Blue Lake

Blue Lake United Methodist Assembly started as a dream of a few people sitting on the shores of a beautiful Lake in a national forest in the 1940's, but it was not until 1951 when the first camp was held. The campers that year wanted to be at camp so badly that they all slept in tents and all of the meals were cooked over a roaring campfire!

The Alabama Conference met at Huntingdon College in 1950 and adopted the report of the Assembly Ground Commission, which stated that the Commission had "found a most suitable place in the Conecuh National Forest, in Covington County, located geographically in the center of the Conference: Blue Lake covering fifty acres and stocked with fish, and adding this "site can be secured through the US Division of Forestry for an annual rental of approximately twenty-five cents per acre, on a continuing permit, renewable annually."

The report also called for a permanent Assembly Ground Commission, with authority to close the contract with the Forestry Service, for approximately four hundred acres surrounding and including Blue Lake; and for the Commission to be empowered to raise $50,000 for equipping the Assembly Ground."

By 1952, the first wing of the main building at Blue Lake Assembly Ground was practically ready for use and work was going forward on the grounds which were already being used by church groups. The dining hall and kitchen and three cottages had been completed. and three other cottages were under construction.

In January 1954, a special session of the Conference was held. One of the two matters requiring urgent Conference action dealt with the Assembly Ground. The Conference voted to spend $8,000 of the approximately $25,000 received from the sale of land at Seashore Assembly at Biloxi, Miss. to acquire a good and merchantable title to land adjoining the Blue Lake property with the remainder of the money to be used for the development of the Blue Lake Assembly Ground.

The 1954 Conference year closed with Blue Lake ready for increased activity. There were six cottages comfortably furnished; a kitchen equipped with a walk-in cooler, deep freeze, a ten-eye, double-oven gas range; and a large tent, erected as an assembly hall for the summer, with plans on foot for the construction of the regular assembly hall and additional cabins in the near future.

The Assembly Ground Commission reported that the Conference now had a deed which included three-fourths of the shore line of Blue Lake. One cabin, accommodating eight people, had been erected during the year. A pavilion had been constructed which would seat approximately fifty persons. The Administration Building and Assembly Hall (seating 500) had been sufficiently completed to use.

A lot has changed since those early days - there are now three separate modern camps (Pinewood, Dogwood, and Oakwood), all of which were built to meet the many different needs of our guests - all together we can now sleep 525! We are also much more than a summer camp, serving all kinds of
guests and accommodating the needs of all different age groups and types of groups.

Blue Lake has continued to receive faithful support from numerous groups such as the United Methodist Women (donations and funding for new buildings), United Methodist Men (bunk bed renovation project and many other work days), and of course the NOMADS who complete several projects each year.

Despite the changes and improvements over the years, Blue Lake continues to honor its rich history, the legacies of those that have gone before, and the original mission and vision of Blue Lake United Methodist Camp.

Blue Lake in the Early Morning

BLUE LAKE TOAST
by Jim Young

The Blue Lake Camp/Assembly Area is a mission of the Alabama-West Florida United Methodist Conference. Thousands of adults and children have enjoyed camps, retreats, Emmaus walks, and just plain relaxing in this serene area in the heart of a long pine forest a little south of Andalusia, AL.

Those who have eaten breakfast at Blue Lake know about Blue Lake Toast.

I had breakfast there during a recent United Methodist Men’s (UMM) annual gathering. (We call these gatherings “Advances”, because the UMM never “retreat”!) After breakfast as we were gathering for the morning session of our meeting, I met Frank, the leader of our Conference UMM. His first words were, “How was the toast?” Blue Lake Toast has been served since before 1981 and is a cultural favorite.

Frank chuckled as he recalled our then current Bishop’s first breakfast at Blue Lake. The Bishop took his first bite of his piece of toast, chewed, held it out and looked at it, and then asked Frank, “Is it supposed to be like this?”

Frank lowered his voice and told me that the secret of Blue Lake Toast is that it is made with lard.

It turns out that it isn’t made with lard, but Frank was not far wrong.

The official recipe, as found in the Blue Lake cookbook is: “Spread one side of white or wheat bread with Wesson’s LoMelt all vegetable shortening. Bake for 15 minutes at 350 degrees, flip, and then bake another 10 minutes until desired crispness.” Desired crispness is a personal decision, but the way it is served by the Blue Lake staff is VERY crisp. You have to be careful lest it shatter into smithereens!

I loved it! My table mates went back for several more helpings.

