

## Our Church

† Our Vision is to be a vibrant house of worship drawing people to Christ, a committed people of faith, loving and serving God and all people.

This is a series of articles about the things we all see around our church, decorations, functional pieces, even the building itself. Each thing has a history and message. Let's become more aware of the symbolism, the origins, and those who have given them to our church.

The articles were written by MUMC member Susan Krohner and are excerpted from our church newsletters (2008-2012).

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## **Our Banners**

A focal point in our sanctuary is the banner. There are seven which rotate through the liturgical year, which begins with Advent, proceeds through Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and the Resurrection, Pentecost, and rounds out the calendar with Ordinary Time. These have all been constructed by Jean Crompton and June McNally from designs by the Rev. Richard Yerrington, Robert Anderson, or themselves. Other volunteers also helped.

The banners are all twenty-four feet high and fourteen feet wide and hang from a series of pulleys, cords, and a very strong rod. They were constructed by hand on the floor of our Fellowship Hall. Most are of heaven cotton or linen. One is red satin. The oldest, the first, is the purple one hanging during Lent. All are twenty to thirty pounds of cloth and thread.

Our banners are renown in our New York Conference because they were used several times to transform a gymnasium into a more suitable meeting space.

The banner hanging in September is a Tree of Life. This one is a stark tree, leaf-less, on a green background, with a cross prominent in the foreground. "This is one of the two trees mentioned in the Garden of Eden story; the first (important before the Fall) grew the fruit offered by the serpent to Eve, and was the means to the knowledge of good and evil. The Tree of Life [our green banner hanging during Ordinary Time] plays a role after the Fall; it was thought to have the power of eternal life, and is the means to universal or divine enlightenment."

Take notice of our banners, their symbolism, and think to thank Bob, June, and Jean when you see them at worship.

## **Advent and Christmastime Seasons**

As our seasons in nature change from fall to winter then into spring and summer, thus also change our church seasons. The church year begins with the first Sunday in Advent, beginning the festivals commemorating the life and work of Christ. This part of the calendar includes Advent, Christmastime, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost. The calendar ends with the non-festival portion, establishing the standards of Christian life. The last part begins with Trinity Sunday, which follows Whitsunday, celebrating the Holy Spirit, fifty days after Easter.

In Latin December meant "tenth month." But with the change in calendars, we have this misnomer for our twelfth month instead.

December heralds the first season of the liturgical year, Advent, followed at Christmas Eve by Christmastime, which lasts a short time to the second Sunday in January. We might be confused about the timing of these liturgical seasons because of the music piped at customers in just about any stores starting before Halloween and the sales enticing buyers during the Christmastime weeks.

Our church reflects these two seasons with decorations and appropriate liturgical colors. Prominently, the banner changes for the Advent season. Central is the large, and very heavy, cross now draped in purple. On the front wall to each side hang banners of four candles, three in the traditional purple symbolizing prayer, penitence, and introspection, and representing Love, Hope, and Peace. The fourth candle, for the third Sunday of Advent, is pink and represents Joy. These banners were designed and assembled by Jean Crompton and June McNally.

The paraments (scarves on the altar, lectern, and pulpit) are also changed to purple.

In front of the chancel is the Advent wreath and candles lighted each Sunday by members of the congregation. A few joyful words reflect the Coming of Christ into the world.

Garlands of greens twine around the choir loft railing and around the candles on the side walls. Wreaths festooned with purple bows also hang on the side walls and on the doors. These bows are changed to white for the beginning of the Christmastime season.



For Christmas Eve, the beginning of the short Christmastime season, the central banner is changed to a scene of the town of Bethlehem at night against a deep blue background with a star pointing to a humble building where the Christ child had just been born. This banner was designed by Bob Anderson and made by Jean Crompton and June McNally. All the paraments are changed to match the banner. The purple wreath bows are changed to white. Notice what our pastor wears to reflect these

two seasons.

New gleaming brass candelabras light the chancel. These were given to our church by Jim and Judy Hoffman to honor their children. They will be in place throughout the Advent and Christmastime seasons.

The eight members of the Liturgical Arts Committee with many more helpers change these symbols in our church to reflect the change of seasons.

Our church is rich with gifts and symbolism. Notice them as you worship in the sanctuary during these two joyful seasons.

