Construction began immediately. By October 22, 1964 the building was completed. A Day of Consecration was held, on this date, and the addition was put to full use.

We now had a building complex valued at \$493,000. Much had transpired since February of 1952 when the first members had become the congregation of The Methodist Church in Fairless Hills.

Rev. Pike was transferred in May 1967 after serving us for 10 years. They were busy years, full of promise for the future.

Replacing Rev. Pike was Rev. Kenneth Buckwalter. During his 6 years tenure, 1967 – 1973, the name of the Church became the United Methodist Church in Fairless Hills. This name change became official with the union of the World Methodist Churches and the Evangelical United Brethren Churches.

A new milestone was reached on April 20, 1969, when the clips and glue and hand made replacement parts were replaced with a Rogers "660" Organ, to the tune of \$14,373.00. Fund raising for this event was an undertaking of the Chancel Choir and supported by many generous supporters from the congregation and friends.

Rev. Alan Taylor, Jr., became our Pastor on June 1973. Dedication Day was celebrated on May 11, 1975 while Rev. Taylor was serving the Congregation. On this day, after the 11 o'clock service. The Burning of the Mortgage took place. After 22 years we had reached a milestone.

Replacing Rev. Taylor in July 1979 was Rev. Donald Richards. His 3 years as our Pastor ended in June 1982. He is ably assisted by Rev. Ron Kimball, who came to us on February 15, 1979.

Countless persons have contributed both time and money to the beauty of the Church. One such person is Mrs. Erma Johnston, mother of Mrs. William Young. Mrs. Johnston sewed, by hand, the green, red, white and purple paraments that adorn the chancel. Many others have given, as Memorials, all of the items listed in the memorial Book at the back of the Sanctuary. If you take time to look through the book, you will see another part of our history emerging.

The last 30 years have seen many baptisms, marriages, and deaths among the members of the Congregation. We have had our "ups and downs", but the "up" have out weighed the "downs".

The present Church Organization gives every indication that the next 30 years can be as successful as the past 30 years.

Parts I, II, III and IV were written by Cindy Hadden.

We are grateful for this past, the history of our beginning. We have added Part V, from 1979 – February 23, 2003 as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Methodist Church, Fairless Hills.

HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH

Part V

On October 30, 1983 a 30th Anniversary "Home Coming Celebration" was held. Rev. Robert C. Pike as the guest speaker. On the same day selected hand bells were dedicated in memory of by James and Dee Armour in memory of their son, Keith and Kenneth & Louise Armour Jim's parents.

During this time our Christian Nursery School was in full operation (1983-1986) Verlette Straub and Christie Cojerian were there the teachers. The school offered half day sessions for 3 and 4 year olds.

We welcomed our first Associate Pastor, Rev. Ted Lorah a student in the ministry to work with our youth and assist the pastor in visitations in 1978-79. Rev. Ted married a member of our congregation Ms Sue Rishel.

In 1985 Ron Timlin came on board as our part-time⁷⁹ pastoral assistant. Replaced by Rev. John Stout who left us to return to be a chaplain in the armed services. Rev. Ron Kimball join Assistant Pastor leaving in 1985 and was transferred to Narberth, PA. In 1985, 5 area youth groups (including ours) participated in a "Walk for Kids". This was to benefit the United Methodist Home in Philadelphia. At the same time we started "Let's Raise the Roof a project to put a new roof on the education building, one square was \$30.00. In no time we sold our squares and the roof was paid in full.

In June of 1986 we waived good-bye to Rev. Albert Frank and greeted Rev. Josiah H. Werner, his wife Bea and their three children into our Church family. During these years we served the Fallsington United Methodist Congregation. In 1988 Rev. Thomas Robinson came to us serving as Student Assistant, assisting with the Fallsington Methodist Church.

Our 2nd Womanless Wedding was held June 3, 1989. Our all male cast of 35 left everyone rolling in the aisle. A reception was held in the church cellar. Not one cast member was presented with an "Emmy". A Sunday School Band was formed and performed for Sunday School, Church Services and many activities.

Rev. Rick Rogers came to us as a student in the ministry under the leadership of Rev. Werner and Rev. Charles Cole. Rick married our own Karen Pursel in May of 1993. Rick was also ordained in that same year.

Rev. Josiah Werner was transferred to the Lancaster area on 1990. Rev. Charles C. Cole, wife Lucinda and daughter Alyssa became of new pastoral family in June 1990. During the Cole years, a clown ministry was established. Our church was instrumental in establishing the Contemporary Worship and a Unity Sunday Service. Through P.S.A.L.M. a Teen Night was started and continues today offering young people in the community a social time at the Y.M.C.A. in Fairless Hills.