In addition to being a favorite breakfast item, Blue Lake Toast is made into croutons and breadcrumbs for other menu items.

SIMPLE BUT COMFORTABLE ACCOMMODATIONS
Church Street United Methodist Church
Selma, Alabama

Methodists were the first denomination to organize in Selma and the only church remaining on the original plot of ground assigned by the Selma Land Company. The building sits on the acre of land set aside for a Methodist Church when the Selma Town Land Company drew its plans for the new town of Selma in 1817.

Since 1835, Methodists in Selma have gathered to worship and have gone forth to serve from this same location. The first church building on the site was a frame structure built by J. L. Claughton in 1835. The Rev. Daniel H. Norwood organized a congregation of eleven members, the first congregation organized in Selma, in that wooden church on the corner of Dallas Avenue and Church Street. The rose window in the rear of the present sanctuary is a memorial to those early Methodists, the eight oval petals of stained glass preserving their names and their memories.

In 1853, the wooden church was torn down to make way for a two-story brick edifice. When it was finished in 1856, it had a spacious sanctuary, rooms for Sunday School classes, and a large basement where Afro-American Methodists held worship services for several years.

On a blustery March night in 1899, just as choir practice was ending, a gust of wind toppled the steeple and sent it hurtling, point first into the sanctuary, where it stuck in the floor near the altar rail. No one was injured, but the building was severely damaged. The congregation voted to replace the structure.

The first brick was laid on March 7, 1901 by Ethel Louise Vaughan, so young that her grandmother had to hold her hand. The building, the current structure, was completed in July 1902. It is a Romanesque Revival style structure with a four-story corner tower that’s topped with a conical copper roof. As time has passed, several buildings have been added to accommodate the growth of the church congregation.

The present chandelier was installed during the 1901 construction. It was designed to use electricity in its tulip-shaped bulbs and gas in the flame-shaped bulbs. During the 1986 renovation of the sanctuary, the chandelier was completely rewired for electricity.

The marble baptismal font in the sanctuary was given to the church in 1896 by members of Temple Mishkan Israel in appreciation for being welcomed to hold services at Church Street while their house of worship was being repaired.

The parlor behind the wooden folding doors in the sanctuary is dedicated to the memory of Dr. and Mrs. Otis Vaughan Calhoun. Dr. Calhoun served as pastor of the church for twelve years (1919-1925 and 1935-1941), longer than any other pastor ever served. Ben Feagin was church organist from 1919 until he retired in 1981 at the age of ninety-two.

The building on the northeast corner of Church Street and Selma Avenue is the Fellowship Hall. The property housed several businesses before the church purchased it in 1985.

In November, 1986, the Church Street congregation celebrated the completion of the new education building on the corner of Dallas Avenue and Lauderdale Street, and renovated a large portion of the existing building. During the week the education building is home to Leika’s School that enrolls over one-hundred preschool children each year.

The Pilcher Pipe Organ, installed in 1926, was completely restored with many upgrades, including a new Allen console with MIDI and sequencer capabilities. It has three manuals, 82 ranks (or voices) and 100 voices of MIDI. The installation was completed in December of 1997. This has provided an excellent enhancement for worship, weddings, and other events held in the sanctuary. The organ is reputed to be one of the best of its kind in the state. The sanctuary underwent a complete restoration in 2002.

The Church Street United Methodist Church is a contributing property to Selma’s “Old Town Historic District” that was added to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on May 3, 1978. This church is located at 214 Church Street near downtown Selma.

Sources: 1) ChurchStreetUMCSelma.org; 2) NRHF “Old Town Historic District” Registration Form.
From the early years of the nineteenth century, Alabama Methodists have founded numerous churches and educational institutions. The denomination splintered over the issue of race, first in the 1840s and then after the Civil War. But all Methodists continued into the twentieth century their strong support for social and individual reform.

**Lorenzo Dow**

The entrance of Methodism into present-day Alabama is credited to the Reverend Lorenzo Dow, who in 1803 passed through the Tombigbee country north of Mobile and is believed to have delivered the first Protestant sermon to the frontiersmen there. Yet, the formal establishment of Methodism in Alabama came five years later in early 1808 when the Reverend Matthew P. Sturdevant was sent by the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) to the same Tombigbee settlements. Later that same year, the Reverend James Gwinn was sent from the Western Conference, then meeting at Liberty Hill, Tennessee, to minister to settlers living in the Great Bend region of the Tennessee River, near present-day Huntsville.