## **Epiphany Season**

The first two seasons of the Christian Year have passed (Advent and Christmastime), and we are in the Epiphany. This season commemorates the showing of the Infant Jesus to the Wiseman, the first Gentiles to worship Him. Two other important images of Christ's manifestation are his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding at Cana. This season ends at the beginning of the Lenten season, Ash Wednesday. This time between Christmastime and Lent is Ordinary Time. It is not a season, just a way to describe the time between the seasons. Here, "ordinary" means regular, plain, also counted.

Epiphany is a day of splendor and light. The central banner has a white cross indicating the purity of Jesus; three crowns symbolize the wise men from the East who traveled to worship him. The shell and water droplets in the lower left corner symbolize the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Designed by Bob Anderson, Jean Crompton, and June McNally, it was made by Jean and June; the shell and droplets were embellished by Pam Palmer. All the banners are twenty-four feet high, fourteen feet wide and weigh twenty to thirty pounds each.

## Lent

Lent is the 40-day preparation for Easter, a season to commemorate the suffering in death of Jesus Christ. It is a penitential season beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending on Holy Thursday. It actually has forty-six days because the six Sundays in Lent are not counted as part of the forty days. The word "Lent" comes from an old word for springtime. As the church's spring, it is the season to give the earth and ourselves a good cleaning, a time to return to God. Easter comes from "Eostre," the name of a pagan goddess of springtime and fertility.



During Lent we are facing a thirty-foot purple banner depicting the events leading to Christ's death upon the cross. In the upper half are palm leaves that were thrown down before Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem. In the center is a cup representing the Last Supper with his disciples. Below the cup are grapes turning from purple to red, representing Christ's sacrificial blood. To the left is the crown of thorns forced on Christ's head. The cross, prominent in front of all, will be Christ's fate on Good Friday.

The liturgical color is violet, except on Good Friday when it is black. You will see the violet on our minister's stole, on the altar (the paramounts), on the banner (designed by Bob Anderson and constructed by Jean Crompton, June McNally, and Jean Anderson).

## Holy Week and Easter

Holy Week is the celebration of the last days of Jesus' life.

On Palm Sunday we begin the intense days of passion that lead to Jesus' death and His resurrection.

Our Lenten banner, with palm leaves, a cup, grapes, a crown of thorns, and a cross superimposed over all, will be dramatically lowered. Beneath hangs a plain wooden cross draped in purple. Interestingly, for both practical and symbolic reasons, this cross is actually always there, above the altar, beneath the cloth banners, ever present.

Palms are distributed to the congregation as reminders of the palms the crowds spread on the dusty roads as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Now the palms are a sign of victory. 2000 years ago the date palm trees of Jerusalem were part of the local economy. Reaching 75 feet in height, these trees were used in their entirety. Leaves were woven into mats; fibers provided strong thread; sap was turned into syrup, vinegar, and liquor. The trunk could be used for timber. Even the seeds could become food for the animals.

On Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus taught in the temple.

On Wednesday of Holy Week, Jesus rested at Bethany, a town just west of Jerusalem.

On Maundy Thursday, Jesus returned to Jerusalem and gathered His disciples for a final feast, The Last Supper. Then He is betrayed by Judas. In our church the senior youth group sponsors a pot luck supper to recreate this Last Supper. The Confirmands and our minister ask and answer the four major questions of the traditional Jewish Seder. The evening ends with communion, using

the pottery chalice and paten made and presented to the church by Loretta Disney. The cross is still draped in purple.



At the rear of the sanctuary is a double-sided painting by Walter Laidlaw, 1982. Usually showing is a depiction of The Last Supper. On the reverse is the crucifixion.



On Good Friday the church mourns. The colorful banner is taken down. The cross (built by Jeff Lindstrom in the early 1970s), always present, stark against the wall, is draped in black. Close to the altar is a crown. Unlike gold and jewel encrusted symbols of sovereignty, this crown is fashioned from canes of thorns and is a passion symbol showing the suffering of Jesus. It was plaited by Roman soldiers and mockingly placed on His head during the crucifixion. It is unclear which thorn bush was used, but there were several widespread and well-known in biblical times in Palestine. Barbara Vasquenza has made this very touching and emotional symbol of Christ's suffering from rosebush canes culled from our Memorial Garden. It is a focal point by the altar during Holy Week, waiting for Good Friday.

