IT ALL STARTED ON A FRONT PORCH

A Centennial History of
Bethesda United Methodist Church
Bethesda, Maryland
1914-2014

with
2014-2024 Addendum
for 110th Anniversary

This history draws from information assembled for prior anniversaries in 1964 and 1989 and from the detailed research of former church archivist, Dr. Kenneth Colton. It has been supplemented from the church archives, especially from the news reported in the *Messenger*.

The activities of the church have been many and varied. The ones included are mostly those that are ongoing or were of long duration.

Information, records, or artifacts of church history are always welcome for the church archives.

Respectfully submitted,

William Allman
Church Historian
November 2014

The centennial history has been updated with a 2014-24 supplement as part of the celebration of the 110th anniversary on Heritage Sunday. March 17, 2024.

William Allman

The pandemic that began in 2020 has drastically changed the world, including Bethesda United Methodist Church (BUMC) that celebrated its centennial in 2014. The Bethesda UMC has been re-imagining its mission since the pandemic, expanding its focus to be more inclusive, diverse, and creative in loving and serving Christ, its neighbors, and the world. For instance, in 2019, BUMC declared itself a Reconciling Congregation, which means it embraces the LGBTQIA+ community. In 2024, they hung the Pride Banner on the Bell Tower, which was a significant decision for them because the United Methodist Church (UMC) was experiencing a schism due to the issues around human sexuality. In 2023, twenty-three churches left UMC from the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference. In 2024, the General Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, will confirm the official division of the denomination.

In 2021, BUMC warmly welcomed its first-ever Asian American woman lead pastor. In 2018, the church had also accepted its first African American associate pastor. BUMC has shown support for the historically African American congregation in Bethesda, Macedonia Baptist Church. In 2023, the congregation actively participated in a year-round listening session on controversial issues. Since July 2021, the church has been live-streaming its worship services on YouTube, and the online ministry has grown significantly. It now constitutes a significant portion of our worship participation.

In 2023, we marked ninety years supporting the Boy Scouts of America at BUMC. It was a momentous occasion as we were led by the first woman scoutmaster, who happened to be Indian American. At Bethesda UMC, we have also been working to support the influx of refugees in the Washington, D.C., area since 2022. We have joined hands with the Congregation Beth El, a Jewish synagogue, to help with this effort. Additionally, we have been providing meals to the families of children from marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds at Fairland Elementary School through Manna Sacks ministry for the last fifteen years. This service became even more critical during the pandemic. Recently, we hired a new Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at Bethesda UMC. The new Director

is Brazilian American and will bring more diversity and a fresh leadership style to our community.

BUMC has been updating its education wing since 2022 and is excited to share the facility with a childcare school. This collaboration will bring a new era of vitality to BUMC. Children's voices, laughter, and the teacher's passion for teaching will fill our building during the day. We envision installing solar panels on the church roof, digital signage, and offering car chargers in the parking lot. We also want to increase our involvement in community services, family ministry, and mental health.

The Korean idiom says, "Ten years will change rivers and mountains." I am curious how God will guide us in the next ten years. However, I believe our faithful today builds tomorrow, and that is how we meet the God of the future. May the faithful ancestors before us surround and guide us to focus on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1), so that we can truly become the restorers of the streets and repairers of the breach (Isaiah 58:12) as a wash more feet congregation.

Shalom,
Rev. Dr. HiRho Park
2024

Dear BUMC,

Looking around our church these days, it's hard to imagine that it all began as a group of people gathered on a front porch for Bible study in downtown Bethesda. One hundred years later, the faithfulness of that small gathering has grown into a thriving church community that worships, serves, and shares in ministries not only in Bethesda but around the world. From women's ministry to Vacation Bible School to outreach to wounded warriors and unhoused neighbors to mission trips, interfaith work, music ministry or Bible studies, BUMC continues to be a place where people come to serve, worship and grow in their faith.
We may have outgrown the porch, but our ministry continues because faithful people continue to gather together to seek and follow God.

Several years ago we took on "wash more feet" as our mission statement here at BUMC and I believe that as we look toward the future, we will see even more opportunities to put our faith in action in Christ-like service and wash more feet in our community. I am privileged to follow in the footsteps of many incredible pastors who have served this church through the years and I am so proud to serve as your pastor during the celebration of our 100 years in ministry together. Thank you for being a part of the legacy of this incredible congregation. Happy Birthday to Bethesda United Methodist Church! We give thanks for the faithful people who have come before us and for the call of God that will continue to strengthen and guide our church into the future.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Jenny Cannon
2014

THE CHURCH FAMILY AT ONE SERVICE ON
THANKS AND GIVING SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2014

The Porch Where It Started in 1914

the John Coombs House on Fairmont Avenue, in the Woodmont Triangle

"Original Congregation"

(photo provided by Ora Musgrove, who joined the church in 1918)

THE FIRST 25 YEARS (1914-1939)

1914 – A Mission Church

Our church has its origins in the summer and fall of the year 1914 (the exact dates are not recorded).

In the Woodmont Triangle, where the Old Georgetown Road splits off from the Rockville Pike, residential development had begun in 1892 with the arrival of a streetcar line from Washington. Twenty years later, however, the nearest Methodist churches were in Rockville, Tennallytown, and, new in 1912, Chevy Chase.

Methodist activities in the Triangle began in 1914, when six young people met as a Sunday school on the porch of the John S. Coombs residence on Fairmont Avenue. Not long after, they moved across the street to a tent that had been raised on a vacant lot for Sunday evening meetings. Offered as a mission program of the Rockville Methodist Episcopal Church South, the meetings were led by Rev. Frank Richardson, assisted by one of his Rockville parishioners, Gaither Warfield, a rising sophomore at Dickinson College, who was licensed by the church as an "exhorter" in 1914 (becoming a "local preacher" in 1915).

In the fall of 1914, some of the men of this "Woodmont Mission" built a one-room structure on "borrowed ground," and it was provided with a platform, pulpit desk, carpet, and about forty chairs (sixty more on loan). In a December report, there were only thirteen members, including two of the front-porch youngsters, but seventy-five people were attending, mostly members of the Methodist Episcopal Church North (see note). Although an independent Bethesda church was not established until 1916, the origins in 1914 have been the starting point for celebrations of 50 years, 75 years, and now 100 hundred years.

NOTE: In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal Church split over the issue of slavery. It was not until 1939, that the ME Churches North and South reunited, merging with the 1828 Methodist Protestant Church to form "The Methodist Church." In 1968, union with the Evangelical United Brethren created the current "United Methodist Church."

1918 – The St. Elmo Site

On becoming an independent charge in 1916, the church may have been called the Bethesda Church or perhaps the Woodmont Church, a formal name is undocumented. The first pastor of the new church was William W. Beazley (1916-17), a deacon only since 1914 and still a college student. His successor, Elmer C. Sloane (1917-19), a retired clergyman, was the "pastor in charge" during the "site problem" of 1918. Some members left the church, objecting to the purchase of a new site when an alternate site on Old Georgetown Road had been offered as a gift. Woodmont lots #130-133 at the corner of St. Elmo and Norfolk Avenues (now the site of Rock Bottom Brewery) were acquired from Delia Condon at a favorable price of $500. The existing building on the temporary lot was moved to the new site. In the deed of April 12, 1918, a new name was first recorded - the "Central Methodist Episcopal Church South." There is no story of how the name was selected, but perhaps the new church was deemed central" among its Methodist neighbors.