Young Methodist ministers such as Sturdevant and Gwinn rode the circuit (hence the term "circuit riders"). They wore heavy coats and wide-brimmed hats to fend off the elements, carried in their saddlebags a Bible and a hymnal, and delivered the word to the most remote parts of the frontier. Much of their labor was devoted to camp meetings or revivals, often held outdoors, that attracted much attention throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Ministers aimed to convert settlers, and to those not caught up in the enthusiasm, their behavior seemed bizarre. As some believers became overcome with fervor, they barked like dogs, engaged in a maniacal chuckling referred to as "the holy laugh," or exhibited an uncontrollable twitching known as "the jerks."

Within a few decades, Alabama had lost its frontier edge and the Methodist circuit riders had toned down much of their emotional pitch. Churches were common in villages and towns. Methodism attracted people from all walks of life, including planters, merchants, farmers, and slaves. Throughout the nineteenth century, Methodists promoted many of the great reform issues, particularly education and such social issues as temperance, an important topic in a time of alcoholic excess. The church's English founder, Oxford-schooled John Wesley, had been among the most educated men of the early eighteenth century and placed a premium on individuals' capacity for reforming their behavior, which in turn depended a great deal on disciplined study. Additionally, the continued success of Methodism in America depended a great deal on a trained clergy. Thus it was no surprise when in 1830 Methodists opened the doors to Alabama's first college, LaGrange, which would form the nucleus of the University of North Alabama in Florence. In addition, Methodists took over control of Athens Female Academy in 1842, which later became Athens State University. In 1854, Methodists established Tuskegee Female College, which later became Huntingdon College. Two years later, Southern University (now Birmingham-Southern College) was chartered in Greensboro. The church took over East Alabama Male College in 1859, later known as Auburn University.

Yet the greatest reform issue of the day, slavery, divided Methodists. John Wesley had published tracts opposing the slave trade, and Methodists were strongly involved in the early antislavery movement in the United States. But Methodists in the South turned silent as slavery expanded throughout the early nineteenth century, whereas Northern Methodists would not be silenced. The General Conference of the MEC, which met in New York City in 1844, consumed 11 days debating slavery. In the end, the Southerners split from the church the following year to create the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MEC, South). For the next two decades, no MEC congregations could be found in Alabama, but southern Methodists in Alabama could boast of more than 200,000 members and nearly 800 churches by the eve of the Civil War.

The war's end saw significant changes among Alabama's Methodists. Black Methodists, in particular, were anxious to leave the patronage of white churches, where they had been treated as little more than children. By 1866 only a third of black Methodists remained affiliated with the MEC, South in Alabama. They instead flocked to the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion), which had been formally established in Philadelphia in 1816 and New York in 1821. As early as 1864, two AME ministers preached in Mobile; but the formal organization began in...
1867 through the efforts of missionaries sent from Georgia to establish the denomination in Alabama. In what may have been a typical process, a missionary sent by the AME preached to Brown Chapel in Selma on August 30, 1867. At the end of the service he asked if the congregation wanted to align itself with the AME. When no one objected, the church was considered a member of the AME.

The original Methodist Episcopal Church looked upon the end of the war as the time to reunite Methodism. The war had ended political secession, and now it was time to end the religious division that had begun two decades before. Once again, missionaries were sent to Alabama, led by the Reverend Arad Lakin of New York and Indiana. The MEC was formally reestablished in 1867 in Talladega, its membership largely confined to the Unionist strongholds in the hills of north Alabama where animosities lingered. The MEC was desirously labeled the "Northern Methodist Church" and Lakin was himself nearly lynched by the Ku Klux Klan. His attempts to establish a biracial MEC were stymied until 1876, when he helped establish a racially separate Central Alabama Conference within the MEC.

With black members leaving to join other Methodist branches, the leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South decided in 1870 to ordain black ministers and to hand over churches and property to a new denomination named the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (the CME), whose name would change to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1954.

Whereas the Methodist Church stumbled with regard to race relations, it was a leader in the temperance movement, encouraging abstinence from alcohol. When in 1856, for example

the citizens of Greensboro learned that the charter for Southern University also banned the sale of alcohol in the town, a banner was unfurled across Main Street reading "Sold Out to the Methodists," expressing residents' displeasure. This early example of local restriction set a pattern for others.