On Saturday Jesus' body lay in His tomb. Tombs of the New Testament time were either caves or holes dug into stone cliffs. Jews used neither caskets nor sarcophagi. The tombs were very simple, no inscriptions, indeed even unmarked. The door for such a grave was a stone weighing one to three tons, thus the miracle of the stone being rolled away from Jesus' tomb.

Then Lent is ended. We rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord on Easter.

The word "Easter" occurs only once in the Bible (Acts 12:4). There is no celebration of the Resurrection in the New Testament. The early Jewish Christians linked the Resurrection with the Passover and so observed it on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, no matter what day of the week. Gentile believers celebrated the Resurrection on the Lord's Day, Sunday. Since A.D. 325 when this difference was resolved at the Council of Nicea, Easter has been celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox.



Our banner again covers, but does not replace, the cross. For Easter, the banner depicts the risen Christ. The dominant color is pure white. With his arms outstretched, the Christ figure displays wounds on His hands, feet, and side. A whiter cross frames His resurrected body. This banner was designed by the Rev. Richard Yerrington and was constructed by Jean Crompton, Penny Yerrington, and Richard Yerrington. The Easter banner remains through Eastertide.

## Pentecost

Pentecost is the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks, fifty days after Passover. Because the early Christians received baptism of the Holy Spirit on this day, the term is commonly used for that event (Acts 2: 1-13). According to Acts, while the Apostles were gathered in one house, the Holy Spirit came upon them, sounding like a mighty wind and appearing like tongues of fire. The Apostles then spoke in foreign languages, and conversion and baptism of thousands resulted.





The background of the current hanging fourteen feet wide by twenty-four feet tall focus-demanding banner is searing, electrifying, shiny, fiery, look-at-me scarlet satin. It calls us to celebrate the Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Along with most of our other banners, this spectacular fiber art was designed by pastor Richard Yerrington and constructed by Jean Crompton and June McNally.

On our brilliant banner, a white dove representing the Holy Spirit that visited the Apostles, descends through flames to the earth.

## Stained Glass Windows

Even though our church building is quite modern in style, we have some stunning stained glass memorial windows as testimony from our previous church buildings.

As the congregation has grown and moved away from downtown Unionville, we have brought with us some of the oldest memorials currently in our church. In the early 1980's there were many of the original stained glass windows downstairs in the storeroom, intact. In order to create an art piece befitting our new architecture, several windows were sacrificed by smashing the glass around the medallions, discarding the broken pieces and wiring the chosen medallions to create a mobile. That piece is currently hanging in the clear window at the front left of the sanctuary and is all that is left of those particular windows. This mobile has spent much time unfortunately on the floor and now has crack and smashed parts.

Then someone decided to clean out the storeroom and the intact stained glass antique memorial windows disappeared.

In the late 1980's Chris Carroll found them accidentally in the stained glass shop in Burlington and notified Bruce Merritt. The shop proprietor had recognized them as belonging to a church and therefore did not break them apart to reuse the glass. Bruce claimed them happily on a Friday night. The next day the shop burned down and all its contents were destroyed. The windows have been in the Merritts' basement ever since, except for the six currently hanging in the sanctuary. Bruce reports that it cost about \$5000 to restore each window. When more money becomes available, the six remaining windows will be restored and displayed in our church as memorials.



Hanging now are the restored memorials to Charles Perry James and Loranna C. James; Alice Lamont; Charles G. Eddy; Cecelia C. Sheldon, and Frank W. and Julia Fenn. All of these feature a medallion and the names of the loved ones to be memorialized. At the rear of the sanctuary is a crucified Christ figure in the clouds, not a specific memorial. The colors are not the same in all the windows, but are complementary. Blue, green, gold, yellow, purple, and white predominate. The crown in the medallion is a symbol of the power to rule; the lily, loveliness blooming after the spring rains; the cross, redemption; the star, the glory of the Creator; the dove, peace; the lamp, perhaps God's word, God's guidance, God's salvation, man's spirit, prosperity, or a son as a successor; and the Bible, Christian scripture.