We celebrated the 40th Anniversary on February 6th and 7th 1993. Bishop Morrison presented the morning message. Once again we shared the 45th Anniversary on February 21st and 22nd 1998. Church buildings, memorabilia, dinner, entertainment, Anniversary Cake and fellowship was the highlights on both occasions.

In December 1994 Tim Duchesne became our Associate Pastor. His length of stay was brief with Rev. Nancy Ross and husband Jack, June 1996 as a Student Pastor unit 2001 after her ordination was assigned to Frackville Methodist Church, for the first time she began holding Saturday Night Services.

Pastor Cole was transferred in June 2002 to Paoli, PA. Rev. Theodore Bach (His Holiness) arrived along with his wife, Rev. Lorelei Bach and sons Sebastian and Jorge. Lorelei's mother and Pip, the dog, now share our parsonage.

During the years from 1953 – 2003 our major fund raising activities included an Annual Bazaar, Penny Suppers, Covered Dish Dinners, Candy Making, Flea Market, Pizza Sales, Spring Flowers, Gertrude Hawk Candy, Fashion Show, Birthday Tea, Just Desserts and Scrip have earned us extra funds to support the budget. The United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women have sponsored many functions and dinners. During our 1992 Hard Candy Sessions 1,092 pounds of candy was made and sold.

The men in our church were involved with Promise Keepers. We established a Vision Statement and a Mission Statement. Several Mission trips were made to Charleston, S.C. During these trips homes were repaired, furniture replaced, clothing purchased for the families in need.

In the past 2 years major repairs were made to the church, and to the parsonage. The Children's House of Montessori has rented our Gunnison Building since 1965. The last 20 years have seen many changes, good, bad and in-between along with the passing of many Charter Members and other faithful, hard working members of this congregation, we have reached the 50th year anniversary with many of these members aging gracefully and going home to be with the Lord.

The church continues to move forward to look to the future with new births, marriages, new brothers and sisters in Christ. Our church's future is the youth of today they will be the foundation of tomorrow.

We share with all come to join us this day the ideals, goals, dreams and plans that we celebrate today.

THEODORE PAVLIDIS

1952 - 1957

ROBERT C. PIKE

1957 - 1967

KENNETH E. BUCKWALTER

1967 - 1973

ALAN W. TAYLOR

1973 - 1979

DONALD E. RICHARDS

1979 - 1982

ALBERT D. FRANK

1982 - 1986

JOSIAH H. WARNER

1986 - 1990

CHARLES C. COLE

1990 - 2002

Ted Bach

2002

WINDOWS TOWARD GOD

A SERMONIC INTERPRETATION OF OUR STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Not far from here there is a community of new, modern houses. It's a nice little settlement. The only trouble with it (at least from outward appearances) is that the houses are almost all empty. The windows are boarded up, and upon the doors are tacked signs that say any one who is caught trespassing or defacing the property will be prosecuted according to the law.

It's rather a sad sight to see these nice little homes looking so dead. Houses are not made to stand empty, but to be lived in. Windows are not made to be boarded up . . . but to let in light and beauty.

I want to talk with you this day about windows – WINDOWS TOWARD GOD

The stained glass windows are right here at the front of our Church.

First, we all know that there are several uses for windows:

- They let in light and sunshine to brighten our homes in the daytime.
- They let light out at night to brighten the outside darkness and to let others see that the house is lived in and that the family is home.
- Some windows open to let in fresh air when the weather is such that it's pleasant to have the house open.
- The windows at the shopping center make it possible for the people to look inside and see the merchandise. They are called display windows.
- And then some windows are simply for beauty. The stained glass windows before you here are for the purpose of beautifying God's house. But that is not their only purpose. They are here to help us worship. They speak to us in a symbolic way of all that we hold most precious in our religious faith.

Let us look at these beautiful windows in this matter and let them speak to us of their beautiful message about God and His love.

Beginning at the very top center and coming straight down we see:

1. The Hand of God in blessing.
2. The Sacrificial Lamb – Jesus Christ.
3. The Dove of the Holy Spirit.

These three windows express the three-fold nature of the God we worship. They are a symbolic expression of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

4. The Chalice of the Lord's Supper.

It is properly placed above the altar upon which the elements of the sacred Lord's Supper or Holy Communion are consecrated. It reminds us of the words of Jesus, "Do this, as oft as ye shall drink this, in remembrance of me".