Frustrated with the results of promoting individual temperance, Methodist women in particular began to support public prohibition during the 1880s. Statewide prohibition went into effect at the beginning of 1909, with strong Methodist backing.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Methodists were also caught up with other social problems associated with a modern industrial economy. Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe who landed in Birmingham and the mining towns of central Alabama were unprepared. They lived in crowded homes and spoke no English. In Ensley, Mobile, and elsewhere, Methodist women established settlement homes to minister to immigrants and others struggling to assimilate their old ways to a new order. This was called the Social Gospel, a program of Christian benevolence endorsed by the Methodists in 1907.

Despite—or perhaps because of—the confusing array of Methodist denominations, close to 90 percent of church-going Alabamians in the late nineteenth century were either Baptist or Methodist. Handsome Methodist churches were conspicuous in every town, and Methodist schools and colleges were among the state's best. Methodists were found in all walks of life, from the Maplesville United Methodist Church governor's office to the iron furnaces to the sharecropper's field. The three branches of black Methodism continued as separate denominations. But the Methodist Protestant Church (a small offshoot that began in the 1830s), the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, united in 1939 to form the Methodist Church. In 1968, the Methodist Church united with United Evangelical Brethren to form the United Methodist Church. The 1960s were a difficult time for Methodists in Alabama, as they struggled with the issue of tearing down racial separation. In 1972 the black Central Alabama Conference was merged into the United Methodist Church's other two Alabama conferences, the North Alabama and the Alabama-West Florida.

Today in Alabama, only Baptists number more than Methodists, who remain committed to the theological, structural, and reform tradition begun by John Wesley.

Additional Resources


See more at:

http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1857#sthash.2uGiXck.dpu
September 15, 1829
A Methodist Society was organized at the Union Church according to the rules of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Bishop appointed a “Preacher in Charge,” and the Society became a church – the Montgomery Station. Thus the first organized church in Montgomery was Methodist. It was organized within two months of the centennial of the beginning of Methodism in November 1729 at Christ Church, Oxford University.

1830-1835
The Methodists bought the interests in the Union Church building from the Baptists and the Presbyterians for $50 each. The Baptists included in the deed a requirement that “[...] the Methodist Episcopal Church will finish the building in a plain and decent manner.” A new larger church building was constructed in 1834 and dedicated on March 1, 1835.

1852-1888
The 1835 church building was given to the black members, who desired their own church, and was moved to Holcombe Street. It was named Old Ship Church and is today’s Old Ship Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church. A portion of the 1835 building is still visible. A new larger brick church was constructed on Court Street and was ready to use in 1855.

contact Image

1930-1931
The decision to move the Court Street Church to the Cloverdale area was finalized. The Court Street property was sold to the U.S. Government for $113,720, which the Board of Trustees reported as “[...] the entire assets of the church and is all that is left of this historic building....” On April 26, 1931, the final Sunday in the Court Street Church was marked by “impressive services.” Church Services were then moved to the Chapel at Huntingdon College. Demolition of the Court Street Church was completed on September 18, 1931.

1932-1938
In February 1932 ground breaking for the Education Building at Cloverdale was held. But on November 29, 1932, a terrible gas explosion destroyed the building, killing one and severely injuring another. Rebuilding began, and one year later the first service was held in the new building in the present day chapel. The church faced foreclosure and recurring financial strains, but in 1935 under Dr. Oscar Rice’s able leadership, construction of the nave was begun with nine carloads of stone and one each of bricks, cement, lime and sand. Progress was restricted to “pay-as-you-go”; but in July 1938 the first service was held in the new sanctuary on gravel floors and homemade benches with no windows or heat.
1943-1947
Dr. Gaston Foote set as his top priority finishing construction and furnishing the interior. After lowering the height of the tower and receiving a monetary donation, the tower was finally completed and named in honor of Dr. Rice. In late 1947, Bishop Harrell dedicated the sanctuary to “the glory of God and the service of men.” As part of the 11:00 service, the mortgage papers were burned!

1950-1969
Ground-breaking for the first phase of Fellowship Hall occurred in December 1951. The second phase was completed in mid-1961. After much discussion the chancel carvings were accepted and dedicated in January 1965. The television ministry was begun and received with great appreciation across the state. An organ of “fine quality” was constructed in Ohio at a cost of $75,000 and dedicated on September 24, 1969.

1985-1987
Under Dr. Karl Stegall’s leadership, a major Capital Funds Campaign was over-pledged for the first major renovation work on the church campus since the buildings were constructed at a cost of ~$2 million.

1994-1999
A pressing need for space resulted in the construction of Wesley Hall, a $4.5 million facility. The Maxey House was constructed on Park Avenue and is now used for Sunday school class. The Samaritan Counseling Center opened and later moved to Zelda Road.