Bruce has dedicated a great deal of time - and space in his basement - to these memorials. He would be happy to accept donations towards their recovery. Ask him about these gems.

## The Chi Rho and The Cross and Flames

These are two symbols around Our Church that carry meaning beyond just being attractive. The Chi Rho is one of the earliest cross forms used by Christians. It is the first two letters in Greek of Christ, X and P, superimposed, and interpreted world wide as a symbol of Christianity. Often the Greek letters Alpha and Omega appear with the X and P, to symbolize completeness; so God and Christ are both the Alpha and the Omega, First and Last, Beginning and End. Revelation 1:8; 21:6; Isaiah 41:4, 44:6.

Use of the Chi Rho dates back to the third century when illegal Christians used it to identify themselves. But it was Constantine I (b. 272, d. 337) who had it applied to his military standards and his military shields; then when he won the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, he credited the One God. Constantine's use of this symbol was also a turning point for the Christian Church because in 313 he legalized Christian worship and became a patron of the Church, thus setting a precedent of the Christian Emperor for centuries to come.



Most prominently, a chi rho adorns our bell tower. It was fashioned by Joe Booth of metal and became the symbol for our newly built church, consecrated in 1971. It also appears often around the sanctuary: on the baptismal font, in the mobile of stained glass pieces, even on our name tags.

The Cross and Flames as a symbol is not quite as old as the Chi Rho. This symbol dates back only to the merger of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968. Since then, we are known as The United Methodist Church.



The insignia of a cross (symbolizing God through Christ) and a flame (symbolizing the Holy Spirit) was formally adopted in 1968, patented in 1971, and now supervised in its use by an office of the UMC. This insignia is rich in meaning. The flame is from Acts 2:3 when witnesses experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and saw "tongues, as of fire." Founder of Methodism, John Wesley, had a transforming moment when he sensed God's presence and felt his heart "strangely warmed." Thus the two tongues of a single flame may also represent the union of two denominations.

This insignia can be found on the flag of the Methodist Church hanging in our sanctuary. Also in the sanctuary it is on the hymnals, on the blue table cover for the bell choir, on the small but very useful table in the back, in silver on a chain against our pastor's white robe, even in gold on Heather's neck. In our Fellowship Hall, there is a two foot tall Cross and Flames insignia carved and painted by John Fillian to brighten and bring a focus to the newly redecorated hall and to remind guests using our facility that this is also part of God's house. Through these symbols we enrich our Christian lives.

## "New" Avon Church

*Our New, Very Modern, Very Practical, Very Symbolic, Very Starkly Unadorned Church*

MUMC has had buildings in Burlington, Unionville, and now Avon. The small but expanding congregation in Unionville needed more room. A five-acre piece of meadow was purchased in 1965 from Mr. Conway Smith. Though he is no longer with us, his family still keeps the farm active



next door, with lovely apple orchards stretching out to our property line for us to see and certainly enjoy. It wasn't until 1970 that the foresight of a committee of parishioners manifested in the dedication of the cornerstone at 867 West Avon Road, Avon. A year later, October 3, 1971, the new church was consecrated.

That committee agreed that the concept of the new building should be based on two tenets: the life of the church begins in worship; and the worship space must have built-in flexibility, for uses at its opening and into its future. There needed to be a worship space to accommodate 240 people, a choir of 30, and supplementary seating for special services, to be stored close by.

With these requirements, the architectural firm of Philip Ives Associates designed the structure with restraint of ornamentation. This simplicity has strong symbolism. The walls are unpainted cement blocks. Perhaps in their plainness and decorated only with vertical grooves, they suggest the walls of the ancient city of Jerusalem. Certainly their soaring heights give an almost urban feeling of strength. The many angles of the main structure create exterior courtyards and patios, also suggestive of that important ancient city. The sanctuary is modest. Its walls are sand colored cement; its windows are clear glass, allowing sunshine and views of the trees and far hills to be part of the interior; its floor is uncovered black tiles with a look of stone.

The sanctuary is stark. This minimum of distractions forces the congregation to focus on the altar, the banners, and worship. Even the music is out of sight. The choir, as well as the organ, is in the heavens of the sanctuary, in the balcony out of view but certainly not out of hearing. Worshipers experience the music with their ears and hearts rather than their eyes.