The two windows to your left and the two windows to your right are the symbols of the four Gospel writers:

1. Matthew, on the left
2. Mark, on the left
3. John, on the right
4. Luke, on the right

These men wrote for us the story of Jesus' life and ministry, his sufferings, his death, and glorious resurrection. It is upon the writings of these four men that we lean so heavily for the facts and interpretation of our Christian Faith.

The symbols themselves representing the four gospel writers, as well as the position of the windows in this particular arrangement as based upon the words of Revelations 4:6 and 7 "... and around the throne (of God) on each side of the throne, are four living creatures. . .

The first living creature like a lion,
The second living creature like an ox,
The third living creature with the face of a man,
The fourth living creature like a flying eagle”.

SYMBOL FOR MATTHEW (your top, left)

- The winged man, because Matthew stressed the manhood of Christ. In the first 17 verses of his Gospel he follows Jesus’ line of human descent from Abraham to Jesus himself. Matthew sometimes stressed the manhood of Jesus.

SYMBOL FOR MARK (your bottom, left)

- The winged lion, symbol of strength, for Mark in his writings emphasized the power and miracles of the Savior.

SYMBOL FOR JOHN (your top, right)

- The winged eagle, because in his Gospel, John soars the heights of spiritual interpretation of Jesus and his teachings.

SYMBOL FOR LUKE (your bottom right)

- The winged ox, the symbol of sacrifice, because Luke makes many references to the sacrifice which Jesus made of himself.

These four windows properly surround the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, just as Revelation 4:7 speaks of the four living creatures surrounding the throne of God.

We go back now to the centerline and the top three windows. These windows speak of the heart of our religious faith – the three-fold nature of God. Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Fourth Century Christian leaders coined a word for this three-fold nature of God – they called it the Trinity. Christians before the 4th Century would not have known what this meant, for they had never heard of the doctrine of the Trinity. But that does not mean that it is not true for early Christians had experienced God revealing himself in three ways:

- in nature: sunset, sunrise, waterfall, song of the bird, a walk in the woods.
- in history: thru Jesus and the prophets, thru justice triumphing among nations.
- in the spiritual experience of individuals; in the inner feeling of closeness to God, an unexplainable enthusiasm of faith.

Still, it is the same God, revealing himself in different ways: There is only one God:

- His glory the heavens declare.
- His righteousness is disclosed in the historic record of the Scriptures.
- His living, saving, spiritual presence is not far from any one of us right now.

THE TOP WINDOW IS THE HAND OF GOD OUTSTRETCHED TO ALL HUMANITY.

It is a hand of blessing, of healing, of guidance, and of assurance. The Psalmist said to God, **“My times are in thy hand”**. Psalm 31:15

When I was a little boy I remember the first time I ever got lost. It was a busy Saturday night and the family was down town shopping among the crowd. I was about 4 or 5 years of age. I was walking with my father, holding tightly to his hand. But suddenly I broke away to go over to a store window to look at something displayed there. When I came back, I thrust my hand to a man without looking up to see who it was. Somehow I felt that all was not well. I looked up to see that the hand I was holding was not that of my father, but that of a perfect stranger.

There are many hands in this world which people are grasping – science, fame, wealth, happiness – but somehow one never feels quite right until one grasps the steady, secure hand of God, who made us all, and who is our Father.

When we look at the top window, we might well think of the comforting words found in Isaiah 41:13. **“For I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy hand, saying unto thee, Fear not: I will help thee.”**

THE SPIRIT IS AT WORK IN YOU AND ME. The Spirit is God speaking afresh to every generation.

Robert Louis Stevenson tells how when he was a boy sailed out to see a lighthouse. He put on a diving suit and went down deep with a diver who was working on the lighthouse. When they stood on the floor of the sea, the diver signaled him to jump onto a great rock, which towered high above his head. Young Stevenson thought the man was joking, but the man repeated the signal. Stevenson made a leap and found himself lifted gently over the great rock. He had forgotten that the water was a buoyant element – that a force in the ocean would support his tiny effort and bear him up.

Just as truly, there is a spiritual force that supports and enlarges our own feeble efforts. We forget about it. We let ourselves be frightened by all the things that stand in our way. But we must trust this force, and it will not fail us. This is the power of God that comes to our lives through his Spirit.

This, then, is the story of our stained glass windows and the message they speak to our hearts. Whether our ideas of God are wrought in stained glass, in stone, in a poem or a song, they are man's way of expressing his faith and love and for the Almighty God, who made us all.

LET US PRAY

Accept our grateful thanks, O God, for these beautiful windows that speaks to us of Thee.

Make sacred the recollection of those lives in whose memory these windows were given.

**Each time we enter this holy place, let these windows silently speak to each of us
their message of thy love and goodness. Amen.**

Copy from a presentation made on February 15, 1958.