2001-2003
The Youth Program grew so much the Wesley Hall attic was finished out as a worship place for youth. The Columbarium, limestone cross and memorial garden were dedicated.

2004
In 2004, the Church’s 175th anniversary was celebrated under Dr. Karl K. Stegall. Church membership reached 3500.

2007-Present
With the appointment of Dr. Lawson Bryan in 2007, the church strengthened its bonds with Huntingdon College. It became a teaching church and developed a strong internship program for college youth interested in ministry. In 2010 the church leased Cloverdale School from Huntingdon to increase its community outreach and to offer alternative worship services.

2007-2016
In 2007 Dr. Stegall retired, and Dr. Lawson Brian was appointed to replace him. Under Dr. Bryan’s leadership, the church’s outreach activities were expanded. In 2013 the Respite Ministry was established to provide day care for persons with Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia. Dr. Bryan brought all the Methodist churches in Montgomery together, uniting AME, AME Zion, CME, and United Methodists, in what became an annual Pan-Methodist Pentecost Service.

2016
At the 2016 Southeast Jurisdictional Conference, Dr. Bryan was elected a Bishop of the United Methodist Church and was assigned to the South Georgia Conference. Dr. Jeremy Pridgeon was appointed as the pastor of the Montgomery First United Methodist Church.

Source: Montgomery FUMC Web Site
1913-2013

Methodist preaching services were held as early as 1911, conducted by the Rev. C.A. Butrum, who was a pastor in Freeport, FL; however, in late 1913 Rev. D.B. Sellers and Rev. K.K. Rushing formally organized a Methodist church in Niceville. They held services in the Edge and Spence Mercantile Building on Bayshore Drive, later the site of Carr Hardware. During that week of services, thirty-one people joined the Church and were baptized in Juniper Creek near the head of Boggy Bayou.

Those joining were: Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Nathey, Mrs. R. A. Burlison and Mrs. G. B. Anchors, Mrs. Addie Willingham, Mary Richardson, Della Rushing, Lucia Early, Sarah Howell, Mary Allen, Lucy Grantham, Mary Spence, Ida Ervin, Nettie Owens, Lola Erwin, Winford Spence, Mr. and Mrs. John Dashinger, Miss Lou Thomas, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Hudson, Miss Quinnie Nathey, Mrs. Alice Allen, D. S. Davis, J. S. Allen, Carrie Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. O. E. Fisher, Amanda Thomas and S. J. Ervin.

In November of 1913, The Methodist Conference met and decided to add Niceville to the churches which were served by Rev. C.F. Butrum. Because of his other church commitments, he preached at Niceville only the fourth Sunday of each month. During this time period, services were held in the High School, then located on the west side of Boggy Bayou. Later services were held in the Woodman of the World Hall, then located near the First Baptist Church.

In 1914 the Conference sent Rev. B.F. Brown and he was here from 1914 until 1915. In the early part of January 1915, a group of church members organized a Sunday School and appointed a Superintendent, Secretary and Treasurer, Pianist, and Sunday School teachers. Also, in the early part of 1915, Rev. Brown started the construction of a small church building, across the highway from Bay Trailer Court on the north side of Mill Creek. Even though the framing was erected, the building was never completed because more room was needed to accommodate the growing membership. The members decided to move from Woodman Hall to the school house, located on Highway 20 in the area of the present Edgewood Subdivision. Services continued in this school house for several years, conducted by several different pastors.

In 1921, Rev. B.F. Brown returned to Niceville and supervised the construction and completion of a church.

On Mother’s Day 1926, while Rev. Grant Gafford was the pastor, the church was destroyed by fire. While the rebuilding of the church took place, the congregation met in the Baptist Church. As the new church was in the final stages of construction in 1927, Pastor Gafford was reassigned and he held his last service on the site of the new building using blocks, timber, and other construction material for pews.

In 1945 when Rev. Spivey was pastor, preaching was still held every fourth Sunday. Carol Britlinger, Rev. Burleigh Law, and Laymen R. R. Roush volunteered to fill the pulpit the remaining Sundays. Roush and Britlinger were with the Air Force at Eglin AFB, and Law in Civil Service at Eglin AFB. Mr. Roush became the pianist.

On August 26, 1945, the church was officially named Niceville Methodist Church. At that time, the building committee was J. M. Reynolds, G. B. Anchors, Miss. Mattie Moore, and Miss Lula Jane Edge. The officials of the church were J. M. Reynolds, Mrs. T. J. Peaden, Mrs. Charles Parrish as Sunday School Superintendent, and Miss Corinne Howell (Mrs. Lester Early) as Secretary and Treasurer.