Originally, there was a clerestory window over the altar, allowing sunbeams and, in a timely fashion, moonbeams, too, to enter and light the altar. Unfortunately, these windows also allowed the entrance of rain water and melting snow, so they were removed recently when the roof was replaced. Without installed pews, the sanctuary has been flexible for many uses. Indeed, the chairs have been rearranged for "worship in the round" encircling the repositioned altar and dais (also not permanently installed). Our Christmas dinners and concerts have been held in our rearranged sanctuary. Art auctions, musical events, and dramatic presentations have been held in this flexible worship area.

Outside, our church nestles into the side of the sloping meadow, its footprint originally a large square, but now with a rectangular addition. The several roofs are on the same plain, suggesting the hills around Palestine. The bell tower rises high above the entire structure, housing the bell from our Unionville church building and acting as a tall signpost for our signature red Chi Rho.

Worshipers enter the sanctuary on a gently sloping ramp, not unlike climbing a gently sloping hill into a city. The other entrance is by a purposefully tall and narrow interior set of stairs like those found in old cities that have narrow roads and alleys and passageways. At each level, windows encourage us to look out at courtyards and more distant views. Of course, there is now an elevator, a necessary concession to modern times.

Look at the framed article from Architectural Record, July 1977, hanging just outside the office. Read the plaques commemorating the 1971 dedication and consecration of our new church, on the wall close to the elevator. Look at the bird's-eye view picture of our church hanging in the upstairs hallway. Observe the exterior of this building to discover the meeting of the original building and the new educational and fellowship addition (consecrated October 1992). Look down the long corridors of the new wing and see how they funnel the classrooms and meeting rooms back to our place of worship.

## Memorial Bench in the Atrium

A place to sit down - such a simple pleasure and often a necessity. MUMC has such a place with a view and some sunshine and a wonderful story to go along with it.



The lower entrance to our church is through an atrium, in our case, an airlock as well. It is tiled, usually unlocked, sometimes with a thriving plant, and for a few years now, with a welcoming wooden bench. The inscription on the panel says, "In Memory of Charlotte Hunter Dahle, 1967 – 2004, Given by Mom and Dad, Kay and Brian Hunter."

This memorial was inspired by two well remembered ladies of our church. So think of the three long-time members of our congregation who are no longer with us when you pass by the bench or perhaps linger there for a bit of respite.

Here is the story written by Kay Hunter about the inspiration of this memorial for her daughter:

"The bench was inspired by my observations of two ladies from our church. One Sunday when Priscilla Pitzen was waiting for Charlie to pick her up, she walked back and forth several times between the entrance and Fellowship Hall. Another Sunday as I was leaving Memorial, Bob and Grace Anderson were sitting on folding chairs in the Atrium, waiting for someone who was providing them a meal. These two instances made me feel that a bench in this location would be useful.

Since the placement of the bench, both Priscilla and Grace have also lost their battles with cancer. So, when you have the opportunity to sit a while, or just take a glance at the bench as you go by, I hope you will take a moment to remember three great ladies – my daughter Charlotte, Priscilla Pitzen and Grace Anderson."

Grace died when she was eighty. Priscilla died in her sixties. Charlotte died even younger, in her mid-thirties.

Our church, Memorial, has many memorials - both inside and outside the building. Not all of them are labeled. How wonderful and loving to share the memories of those no longer with us.

## The Cross



The cross is such a ubiquitous symbol of Christianity that perhaps all it brings to mind is Easter and Jesus. It is more. In the sanctuary at our church, there is a simple dark brown pine, very heavy, hand wrought cross hanging on the wall behind the altar. It is always there. Often it is hidden by the banners that announce and celebrate the various seasons of the Christian calendar. But it is always there.

Our cross is the "crux immissa," the type traditionally presented in art, having the upright beam extending above the cross beam, as the one used in Christ's crucifixion. It was crafted by Jeff Lindstrom in the early 1970's when he was eighteen. A member of our church, he lived in the Highland section of Farmington. Eventually, he married in our church and moved away. Thank you, Jeff, for your gift.

The cross symbolizes Christ's atonement and man's redemption. There are three biblical uses of the term: first, the wooden instrument of torture; second, representation of redemption; third, death on the cross, crucifixion.