1921 – A New Building on St. Elmo

Under the fourth pastor, Edward H. Davis (1920-24), a new building was constructed. The cornerstone, still preserved in the church archives, was laid on December 21, 1921. After three more short-term pastors, the eighth pastor, Charles C. Burruss (1929-33) pitched in with men from the church in 1930 to excavate a much-needed full basement for class space and a kitchen.

Under Burruss, a well-respected Sunday School and Women's Missionary Society, both founded in 1914, were joined in 1933 by Boy Scout Troop 204 sponsored by the church. Scouting would blossom over the following decades with the addition of a Cub Scout pack and a second Boy Scout troop, as well as two Girl Scout troops and a Brownie troop.

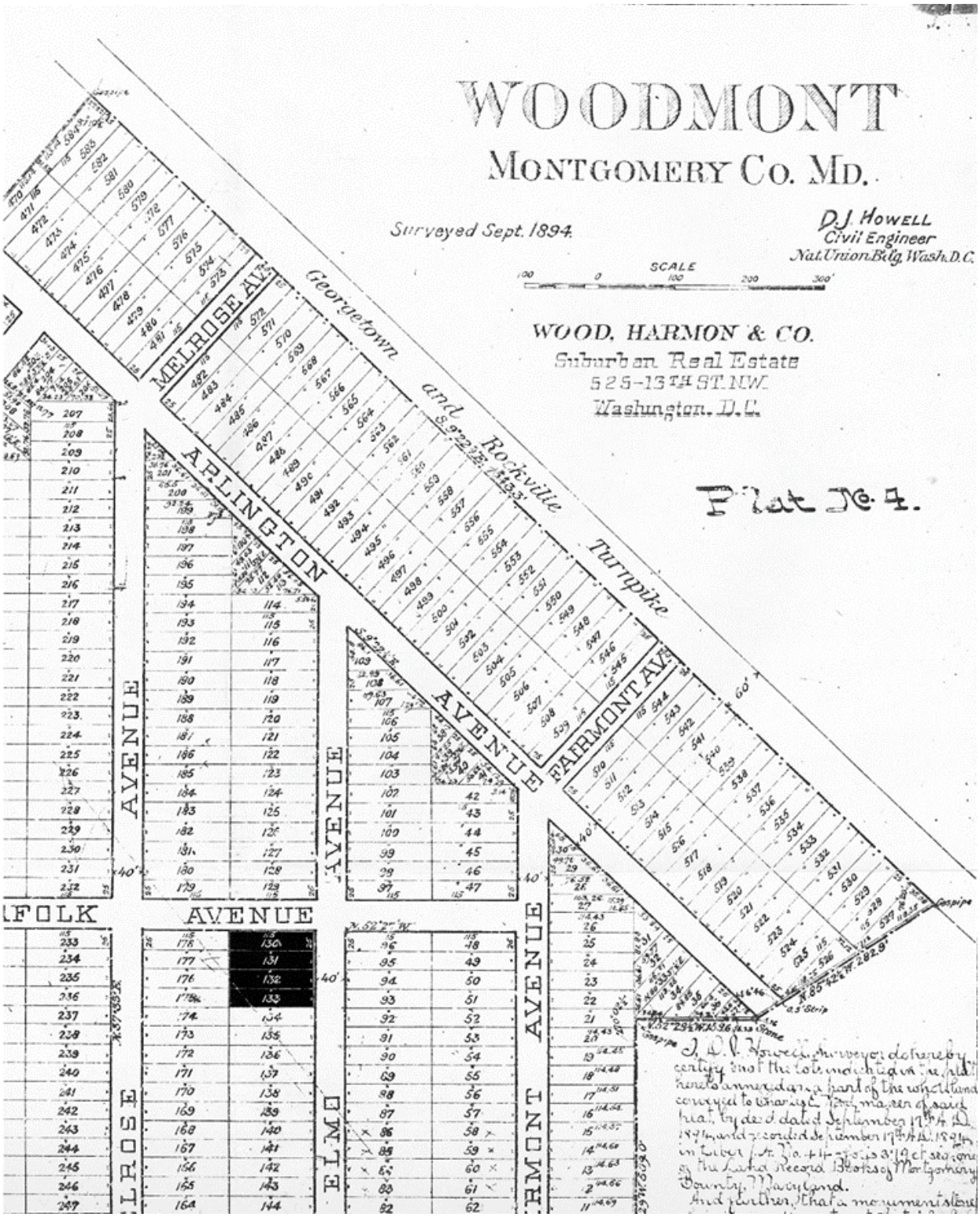
1939 – A Parsonage and a New Name

Under three more young temporary pastors, membership dwindled some; a modest salary and the absence of a parsonage prevented appointments of more experienced clergy.

The first 25 years ended in the hands of Francis I. Cockrell (1936-40), son of a conference minister, but only a probationary member himself (deacon 1936, elder 1940). In 1939, Cockrell presided over the renaming of his charge as the Bethesda Methodist Church, a name that would first appear on a service bulletin on December 17, 1939. That year the Methodist reunification provided new standardized names for two important ministries of the Bethesda Church: the Women's Missionary Society became the Women's Society of Christian Service and the Epworth League became the Methodist Youth Fellowship.

In 1939, on the verge of marriage, Cockrell lobbied for the construction of a parsonage. Built next to the church at a cost of $5000, with many contributions from the women of the church and from local merchants, the parsonage at 4907 St. Elmo was first occupied in October by the pastor and his bride Martha, sister of former pastor Charles Burruss.

Cockrell also lobbied for a new church building, writing to the congregation in a bulletin message that the church lacked the facilities needed to easily attract membership. It remained for his successor to implement his aspirations.



Lots 130-133 on St. Elmo Avenue in Woodmont – purchased 1918

Central

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH

St. Elmo and Norfolk Avenues

BETHESDA, MARYLAND

"The hour shall be filled with music,
With help and praise and prayer,
And the burdens of life be lifted
From all who enter here."

REV. FRANCIS IRWIN COCKRELL
Minister
Residence: 305 Wilson Lane, Bethesda, Maryland
Telephone, WISCONSIN 5303

DR. EDGAR C. BEERY
Presiding Elder
WASHINGTON, D. C.

BISHOP EDWIN D. MOUZON
Presiding Bishop
CHARLOTTE, N. C.

MRS. LEE CRANDALL, JR., *Choir Director*

1937 bulletin (June 20)

1945 bulletin with new 1939 church name

St. Elmo Church – Sanctuary and choir

St. Elmo Church, 1940s
Boys Scouts in basement (Dick DeHaven at right of boys)
Administrative Board outside

THE SECOND 25 YEARS (1939-1964)

1941 – The Old Georgetown Road Site

After thirteen mostly "supply" pastors in the first quarter century, the newly named Bethesda Methodist Church was home to three experienced pastors for its next 25 years. Hartwell F. Chandler (1940-53) advocated strong evangelism and a new church building in which to welcome new members.