The first parsonage was built in 1947. In 1949, an expansion of church facilities included an educational building with Sunday School rooms, social hall, bathrooms, and a small kitchen. Regular church pews and pulpit furniture were purchased in the 1950-1954 period. The debt on the Educational Building was paid off in 1954.

In 1956, Pastor A.C. Britt was assigned. Brother Britt, as he was called, was a highly-loved minister and was said to be a real “go-getter.” He even typed the church bulletins himself. In addition, he encouraged the congregation to build a new sanctuary and became heavily involved in the construction. With donated labor and materials, estimated at $28,000.00, plus $47,000.00 in cash, the sanctuary was completed and the first service was held May 21, 1961. Serving on the building committee during this period were Chairman Walker Spence, L. H. Childs, Watson Hodge, Jerry Reynolds, M. G. Moore, Joe Marler, W. G. Ransom, W. T. Walker and Treasurer, Mrs. Corinne Early. The Official Board recommended and voted to have Homecoming every third Sunday in May and to ask Rev. Britt to preach the sermon each Homecoming as long as he was physically able to do so. Pastor Britt left Niceville in 1961. Rev. William J. Hughes came to our church in June of 1962 and was the first pastor to have a full-time secretary.

1963-1983

In 1963 as the church celebrated its 50th anniversary, plans for expansion continued. Bonds were sold to finance a new centrally heated and cooled building containing 18
classrooms, a fellowship hall, and restrooms. In June 1965, the building was ready for occupancy. In June of the same year, the old sanctuary was torn down, rubbish cleared away, and a parking area paved.

In 1965, the church voted to change its name of the church from Niceville Methodist Church to First Methodist Church of Niceville. In 1966, the parsonage was completely remodeled.

In 1968, the name of the church was changed to First United Methodist Church. The word "United" coming from the union of The Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Church and The Methodist Church which occurred that year.

In August of 1974, a new parsonage was completed. The lot for the parsonage was given by Mr. Pat Bryne, a friend of the church and the new parsonage was financed by the sale of church notes. John and Joy Macon served as treasurer for this building program and Jane Meigs, church lay leader, and Chairman of the Parsonage Committee. Because of the need for additional parking space and for a recreational area, the church bought and developed the property next to the old parsonage.

In 1979, under the leadership of the Rev. Douglas Newton, a new sanctuary was erected and consecrated. A new office complex, a chapel, Sunday School classrooms and a new kitchen, adjoining the large fellowship hall (which had been the sanctuary) were added.

1983 to 2002

Rev. Ed Chandler came to the church in 1983 bringing several innovative programs which strengthened the church and facilitated its growth. The sanctuary was expanded and a balcony added in 1991. A large family center, named the Chandler building was completed in 1995. In 1998 the renovation of the old educational building took place. This was completed in April of 1998, just before Rev. Chandler retired. He had been the senior pastor from 1983-1998 and became a Counselor to the church on his retirement.

In 1998, Rev. Rurel Ausley, Jr. was assigned to the church and has aggressively moved forward with in looking toward the future of the church as it continued to grow. A Contemporary Worship service at 9:40 AM was added in 2000 and has consistently had the largest average attendance for Sunday church services. The Sunday morning services included a traditional 8:15 service, a contemporary service at 9:40, and another traditional service at 11:00. A second Sunday School service was added to provide one at 9:40 and another at 11:00. Major property acquisitions have provided for future expansion and for improved youth activities.

By late 2002, The Niceville United Methodist Church had reached an average Sunday attendance of 1,435, placing it in the top 1 percent of churches nationwide.

2002 – Present.

Niceville UMC is no longer. As it continued to grow and build additional campuses, the Niceville UMC congregation voted to rename itself to reflect its larger presence in the area. It is now Crosspoint United Methodist Church and has a campus on the north side of the county seat of Crestview north of Niceville and another on the south side of Crestview, the original site in Niceville, and a site in Blucwater Bay, east of Niceville, which has just opened. A separate administrative building called Crosspoint Central located near the Niceville site houses the Lead Pastor, the Executive Pastor, and Crosspoint administrative staff.