Because of the sacrifice of our Savior on the cross, the cross rapidly became used in early religious thinking and organizing, especially by Paul. Crucifixion was one of the most cruel and inhumane forms of death known to man. Even in pre-Christian days, the cares and troubles of life were often compared to a cross.

Look around our church for other crosses. It comes in many different forms; for example, anchor, Greek, Celtic, Maltese, Jerusalem. Do you wear a cross? Do you have one from Chris in your pocket? Do you have one hanging in your home?

## **The Hand Bell Choir**

To the left of the altar is a configuration of eight tables topped by foam mats and covered with a dark blue corduroy cover. The banner at the front says "Memorial Ringers." Under the direction of Tony Rauche since 1987, this group of twelve dedicated ringers practices weekly.

The hand bells now range through five octaves. The early ringers, about eight musical souls, played two octaves. The bells are crafted by Schulmerich in Pennsylvania.

In addition to the bells, the ringers also play chimes. These are made by Malmark, also in Pennsylvania. They were given "In Loving Memory of Betty W. Martini" by Richard and JoAnn Morrill, in December 1998. These enhance the luster of the bells and cover six octaves.



and Sally.

Most of the ringers are in charge of three maybe four bells. But in the back row, Bruce manages seven or eight of the huge bells while beside him Martin has five. Also in the back row, Becca has fourteen of the little mosquitoes, holding four, seemingly a handful, at a time. Wes and Lauren, high school seniors, have been with the choir for several years. The rest of the ringers have many years of experience amongst them – Vee, Diane, Carol, Sue, Ann,

In addition to the bells and the chimes, other equipment the choir uses are gloves, mallets, stands, lights, and printed music. Concert attire is white shirts and maroon silk ties or scarves (a gift from Sally on the occasion of playing for her wedding).

The Memorial Ringers have participated in the May Bell Festival since 1997. They performed at their first wedding in February 2008 for Sally and Walter Parylak. Last year they played one song while entering the sanctuary, actually walking and ringing at the same time. The ringers and their bells are part of the glorious musical tradition at our church.

## **The Floor Plan**

At least since the Middle Ages, churches have had a floor plan in the cruciform pattern. Our church also has this historic floor plan but modified by our architects, Philip Ives Associates, who were given the mandate that the worship space have built-in flexibility. The designers responded with such a plan that was built with "restraint of ornamentation," adding to the possibility of multiple uses.

In a cruciform church, worshippers come to the space through the narthex, a vestibule entered by the main door stretching across the end of the church. It may be under a balcony and is separated from the nave of the church by a wall.

Next on the path to worship is the nave. This is the Latin word for "ship" and in church arts is represented as a ship sailing toward heaven. The passengers are the worshippers who sit in the main part of the church. In our church we have no pews but instead moveable chairs accessible by three aisles. The nave extends from the narthex to the chancel.

In the cruciform floor plan, the arms of the cross are represented by the transept. This is the open area (in our church often filled with musical accoutrements) in front of the nave ending at the chancel.

The chancel is the raised area of the church leading from the nave to another raised area, the sanctuary, containing the altar. In the cruciform pattern, this area is separated from the chancel by steps and the communion rail. The wall in back of the altar is curved, the apse. Our church differs in this traditional form. We have no apse, no rose window outlined in tracery; we have a moveable altar table; our communion rail is removable; even our chancel is moveable.

The word "sanctuary" comes from Greek and Hebrew and refers to the tabernacle or temple. It was also a place of asylum. In the cruciform church floor plan, the sanctuary is the enclosed small area at the very top of the cross form where the altar stands. Generalized, the word applies to the entire room where public worship takes place.

With the erection of the tabernacle, the Hebrews also constructed altars. The two chief purposes of the altar were to offer sacrifices and to burn incense. In our church, the altar, the table, holds the filled collection plates, candles, cross, the Bible on a stand. It is the place where Holy Communion is consecrated and administered. and worship is conducted.

Again in the cruciform floor plan, a pulpit (Latin word for raised platform) is at the front of the chancel and raised so the person giving the sermon is easily visible to the congregation. Our pulpit is raised and rather unique. A lectern (Latin word, to read) is also at the front of the chancel, raised, opposite to the pulpit. This is the metal or wooden stand from which the Bible, the Gospel, and Epistle lessons are read and used sometimes for preaching.