After only six months, he led the church to seek a new site, a move partly driven by the commercial development in the Woodmont Triangle. In April 1941, three lots (29,000 square feet) at the corner of Old Georgetown Road and Huntington Parkway were purchased. The former owner, Washington land tycoon Morris Cafritz (who developed the nearby neighborhood of Greenwich Forest), donated $1000 of the cost. The church raised the remaining $5000 with church notes, a bank loan, and a $2000 gift from the Methodist Union. The chair of the building committee explained that "the church was started to care for children." Citing how it had served well as a center for activity in the immediate community, he noted that the location had become dangerous due to "Georgetown Road and Wisconsin Avenue, both traffic hazards." With new commercial zoning in the area, he said "the church is moving in the direction in which the population is spreading." Architect Hugh Jones, a church member, drew up initial plans that were published in a pledging brochure. Fund-raising fell short in 1942 and was "temporarily halted" by World War II. In the interim, a frame addition for classrooms was appended to the St. Elmo church, and, in 1944, the mortgage was paid off and burned. An additional lot on Old Georgetown Road was purchased in 1946 for $4500, less a gift of $1250 from the land owner.

1949 – A New Church on Old Georgetown Road

With a $75,000 mortgage, construction of a new church began in 1948 with a groundbreaking ceremony on October 18. The following July, the men of the church helped level the lawn for seeding, after which a cornerstone was formally installed on September 18, 1949. The church opened to 690 members on November 6, and later that month the first community Thanksgiving service was held in the new sanctuary. The electric organ installed in the St. Elmo church in 1935 was moved to the new building with the addition of chimes. The old holdings, including the parsonage adjacent to the old church, were sold to another religious denomination, the Potomac Conference Corporation of the Seventh Day Adventists.

On January 7, 1951, after only one year in the new building, growth in membership brought an expansion to two Sunday morning worship services with Sunday school at each hour. In 1952, the church received its first associate pastor, Selwyn Cockrell, the retired father of former pastor Frances Cockrell. In December 1951, anticipating further building expansion, three additional lots along Old Georgetown Road were purchased for $33,500. Although the church only wanted the adjoining two empty lots, the deal required the acquisition of a third lot on which sat the large frame Austin house, which would be used as a youth center.

1951 – Congregation Beth-El

In September 1951, the church began a long-standing relationship with Congregation Beth-El, offering our facility for the synagogue to hold its holiday services. In January 1952, Beth-El wrote that they had donated two trees planted in the Holy Land, one in honor of the church, one in honor of Rev. Chandler. In 1954, Rev. Marion Michael would represent all of the Protestant churches of Bethesda at the dedication of the Beth-El building across from our church on Old Georgetown Road.

Community Thanksgiving services were held each year, rotating among the various houses of worship in Bethesda. Since 1977, our church and Beth-El have met to share an interfaith Thanksgiving service, alternating locations and preaching duties. Our Jewish friends much enjoy our music and often apologize for their lack of experience at passing the offering basket when the service is held at their synagogue.

1958 – An Education Wing and an Enlarged Sanctuary

Hartwell Chandler was succeeded in 1953 by Marion Michael (1953-61), under whose leadership more great changes would come.

Parsonages - In July 1954, a parsonage for the senior pastor was opened at 5816 Conway Road, built at cost by church member Riley Evers and furnished by the Women's Society. A parsonage for the associate pastor was acquired in 1963. Both would be sold in 1985 in a move to provide the pastors with a housing allowance and the opportunity to establish some home equity.

Building Expansion - For a fast-growing congregation, the church hired its first full-time Director of Christian Education, Ralph Wilbur, not long after a November 1955 drive had raised the necessary $125,000 (the required half of the projected cost) for an education wing and expanded Sanctuary on the 1951 lots. When even the low construction bid exceeded the authorized $250,000 contract, the 50-foot end section of the planned extension was eliminated. It was perhaps thought to be only a temporary solution, leaving a blank block wall at the north end of the church. Groundbreaking on January 13, 1957 was held at both services, followed by a cornerstone ceremony on June 27. A three-story Education Building, including a small serving kitchen, was added north of an enlarged Sanctuary with the Chancel retaining the original pulpit, lectern, altar, and much of the other woodwork. On March 16, 1958, the new work was "consecrated" (it could not be "dedicated" unless debt-free).

Library - The new Education Wing included a library (the collection beginning as 85 books in the Youth Center catalogued by founding librarian Ruth Smith) that would become a renowned church model, growing to 3500 volumes by 1968. Designated a full-fledged church ministry in 1975, the library was dedicated in 1984 in honor of former associate pastor S. Carroll Coale.

Pipe Organ - As part of the expansion, the enlarged sanctuary received a $47,000 Moeller three-manual organ partially funded by sponsoring pipes at $20 each. With installation complete in January 1959, the organ was dedicated in honor of longtime organist Marie Little (died 1954). In 1960, world-renowned conductor and organist Karl Richter would perform on the new Moeller organ.

The Early 1960s

Marion Michael was succeeded in 1961 by Orris G. Robinson (1961-65).

Missionaries – Dr. and Mrs. James Stringham made a presentation at the church on August 27, 1961, after which they departed with a $5000 contribution from the church to help establish a psychiatric clinic in Lucknow, India. Beginning in 1987 BUMC would generously begin supporting Jeff and Ellen Hoover with their missionary educational work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2001, support was also given to Susan Porter for her nursing missionary work in Central Asia and later in Liberia.

Wesley Nursery School - In September 1961, the Wesley Day School was founded with an enrollment of 35 in two classes. Designed to provide maximum usage of building, it was, according to its by-laws, an integral part of the Christian education program, providing a service to church families and an outreach to the community. By 1971, when the name was changed to WNS, there were five classes.

A Powerful Music Program - In 1961 the first full-time music minister was hired – Wilmer T. Bartholemew (1961-71). A "Service of Advent and Christmas Music" was held at 7:00 PM on Sunday December 18, 1961, perhaps the first "Carol Concert."

Assistant organist Connie Creveling (1967-72) would serve as a much beloved director of music from 1972-2002. By her instruction, many generations of young people received much of their learning and experience with singing. She continued "Mr. B's" practice of performing a formal classical piece of music each spring. Chancel musicals, including "Celebrate Life" and a ten-year run of Pops Concerts were hallmarks of her 35 years of service. She would also create a handbell program in 1974 with the gift of three octaves of bells, supplemented later with two additional octaves of bells and five octaves of chimes. The music program became a major force in attracting and retaining members.

<u>Reaching the Maximum</u> – early 1960s

To help keep a swelling congregation informed, the first edition of *The Messenger* appeared on October 2, 1960. Church attendance on February 21, 1960, was listed at 1005, while three services on Easter Sunday in 1961 attracted 1908 people. In 1963, membership peaked at 2270, only to decline as two new churches initiated nearby in 1956 - St. Andrews on River Road and North Bethesda further north on Old Georgetown Road – began to help meet the needs of the burgeoning Bethesda community. In the future, two of Bethesda's associate pastors would be re-assigned to start new churches – James Matheson at Faith Methodist on Montrose Road in Rockville in 1963 and Dave Stum at Covenant United Methodist in Montgomery Village in 1980.

50th Anniversary – 1964

The first half-century of growth ended in 1964 with a golden anniversary celebration marked by preaching by Gaither Warfield, who had helped start the church in 1914. A commemorative booklet included a hymn with words by long-time church secretary Marian Maynard (to whom an expanded Sacristy was dedicated in 1978) and music arranged by "Mr. B."