In 2016 Crosspoint was listed as one of two fastest growing United Methodist churches in the Alabama-West Florida Conference and is the 9th fastest growing United Methodist Church in the United States. Rev. Rurel Ausley, who has been the pastor since 1998, continues to be the Lead Pastor. The 2014 average worship attendance (the last year for which data are available) is 2,898, and Crosspoint’s 5-year growth is 47%. In 2015, Crosspoint had been listed as the 12th fastest growing UMC in the U.S.

From www.fumcniceville.org and Boggy Bayou – Around Niceville and Valparaiso, Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, 2005

Pastors of the Niceville FUMC (1915-2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pastor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1915-1920</td>
<td>B. F. Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921-1922</td>
<td>F. L. Floyd</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923-1925</td>
<td>H. E. Price</td>
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<td>1926-1927</td>
<td>G. E. Gafford</td>
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<td>1928-1929</td>
<td>J. W. Gibson</td>
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<td>1930-1933</td>
<td>A. H. VanLandingham</td>
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<td>1934-1937</td>
<td>P. B. Dansby</td>
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<td>1938-1939</td>
<td>J. F. White</td>
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<td>1940-1943</td>
<td>H. F. Wesley</td>
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<td>1944-1945</td>
<td>D. M. Spivey</td>
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<td>A. D. Shoemaker</td>
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<td>G. G. Vickers</td>
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<td>Haywood L. Scott</td>
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<td>1954-1958</td>
<td>A. M. Shirah</td>
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<td>1959-1961</td>
<td>A. C. Britt</td>
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<td>W. J. Hughes</td>
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<td>Sam E. Hudgens</td>
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<td>F. R. Herlong</td>
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<td>John T. Parker</td>
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<td>1979-1983</td>
<td>Douglas C. Newton</td>
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<td>W. Judd Stinson</td>
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<td>1977-1979</td>
<td>Jeff L. Spicer</td>
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<td>J. Edward Chandler</td>
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<td>R. A. Ausley</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998-2001</td>
<td>Davis W. Rhodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2010</td>
<td>Kevin Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2015</td>
<td>Jeremy Smith</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Associate Pastor: Bryant C. Wilson 1993-1999

Associate Pastor: Davis W. Rhodes 1999-2001

Associate Pastor: Jeffrey C. French 2001-2005

Associate Pastor: Kevin Kelly 2005-2010

Associate Pastor: Jeremy Smith 2010-
February 19, 2017

Fire Destroys Springfield UMC Sanctuary

SPRINGFIELD, Fla. - A church that has been a sanctuary for the Springfield community is now just walls and smoldering ash. "I got a call saying the church is on fire, and I thought they were talking about the holy spirit and the gospel and then all of a sudden the texts started coming in," Pastor Seven Grogan, Springfield United Methodist Church, said.

The first call went to Springfield firefighters shortly before 9:00 p.m. The department along with Bay County, Panama City, and Callaway crews responded to the church at 701 School Avenue to find the building engulfed in flames. "This is, never in my wildest dreams. I was completely, wildest nightmares. I was just like, 'Oh my, Lord in Heaven,' and I just started praying and I was just so overwhelmed with 'this is crazy," Grogan said as he struggled to find words. Grogan and a crowd gathered at the scene, but onlookers could only watch as the fire ripped through the church. Grogan said the sanctuary, church offices, and prayer rooms which were added to the church in the 1980's were all destroyed.

Crews tried to prevent the flames from spreading to the original building, but so far it appears the fire was unforgiving. "I say it all the time, but God is a God of miracles, and he's in the miracle business. This is going be awesome because it's going to turn tragedy into triumph. I know that's true," Grogan said.

The church is known for its Mission House, which feeds 80 to 90 families every week. Grogan said the church plans to continue its food mission and church services this week.

It was hoped that the undamaged Fellowship Hall which is adjacent to the Sanctuary could be used for church services in the coming weeks, but the latest information as of February 21st is that the Fire Marshall determined that there weren't enough exits in the Fellowship Hall to allow for the 80-90 people that would be expected to attend. The church and the Marianna-Panama City District are currently looking for a large “revival” type of tent that would be suitable.

Photo: Springfield UMC web site  
Text and Fire Photo: www.mypanhandle.com

The Alabama-West Florida Conference Historical Society’s Annual Meeting, September 21, 2017
At the Oldest Methodist Church in Florida, Pensacola FUMC

The First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL dates back to 1821, when a mission was established by the Mississippi Conference and the Reverend Alexander Talley was appointed as missionary to Pensacola. At that time, the areas that later became the states of Mississippi and Alabama as well as the area now known as northwest Florida were all part of the Mississippi Territory. The mission began by holding meetings in the courthouse and the old theater of Pensacola.