A vestry is also incorporated in the traditional floor plan, a room where vestments for clergy and choir are stored, accessible from the chancel and transept. Our vestry has no such garments and is to the right of the chancel, containing an ever-increasingly crowded storage area for bell accoutrement, seasonal decorations, communion supplies, stored banners, even a ladder. It is accessible to the sanctuary and the courtyard.

Certainly, our church has many attributes of the early churches. But ours was designed for and built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with directions from a forward-thinking group of worshippers who envisioned an inspiring worship space with multiple uses.

## Flags

Four flags fly in our sanctuary from the choir loft. From the left side, they are the flag of the United States, the United Methodist flag, the Christian flag, and the State of Connecticut flag. All are set

at the same height and angle, and all are about the same size. the topmost part of the flagpole, the finial, is distinctive for each.



The flag of the United States of America needs no explanation here. It is easily recognizable even in its semi-unfurled pose. It is decorated with a gold fringe. the finial on the pole is appropriately an eagle. This flag's presence in the sanctuary, however, may cause some controversy. Some clergy and leaders maintain that the display of the flag inappropriately "renders unto Caesar the things that are God's." Some clergy and leaders argue that the stars and stripes has a spot in the sanctuary to remind us that the Constitution given us the right to worship as we please, not as we are dictated.

Many churches raised the American flag for those who served during World War II (1941-1945) and provided a book of remembrances for those serving their country in the Armed Forces. This practice continued in more recent conflicts as well.

The flag of the United Methodist Church has gold fringe on its perimeter. It has a white field (also called "ground"), with a black cross centered, with double-tongued red flames. this is the official insignia of the United Methodist Church and is quite visible throughout the church. The finial on the flagpole is a simple Latin cross.



The official insignia is registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, No. 917,433. It is been in use since the 1968 merger of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church. Symbolically, this insignia is rich with meaning. One interpretation is that the cross, meaning Christ, is enflamed with the Holy Spirit. Another is that this represents Pentecost, when witnesses saw "tongues as of fire." And yet a third interpretation sees the two-part flame as the merger of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church.



The Christian flag, white field with a red Latin cross in a blue canton, was designed to represent all Christianity, but has been adopted mainly by Protestant churches. Its pole finial is a budded cross, a Latin cross with trefoil ends representing the Trinity. Its symbolism is strong. White can represent the purity of Christ, or perhaps the forgiveness of our sins. Red can mean His crucifixion, His blood, and then His resurrection. Blue often means royalty, perhaps Christ as King of Kings, or perhaps faithfulness, truth, sincerity.

The Christian flag was invented as part of an impromptu lecture by Charles C. Overton in September 1897, in Brooklyn, New York. Ten years later it was formally designed by Overton and Ralph Differdorfer. Non-Protestant churches generally do not use the Christian flag.

There is even a pledge, with several versions, that may be used with this flag. "I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands; One brotherhood, uniting all Christians in service and in love." We, however, do not recite it.

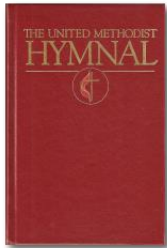
The flag of the State of Connecticut flies in fourth position on the right side of the sanctuary. It also needs no explanation here. Its finial is a plain golden orb. Its white field is decorated with a golden fringe. On a centered shield is the design, the arms of the state in gold, silver, brown, white, blue and purple. there are grape vines, oak leaves, acorns, and a ribbon with the state motto, translated, "He who is transplanted, still sustains."



The study of flags, vexillology, has five principles of good flag design: keep it simple; use meaning and symbolism; use two or three basic colors; use no lettering or seals; be distinctive or be related. You can use these five standards to rate the flags in our sanctuary and flags flying anywhere.

## Hymns

The word "hymn" comes from the Greek "hymnos," a poem usually sung to heroes or to gods. Western hymns date from 1200 BC from Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, China, Korea. Hebrew scripture contains many hymns. Exodus 15:1-18 begins, "I will sing to the Lord." A hymn in Luke 1:46-55 begins with Mary saying, "My soul magnifies the Lord." The Book of Psalms is a collection of 150 songs. One is Psalm 100, "Make a joyful noise to the Lord." Early Christian hymns addressed God or Christ. German reformer Martin Luther in 1523 wrote, "I wish that we had as many songs as possible in the vernacular which people could sing during the mass." He wrote hymns combining poetry and tunes for the worshippers. Thus, music and hymns have ever been an important component of worship.