1964 – Golden Anniversary in Fellowship Hall

Old Georgetown Road at Huntington Parkway – groundbreaking day October 18, 1948 (Rev. Hartwell Chandler at center)

Education Building –
groundbreaking on January 13, 1957
(Dr. S. Carroll Coale, associate pastor)
and construction

Original Chancel, 1954

New Chancel in expanded Sanctuary, 1962
with addition of Moeller pipe organ

Fellowship Hall

THE THIRD 25 YEARS (1964-1989)

The third quarter century was marked by a series of fine pastors, all of whom went on to jobs outside the local church. Three pastors – Theodore R. Bowen (1965-67), C. Douglas Cooney (1969-75), and Kenneth A. Tyson (1975-80) – were elevated from the Bethesda pastorate to service as district superintendents in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. R. Bruce Poynter (1967-69) would leave to become the chaplain at American University and Carroll Gunkel (1983-89) would leave for service at the Asbury Methodist Village.

Recognizing the new "United Methodist Church" created with the 1968 merging with the Evangelical United Brethren, the name "Bethesda United Methodist Church" was first used in print for an evening event on July 31, 1968. The old name would continue to appear on the service bulletins until October, when the pre-printed stock must have run out.

The Building

Steeple – 1966 – The original plans had shown a steeple atop the tower, but it was not put in place in 1949. A more simplified version was craned into place on November 19 and dedicated the next day.

Chapel and Reception Room – 1969 – The end of the building adjoining the Custer Road parking lot was reconfigured as a chapel and reception room dedicated on March 9. The rooms were often used by the weekly Prayer Group, founded in 1953 by Juanita Michael, and the Hartwell Class, an adult education class founded in 1941. These rooms would be converted to offices in 1999 and the chapel moved to the basement of the Education Building.

Mortgage Burning – 1976 – When the mortgage on the 1949 building was retired, a ceremonial "mortgage burning, dedication, and renewal of commitment" was held on October 24, attended by the former pastors who had been instrumental in the building's creation and expansion – Hartwell Chandler and Marion Michael.

Stained Glass Window – 1979 – A stained glass window was commissioned for the center of the chancel wall, dedicated on April 29 as a gift of the Long Family in memory of James S. Long. The installation incorporated the large cross that had been dedicated on October 8, 1967 in memory of Elmer W. Rebol.

Sanctuary Piano - In 1980, a Steinway concert grand piano was donated by the James S. Long Family as a worthy companion for the Moeller organ.

Air Conditioning – 1984 – Rather than assume a new mortgage to finance needed renovations to the church property, a "For Us and Others" campaign was held. One new amenity "for us" was air conditioning. Nearly $25,000 of the funds gathered went to missions projects "for others".

Founders' Hall – 1984 - To mark the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Methodist Church in America, Fellowship Hall was rechristened to honor "former pastors and the founding members of our congregation."

Apostles' Insignias – 1985 – Twelve shields were installed around the cornice of the Sanctuary on August 25. Rev. Ed Moore prepared a booklet explaining the insignia for each Apostle.

Outreach

Bethesda Help – The church supports this local organization, founded in 1968, that helps the homeless and working poor by providing a food closet; financial assistance with rent, utilities and prescriptions; and rides to medical and social service appointments.

Community Ministries of Montgomery County - The church was "among the earliest supporters" of this group that was founded in 1972 (renamed Interfaith Works in 2008).

Refugees – Beginning in April 1975, the church helped sponsor in succession three families from Vietnam and one from Cambodia. This was followed by refugees from Eastern Europe – Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Russia – and Zaire. Spear-heading the program was Jo Allen, who for 25 years would run the church rummage sale to benefit missions. Since 2002, the youth have put on the rummage sale to support their work camp outreach.

SOME – Beginning in 1978, the Washington organization So Others Might Eat received meals prepared and served by church members. Bruce and Nancy Smith tirelessly led this effort for seventeen years.

Sandwich Sunday – Since May 1983, church members have supplied sandwiches for McKenna's Wagon, an outreach to the homeless in Washington. Bruce and Nancy Smith also have spear-headed this ongoing outreach for over thirty years.

Bethesda Cares – In 1988, the church was part of a group of churches and synagogues that founded this local organization that continues to help the needy and homeless in Bethesda.

Work Camps – Rev. Ed Moore, appointed Associate Pastor in 1980, began the ongoing program for the youth of the church to attend work camps, first in nearby West Virginia, then in Appalachia, now across the country, at both urban and rural sites, and in international settings, including Puerto Rico, Belize, and the Bahamas.

Education

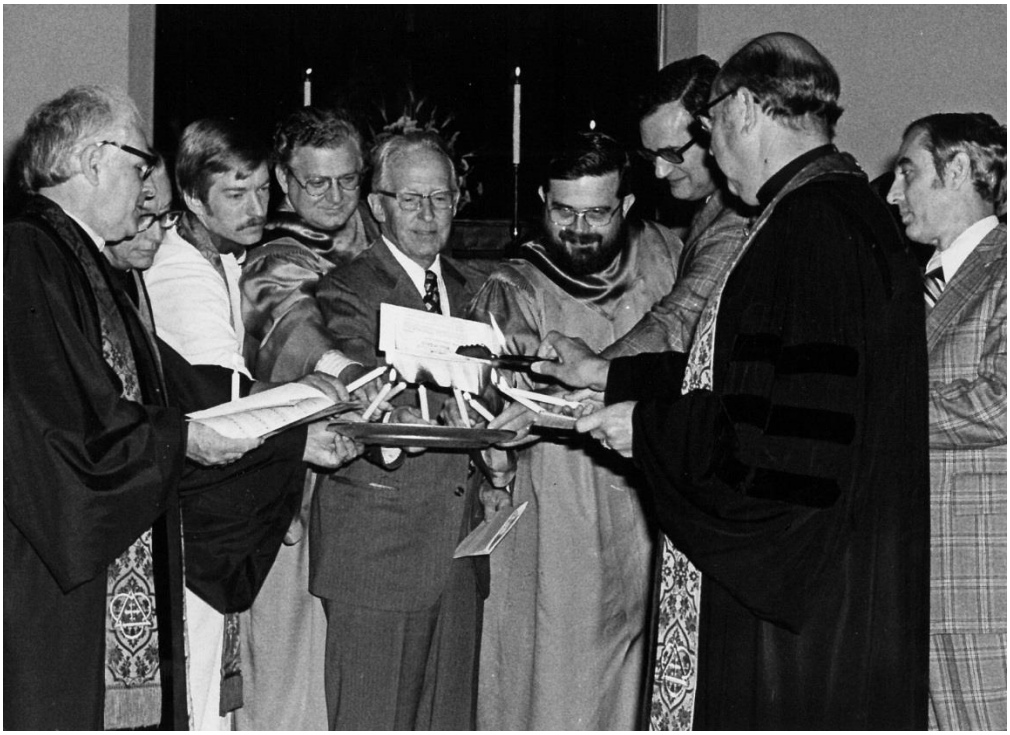
Kid's Christian Fellowship – Since September 1983, children at the 11:00 worship service (a single service at 11:00 from 1994 to 1999) have enjoyed a children's sermon and then attended a kid-friendly fellowship in the Education Wing.
In April 2010, this was restyled as "Kids with Purpose," a more mission-driven activity period originally created as an afternoon program in 2006.

Bethesda Hispanic Mission

In March 1986, BUMC became home to a small Hispanic Methodist congregation. Conference leader Rev. Yolanda Pupo-Ortiz helped start the mission and was appointed its first full-time pastor in June 1988. Eventually the Hispanic Mission shrank in numbers and was disbanded.