In 1827, a lot was purchased on the north-east corner of Intendencia and Tarragona Streets and a church was built. The first services were held on June 2, 1828.

The years of 1870 – 1880 were crucial years for the church, which suffered two fires, in which the church was completely destroyed, and there was an epidemic of yellow fever.

More information about the 2017 Annual Meeting will be provided in later issues of this Newsletter.
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The Little Texas Tabernacle and Cemetery
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St. Stephens UMC Pastor
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First United Methodist Church, Fort Walton Beach, FL
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Gainestown United Methodist Church, Gainestown, AL
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Information and Events of Historical Society Interest

Executive Committee and Officers of the AWFC-HS

Jim Young, President
Rev. Ed Shirley, Vice President
Sharon Tucker, Recording Secretary
Mary Ann Pickard, Financial & Membership Secretary
Carolyn Coker, Member at Large
Craig Reynolds, Member at Large
Joyce Stimak, Member at Large
Myrtice Carr, Previous Past President

The Historical Society Website

http://www.awfhistory.com/

Please visit the website for the AWF Conference’s Historical Society. This website was created so that we may be more accessible to everyone with information and offer an avenue of interaction concerning our shared interest in Methodist history. Please browse through the pages to learn more about early Methodism in America, Alabama, and West Florida. We will be adding more to our internet files through the efforts of volunteers (we invite you to be one), members of the Historical Society (you can become one), and our conference archivists (we have some good ones). We regularly plan events where we enrich our knowledge of history, enjoy fellowship, and actually visit a historic location.

We’re Also on Facebook!

Follow us on Facebook. Enter “AWF Historical Society” in the search box at the top of your Facebook page. “Like” us – Follow us! Participate with comments and photos. Invite your friends.

The AWFC Historical Society Newsletter

The newsletter is published quarterly and all comments and suggestions are welcome.

If you would like to submit an article or a notice or an announcement for publication in the AWFC Historical Society Newsletter, please contact the editor, Jim Young, at youngjmy@cox.net or by phone at 850 862-8642.

Ask the former generation and find out what their ancestors learned, for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow.

Job 8

AWFC Historical Society Contact Information

Sharon Tucker, Archivist
Mary Ann Pickard, Administrative Assistant

Methodist Archives Center
1500 East Fairview Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36106

Telephone: 334-833-4413
FAX: 334-263-4465
E-mail: archives@huntingdon.edu

Also

James Young, President
1014 Aspen Court
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547
Telephone: 850 862-8642
E-mail: youngjmy@cox.net

The Historical Society Fiscal Year

The AWFC Historical Society Executive Committee, at their February 2015 meeting, amended the by-laws of the Society to establish the AWFC-HS Fiscal Year as being from AWF Annual Conference to the next AWF Annual Conference.

The Executive Committee members for 2015-2016 were re-elected at the September 24th, 2015 Annual Meeting to continue to serve during the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year.

Your Help Is Needed!

Our Society has a relatively small number of members. We need your help to make everyone in the AWF Conference aware of our group and what we do. We need to educate District Superintendents, Pastors, and Church Councils about the need for an active effort in each church to collect and preserve our history.

We need to recruit new members and to involve more folks in our activities.

We need your suggestions for locations for future AWFC-HS Annual Meetings. Consider your own church or historic churches in your area and let us know.

Articles or suggestions for articles for this newsletter are also needed and will be appreciated. People, places, and events of historical AWFC interest are worthy of being featured here.
Alabama-West Florida Conference Historical Society
Membership Application
Membership is from Annual Conference to Annual Conference
2016/2017

When you join between annual conferences your membership is valid through the remainder of the year plus between the times of the next two annual conferences.

Please Provide Following Information for Individual or Church. Check the one that applies:

___ Person ___ Church
Name: ___________________________________________

If individual write the name of your church below:
______________________________________________

Address: _______________________________________

City: _______________ State: _______________ Zip: ____________

Phone: ___________________ E-Mail: ___________________

SELECT MEMBERSHIP TYPE

___ Annual Membership $15
___ Student Membership $8
___ Donation to Society

Total Amount Enclosed: $____.____ Make checks payable to: AWFC
In Memo/For section write “AWFC Historical Society”

Send this Membership Application to:

Methodist Archives Center
1500 E. Fairview Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36106

Are you the historian for your church? ___Yes ___No
Are you interested in being a member of the Commission on Archives and History (COAH)? ___Yes ___No ___Need more information