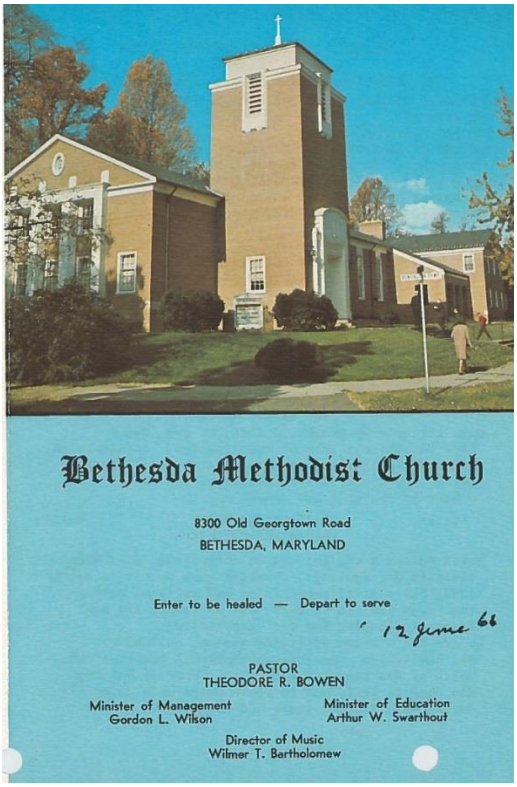
75th Anniversary – 1989

The third quarter century was marked with an anniversary celebration, complete with a second booklet chronicling the history and activities of the church. On October 22, a time capsule was buried in the yard along Huntington Parkway.



Mortgage Burning Ceremony, 1976

Rev Hartwell Chandler, under whom the new church was built, at center; Rev Marion Michael, under whom the Education Building was added, flanked by the 1976 pastors Rev. Ken Tyson and Rev. Dave Stum at left



1966 – before and after the addition of the steeple

Men's Club Pancake Supper

Sandwich Sunday for McKenna's Wagon

THE FOURTH 25 YEARS (1989-2014)

With membership declining, Sunday worship was reduced to one service on September 11, 1994. Rev. Wayne DeHart (1989-98), who had also been with us as the associate pastor (1972-76), shared leadership with a Director of Lay Ministries, Scilla Adams (1993-2005).

Under the leadership of Ronald Foster (1998-2014), an early service was restored on January 10, 1999, with a contemporary format invigorated by the musical leadership of the Praise Band.

At his first Church Council meeting in July 1998, "Reverend Ron" mentioned a phrase that he liked - "Wash More Feet." In June 1999, the council endorsed his more formal proposal to adopt the phrase as our mission statement. In 2001, the United Methodist Church adopted the slogan, "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors" which has become a companion objective to our mission statement.

With renewed growth, BUMC again asked for an associate pastor, the first new appointment being Rachel Cornwell in 2002. In 2004, Ron, Rachel, and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee would present a new "Collegial Pastorate" format to formally move away from the standard senior-associate format.

Rev. Rachel's successor, Jenny Cannon, would, like Rachel, be called from BUMC to a senior pastorate. In 2014, when Rev. Ron received a new appointment after sixteen years, everyone was surprised and delighted to have Rev. Jenny return, joining Kara Scroggins to lead BUMC into its second century.

7:02 Service – In November 2009, the "Alt 27" service began meeting at 7:00 PM on the second Sunday of the month. Rev. Jenny and her husband Rev. Kirkland Reynolds selected the Alt 27 service of November 14, 2010, for the baptism of their first child, Molly. In 2013, this evolved into a regular Sunday evening service at 7:02, designed to provide a time for people at the end of often busy weekends to meet and reflect in a less formal service format with weekly communion and more acoustical music.

Building for the Future and Celebrating Fifty Years on Site – 1999

Arriving for Sunday morning services, members once entered via four doorways - one facing Huntington Parkway that opened into the interior staircase; one through the tower or one on the porch between the Sanctuary and the Education Wing, both facing Old Georgetown Road; or the one at the back parking lot. Only the latter remains a regular entry today. With a 1997 kickoff, a fund-raising drive called "Building for the Future" financed a much more welcoming principal entry. Pastoral offices, a cloakroom, and a narrow Narthex were replaced with today's spacious Narthex, open to the neighborhood with a large window and a bank of glass doors that lead to a broad exterior staircase and an accessibility ramp. The chapel and reception room were reconfigured as offices, with a door opening directly into the Custer Road parking lot. Founders' Hall and the Education Building were renovated, including the provision of fire suppression. All of the changes were celebrated on October 10, 1999, to honor the 50th anniversary of the church's presence on the Old Georgetown Road corner.

Next Steps in Faith – This program for funding further church improvements and missions began on June 8, 2003. In 2005, a generous contribution was made to fund reconfiguring the organ – merging the pipe organ with digital technology - "in thanks for the life and ministry" of Rev. Doug Cooney. By December 2006, a new roof (an unplanned for necessity) had been installed; the chancel had been opened up for greater flexibility of activity; the organ work was complete and a new console in place; and pew cushions and new chancel furniture (communion table, pulpit, lectern, and baptismal font) had been ordered.

Expansion of the Custer Road parking lot – In August 2008, the adjoining Sims house on Custer Road was finally demolished and the new enlarged parking lot was repaved in water-pervious concrete. A long-time neighbor, Mr. Sims had indicated that the church would have rights of first refusal to buy the house upon his death. After it was acquired, it was used for a period as a rental home for needy families, beginning in January 2004.

Elevator – The new Frederick and Willard Myers Memorial Elevator was installed in late 2008 at the south end of the Education Building, providing for the first time not just access to the basement (served by our first small elevator, actually a "lift"), but to the second floor as well. This increased the utility of the building for classes and the Wesley Nursery School. A proper elevator was another goal of the Next Steps in Faith program to slowly come to fruition.

Lonnie's Lobby – A Goal of the Next Steps in Faith program was to convert the Miller Lobby and the porch outside into a more usable space. In May 2007, the Church Council gave preliminary approval for "Lonnie's Lobby," in honor of Lonnie Derrick; this project will finally move forward in early 2015.

Congregational Care

Website – The church established a web presence in September 1997.

Adventicipation – An annual Advent workshop, held after a Sunday lunch in December 1998, was reinvented as a Sunday evening event in 1999, to include dinner. An outdoor living nativity was added to the event beginning in 2003.

Stephen Ministry – In December 2000, the Church Council authorized development of the Stephen Ministry, a program for one-on-one counseling of church members in need. The first class of Stephen Ministers was commissioned in October 2001.

Third Age Café – Begun in January 2005 as "Something for Our Seniors," this mid-day fine dining and fellowship for some of the older set was given a more graceful name for its third session in June that year.

Women's Ministries - The very active United Methodist Women of our church traditionally met in "circles" for study and fellowship, some during the day, and some in the evening. In May 2003, a somewhat less traditional circle, "the Wild Women of Faith", was formed.

Women's Retreats have been held since at least March 1999. The Women's Evening Book Group was begun in April 2002 as the "Booksters."

Men's Group – As a successor to the United Methodist Men, once known as the Men's Club, a new Men's Breakfast Group was formed in 2000.

Easter Egg Hunt – For the younger children, the search for eggs at 10:00 AM on Easter Sunday morning in Greenwich Park adjoining the church began in 2000.

Music

Succeeding Connie Creveling, David Fanning became Director of Music in September 2002, serving until 2013. David brought great musical skills to directing the Sanctuary Choir, arranging music for the Praise Band, orchestral conducting, and staging such musical presentations as *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *Godspell*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. A 2011 performance of Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Requiem* was approvingly reviewed by the *Washington Post*, largely for the very ambition of attempting such a work.

A series of exceptional organists served under Connie Creveling during her 30 years as music director – Lynn Dean, Doug Mears, Mark diGiampaolo, Paul Hardy, and Chris Warrington. Serving since April 2001, under both Connie and David, Chris became the new Director of Music in 2013.

Youth Praise Band - Formed in December 2006, it has remained a vibrant musical outlet for many talented teens.

Education

The Hartwell Class, founded in 1941 as the Young Adult Group and named for Rev. Hartwell Chandler, served the church for 61 years, before providing its last class on December 22, 2002. Just as it had been developed alongside an existing adult group, the Wesley Class, so too have other adult education outlets flourished since the 1980s.

Of note is the ongoing "PTR Class" (Philosophy, Theology, Religion) founded by Dr. Don Ross in 1981. The "Faith and Life Class" (1989-2004) was followed by Koinonia (2004) and The Edge (2008), which merged in 2011 as The Edge of the Koin. A young adults fellowship founded in 2000 as the "Twenty/Thirty Somethings" has become today's YA.Com.

Christian education flourished under the leadership of Amee Fansler, first as a volunteer, then as Director of Education from 2001 to 2013 - an active Sunday School, confirmation classes, and MYF activities, including work camp with such fund-raising efforts as the Adventicipation dinner and rummage sale.

Vacation Bible School – The earliest archival record of a VBS (for a time known as "Vacation Church School") dates to 1940. After a hiatus, it was resurrected in 1998 by Amee Fansler. It has become a vibrant summer program, attracting 300 children, both from the church and the community, with dozens of volunteers from the adults and youth.

High Voltage – This program for the 4th and 5th graders, akin to the MYF for the older youth, began in January 2002.

Outreach

Holiday Bazaar – For decades, the United Methodist Women (with lots of help) raised funds for mission projects by staging a holiday bazaar, noted for its hand-made gifts, baked goods, and gently used books and jewelry. Delicious food attracted employees from the nearby National Institutes of Health for lunch. A full-day event through 2007, it was followed in the later years by a mini-bazaar on a Sunday morning closer to Christmas. In November 2008 and 2009, only a mini-bazaar was held as the last vestiges of a long tradition.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper – For years and years through 1997, the pre-Lenten pancake feast was the fund-raising effort of the United Methodist Men. In 2001 and 2002, it was staged in support of the Volunteers in Mission program, in 2003 jointly in support of VIM and the youth. Since then, it has been a major fund-raising activity for the youth work camps.

Pennies-into-Potatoes Project – To raise funds to combat hunger, this simple program, by which children in Sunday school and interested adults deposit pennies in a jar in the Narthex, began in 1998. The monies are sent to the St. Andrew Society to help pay for the shipping of donated potatoes to food pantries and meals for the homeless, at a cost of 1 cent per serving.

Volunteers in Mission – In 1999, the church first participated, sending a VIM team to Puerto Rico to assist with post-hurricane repairs. In 2000, Rev. Ron was the conference VIM coordinator. In response to the devastation that Hurricane Katrina brought to the Gulf Coast in 2005, church members have traveled to Louisiana (first of many in 2006) and Mississippi (2007) to assist with rebuilding homes. Tornado destruction in Alabama in 2011 led to a VIM trip there as well.

In addition to immediately recruiting twenty VIM volunteers in response to Hurricane Katrina, the church also raised $25,000 for the United Methodist Committee on Relief, pledged $25,000 from Next Steps in Faith giving, and raised $2000 via a Praise Band concert, reflecting the ever-ready responsiveness of BUMC to need around the world.

Calvary Women's Shelter – For one of three small DC shelters, the church provided one Sunday meal each month from 2000 to 2011, when relocation of the shelters to Anacostia made the relationship difficult to maintain.

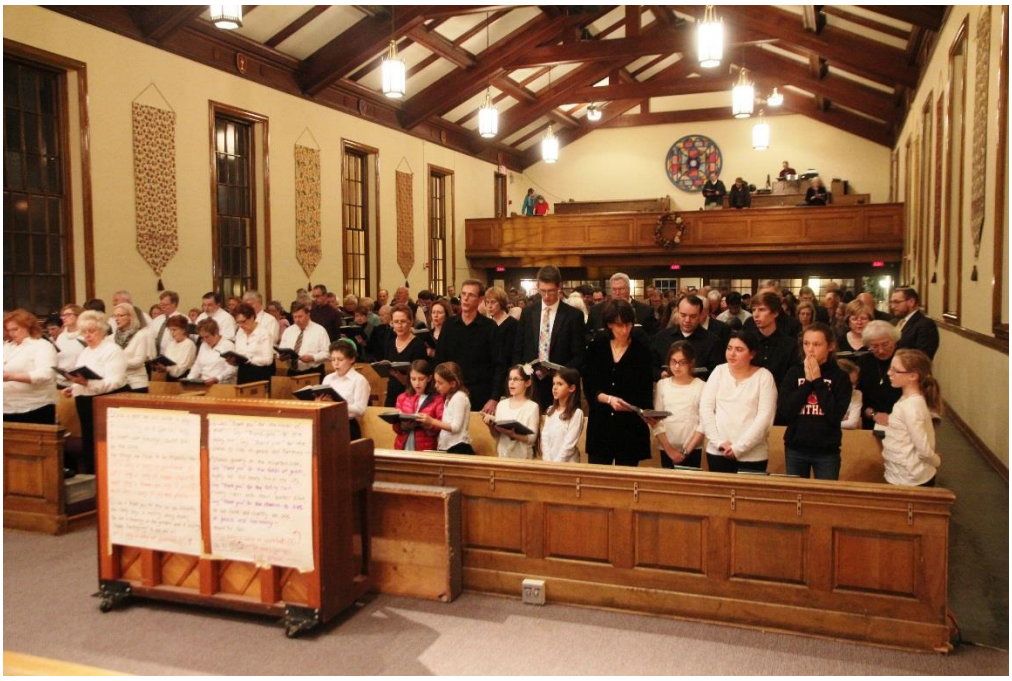
Thirty-Hour Famine – Since 2000, many of the youth have participated in a two-day period of fasting and education to raise funds for children's outreach by World Vision.

"Don't Go to Church – Be the Church" – This motto was first used for a "Faith in Action" weekend in October 2007.

Angel Tree – The Christmas tree from which members can select requests for gifts for needy families has been placed in the Narthex each year since 2007.

Alternative Gift Fair – Although outreach programs had been suggested as recipients of Christmas giving in 2000-02, the current program began in 2008.

Loaves and Fishes – To provide meals, comfort, and support to badly wounded service men and women and their families, the church used one-quarter of the 2010 Christmas Eve offering to establish this outreach with the nearby National Naval Medical Center on February 19, 2011 (Walter Reed National Military Medical Center after September, 2011).



Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

Youth Service after 30-Hour Famine

Vacation Bible School

Volunteers in Mission

SECOND CENTURY – THE FIRST DECADE (2014-24)

The centennial of BUMC's founding was celebrated on Thanks & Giving Sunday, November 23, 2014. This joyous event took place five months after Rev. Ron Foster had been given a new assignment, after sixteen years at BUMC, and former associate pastor Rev. Jenny Cannon had been welcomed back as the new senior pastor. A centennial history, *It All Started on a Front Porch*, was prepared, to which this updated look at the church during the ensuing decade, 2014-24, has been appended for the celebration of our 110th anniversary on Heritage Sunday. March 17, 2024.

2015-2019

Rev. Jenny Cannon and Rev. Kara Scroggins began the first half of the decade facing ever more directly the issue of human sexuality in the policy and practice of the United Methodist Church. In September 2015, after a year-long process of discernment, the Church Council approved a "Welcoming Statement" which eloquently declared our welcome of all persons fully into the life of our church:

> We are a congregation that welcomes all with open hearts, open minds and open doors. Our faith is deeply rooted in the Methodist tradition of social justice and we support the inclusion of all in every aspect of the life of the church. We are more that the sum of our parts. We are a community of believers, doubters and seekers of all ages, from all corners of the earth. Our church family is made up of people of differing sexual orientations and gender identities. We are socially, politically and theologically diverse, yet we are one in the body of Christ. We welcome everyone who wishes to join us as we strive to order our lives in the way of the footwasher, Jesus Christ, to love our God, to love our neighbors and to bring peace, kindness and justice to a world in need.

Fours year later, after Rev. Kara had departed in 2018 to become the senior pastor of Glenmont UMC and Rev. Scott Bostic was received as her successor, BUMC took a second important step. After a summer of discernment in small group meetings and Bible study sessions, at a specially called church conference in October 2019, BUMC voted to affiliate with the Reconciling Ministries Network. To fine tune this relationship, a simple addition was made to the "Welcoming Statement" for clearer alignment with the advocacy language of the RMN; the fifth sentence was expanded as, "Our church family is made up of people of differing sexual orientations and gender identities and we affirm and celebrate all of them."

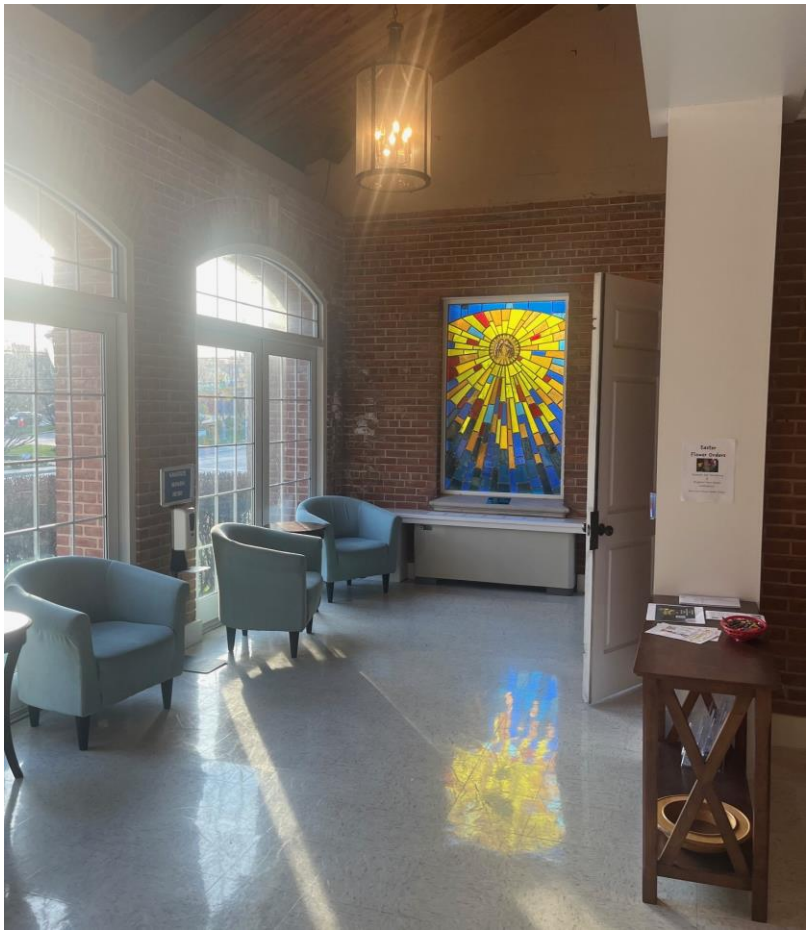
At the turn of our centennial year in 2014, BUMC had begun dedicating all or part of its Christmas Eve offering for outreach endeavors. Recipients have included Bethesda Cares, Refugee Ministry, Rise Against Hunger, Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief Volunteers in Mission trip, Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland Randolph Road Project, and most recently a three-pack of Huree University in Mongolia, St. Jude School in Tanzania, and the local Project Transformation.

In 2015, two long-standing adult classes - the venerable "PTL" ("Philosophy, Theology, Religion" founded and led by Dr. Don Ross since 1981) and "Edge of the Koin" – were joined by a third adult class called "Pathways". Since then, the latter two classes have become "Faithful Families Fellowship" and "Beyond".

In August 2015, Max Nolin was hired as the Sanctuary Choir Conductor and Gail Williams, the volunteer director of Bethesda Bells, also became a member of the staff. Both are dynamic, versatile, and much-loved contributors to a music program that has long proven vital in attracting and retaining members.

In April 2017 and throughout the summer, a group called the "Dream Team" assembled to re-examine the mission, main goals, hopes and dreams of BUMC.

On January 15, 2017, the expansion of the lobby between the Sanctuary and the Education Building was dedicated as “Lonnie’s Lobby” in honor of the late church stalwart Lonnie Derrick. The project involved absorbing the unused original porch as a sitting and greeting area.



Lonnie’s Lobby, 2024

A regular Sunday evening service - established in 2013 as “Studio 7:02” and revamped in 2015 as “Evensong” - was found in 2017 to be no longer sustainable on a weekly basis. Since then, however, Evensong has been a much-enjoyed special addition to the observances of the Advent and Lenten seasons.

In February 2018, the first morning rush-hour vigil for Gun Violence Prevention was held on the corner of Old Georgetown Road and Huntington Parkway.
In September, an evening vigil was marked by the first installation of a gun violence tee-shirt memorial.

Gun Violence Awareness Tee-Shirt Exhibit, June 2021

2020-2024

Starting in early March 2020, the world was ravaged by a pandemic of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The in-person life of BUMC was shut down, and staff and volunteers stepped forward to adopt technological solutions for maintaining the church family and the worship and educational experience. BUMC was fortunate to have done a much better job than many churches in facing the challenges.

In the September 2020 issue of the *Messenger,* Revs. Jenny Cannon and Scott Bostic wrote of having battled the first six months of covid in "'Virtual Meetings, In-Person Faith'" including:

> Small groups and service opportunities and worship itself have all adapted to our new normal and you have proven to be a congregation more than up to the challenges of being a church in creative and faithful ways… Virtual gatherings have proven to be a critical way to navigate this pandemic, and the flexibility and access that technology provides will continue to be useful into the future. We are grateful for those possibilities, even as we know too well the limits of Zoom fatigue! It is essential though that we realize that while our methods for gathering may have shifted to something more virtual, the faith we hold and practice, the faith that we rely on and turn to, the faith that has carried people for generations, is still very much alive and in-person. And we are living it out every day.

In June 2020, after just a two-month hiatus, the collection of sandwiches and trail mix for McKenna's Wagon had resumed, with deliveries by congregants to Bruce and Nancy Smith in the church parking lot. This also provided an opportunity to restock the Little Free Pantry that had been built as an Eagle Scout project in the spring of 2020. On May 7, 2023, 40 years of the Smiths leading this outreach was celebrated in worship. As a service project for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January 2024, the mask-optional making of sandwiches and trail mix in Fellowship

Hall on Sunday combined with the regular Monday deliveries in the parking lot to produce a record donation of 2269 units.

Sandwich and Trail Mix Collecting in the Parking Lot,
Nancy and Bruce Smith, September 2021

To counter some of the limitations of the pandemic, in early September 2020, music rehearsal and recording for inclusion in online services were staged outdoors - Bethesda Bells in the alley and the Sanctuary Choir in the parking lot, everyone masked and widely spaced. At mid-month Step 2 of restrictions permitted 50 masked and spaced people to assemble outdoors, 10 indoors. Praise in the Parking Lot was limited to 20 households. The Interfaith Thanksgiving service was assembled online from participants at both BUMC and Congregation Beth El. For a mid-afternoon drive-through communion in December, celebrants were invited to stay and join the Racial Justice Vigil on the corner. For Advent wreathes, supplies could be picked up at the church for assembly at home. There was a drive-through Nativity and a virtual Christmas Pageant. For Christmas Eve, the 4:00 service was online, but in-person parking lot services at 7:00 and 11:00 could be attended by 25 households or 50 people.

Praise in the Parking Lot, September 2020

Easter in the Parking Lot, April 2021 –
Revs. Scott and Jenny, Chris Warrington, Max Nolin

Vacation Bible School, June 2020 – watched online

Racial Justice Vigil, September 2020

On January 13, 2021, the Church Council unanimously approved an "Acclamation of Thanks and Praise":

> The Church Council of the Bethesda United Methodist Church extends its deepest thanks and praise to the Pastors, Staff and Volunteers for excellence in the planning and accomplishment of Worship services and programs during the pandemic and, particularly, during Advent and Christmas. Without exception, the worship events were creative, technically skillful, moving, fulfilling and inspiring. The spiritual benefit, reassurance of faith and generation of hope for the congregation were exceptional and immeasurable."

A 2021 kit for Holy Week included palms to be waved in photos or videos for an online procession, elements for a tailgate or online communion on Maundy Thursday, and "God from Light" candles for an online walk of the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday.

Just after Easter, in mid-April 2021, masked in-person indoor attendance was finally permitted, with limited well-spaced seating at a single Sunday morning worship service. To keep people apart, congregants were asked to sit through the postlude and then exit via the parking lot door at the front of the church. On July 18, 2021, the online service was first broadcast via YouTube; if congregants did not want to be visible, they were encouraged to sit towards the rear of the Sanctuary. In the fall of 2021, indoor masked events included the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service at BUMC, a Christmas Concert including Capital Carillon, and Advent and Christmas services. On March 27, 2022, masking became optional for the vaccine-eligible, excepting at children's activities. To this day, church meetings regularly are hybrid events, some people attending in-person, others online.

Limited re-entry, April 2021

In June 2021, Rev. Jenny Cannon departed for an appointment in Minnesota and was succeeded by Rev. Dr. HiRho Park, who described herself as our first racial-ethnic woman lead pastor.

Youth Sunday, July 2021 – Rev. HiRho Park

In June 2022, with Rev Scott Bostic set to depart for a senior pastor appointment in Washington, DC, BUMC declined the appointment of a new associate pastor. Shaw Brewer, a rising candidate for ordination as a deacon, was hired as Minister of Worship & Justice (later changed to Minister of Discipleship & Justice).

Another staff addition was Rev. Steven Martin, an ordained minister running a technology company for churches, as Director of Communication, Marketing, and Media-Technology. In September 2023, new cameras were installed in the Sanctuary to improve the online experience. In fact, BUMC's first virtual member has become the first director of a 2024 congregational care project – Full Potential Families Program – with pilot programs for families with transgender children, families with learning and medical needs, and families of divorce.

In 2021, the BUMC Acts Fund was created to fund service projects for initiatives covered by our ministries, including Gun Violence Prevention, Racial Justice, Foster Care, and Creation Care. In January 2022, the Foster Care Closet was opened in the former Scout Room in the basement as a venue for donated clothing, toys, and baby equipment for foster families.

In February 2023, to more visibly depict our inclusivity and our 2019 affiliation with the Reconciling Ministries Network, an exterior banner was approved by the Council. Unveiled at the worship service on June 15, during Gay Pride Month, it consists of the polychrome LGBTQIA+ flag partially overlaid with the "cross & flame" symbol of the United Methodist Church and the words "ALL ARE WELCOME". Hung on the exterior wall of the Sanctuary, facing Old Georgetown Road, unfortunately it was badly vandalized in early November. Undaunted, the Council approved a replacement which was hung on January 10, 2024, on the higher and presumably safer Old Georgetown Road face of the church tower.

Welcome Banner in Place, January 2024

Children's Sabbath 2021 – Presentation of Bibles by Rev. HiRho

Little Free Pantry

At its January 2021 meeting the Council had decided to permanently close the Wesley Nursery School which had been operating in the Education Wing since 1961. Once considered an integral part of the church's Christian education program, by the covid shutdown few BUMC children were attending.

A year later, a task force was empowered to investigate supplemental income opportunities by the rental of space in the Education Building for full-day Pre-K classes. Work began on necessary upgrades. Space rental and the installation of solar panels, another budget measure, are in the works in 2024. Grant funds have been secured from the State of Maryland and Montgomery County for security improvements.

In September 2023, a pollinator garden was added to the BUMC landscape. Built by Riley Williams, this inviting wayside, between Huntington Parkway and the south parking lot, features a patio with benches and a central water element.

The second edition of a congregational art show, the first one held in November 2019, just before covid struck, is being held on March 16-23, 2024, to open as part of a gala weekend including Folk Fest (March 16) and Heritage Sunday (March 17).

PASTORS

Frank Richardson and Gaither Warfield – leading the Woodmont Mission (from Rockville ME Church South) (1914-16)

W. W. Beazley (1916-17)
Elmer C. Sloane (1917-19)
A.O. Lyons (1919-20)
E.H. Davis (1920-24)
E.M. Richmond (1924-28)
Gordon E. Smith (1926-28)
John K. Knox (1928-29)
C. Carroll Burruss (1929-32)
Clarence J. Fossett (1932-33)
John Blakemore (1933-36)
C.M. Wright (1936)
Francis I. Cockrell (1936-40)
Hartwell F. Chandler (1940-53)
Marion S. Michael (1953-61)
*Selwyn K. Cockrell (1952-54)
*C.G. Muradian (1954-56)
*S. Carroll Coale (1956-64)
Orris G. Robinson (1961-65)
*James L. Matheson (1962-63)
*Paul Carr (1963-65)
Theodore R. Bowen (1965-67)
R. Bruce Poynter (1967-69)
*N. Bruce Kuehnle (1968-69)
C. Douglas Cooney (1969-75)
*William B. Price (1970-72)
*Wayne A. DeHart (1972-76)
Kenneth A. Tyson (1975-80)
*David Stum (1976-80)
Charles E. Harvey (1980-83)
*H. Edgar Moore (1980-83)
Carroll R. Gunkel (1983-89)
*Gregory S. Brown (1988-92)
Wayne A. DeHart (1989-98)
*Ann Gordon (1992-93)
Ronald Foster (1998-2014)
*Rachel Cornwell (2002-06)
*Jennifer Cannon (2006-12)
*Adam Briddell (2012-13)
*Kara Scroggins (2013-18)
Jennifer Cannon (2014-21)
*Scott Bostic (2018-21)
HiRho Park (2021-present)

*= Assistant or Associate Pastor

WASH MORE FEET BUMC