Quickly to more modern times, most English hymns were based on the King James Version of the Bible (1611). Isaac Watts (1674-1748), father of the English hymn, paraphrased his sermons into easily sung hymns, an interplay between words preached and words sung; that is, the congregation sang what was preached and the minister preached what was sung. Some of his hymns are in our current hymnal. Familiar are "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" (#117), "Joy to the World" (#246), "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (#298, 299), "Marching to Zion" (#733), Watts' hymns did not necessarily support the premise that only scripture should be sung in church. Indeed, instead, his hymns expressed thoughts and feelings of the singers.

The greatest English hymnists are John Wesley and prolific brother Charles, credited with over 9000 hymns. John preached and Charles arranged music to respond to the wonder and love of God as written in the Gospel. Thus, they continued the Watts' tradition. Their hymns represented the contrast of preaching and supportive song.

Hymns are not just songs of worship from the past. Our own hymnal, once published, was immediately scrutinized for editing and expansion. In the "hymn explosion" of English hymns (from mid-1960s), there has been movement away from the Book of Common Prayer and the King James Version of the Bible to more recent translations of the Bible, to 20th century science and technology, to ecumenical influences.

Late in the 19th century, the Methodist Hymnal also included Native American hymns. These stress the tradition that life is a gift from God. The Methodist Hymnal of 1966 was the first of any major hymnal to include a Native American hymn, "Many and Great, O God" (#148), in our current hymnal still.

John Wesley made contact with African American slaves in South Carolina in 1736. By mid-18th century, many slaves responded to him and his style of worship. Classic hymns of Watts and Wesley were irrelevant to the slaves and then-former slaves in urban, post-Civil War northern churches, instead singing about their experiences, including their relationships with God. Spirituals were thus moved from the plantations to Negro churches. The heritage of African American songs had been sustained in songbooks, but not in the official mainline hymnals. During the anti-war and civil rights movements of the 1960s, however, African American songs were sung in white churches, as well as at protests. "We Shall Overcome" (#533) remains the most



familiar from that era. But our hymnal includes several other familiar African American songs: "Kum Ba Yah" (#494), "There Is a Balm in Gilead" (#375), "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (#519), "Come Sunday" (#728).

Social gospel hymns are grounded in the theology of Christian social action, preached by Rauschenbusch in the early 20th century. These are concerns with the here and now, rather than Heaven and the hereafter. Often, they were militant, but now have been edited and altered. Familiar is "God of Grace and God of Glory" (#577) and "For the Healing of the Nations" (#428).

After so many war experiences in Asia of the 1970s, there grew worship needs of the Asian communities in America. The task of including which hymns, what musical style, and which translations into English was monumental. Eventually, the committee chose "Rise to Greet the Sun" (#678) from China, "God Created Heaven and Earth" (#151) from Taiwan, and many others. Inclusion of Hispanic American hymns was inevitable. Mexico had a long history of Roman Catholic missionaries, and eventually, Protestants proselytizing. Some are Spanish translations of traditional hymns, as "Mil Voces Para Celebrar" #59 ("O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" #57), but some have been written and composed by Spanish-speaking musicians and hymn writers; examples are "Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore" (#344) and "Christ Is Risen, Christ is Living" (#313).

Our United Methodist Hymnal is a collection of hymns reflecting ever-changing hymn styles, different cultures, historic eras, language sensitivities. There has been a change from hymns exclusively Anglo-Saxon to include other cultures and even other musical instruments. Archaic, sexist, and discriminatory words and phrases have been edited from older hymns and avoided in newer ones. Our hymnal is a history of a very important part of our worship.

## **Our Land**

Back in the early 1960s, we were the Memorial Methodist Church, snug, very snug, in our 1926 stone building on Water Street in Unionville. We had grown! We had three services each Sunday to accommodate all the members, and split Sunday School, Sunday morning and Friday evenings, to accommodate the youth and adult classes. We already had an inadequate parking lot, a separate parish hall built in 1959, and an adjacent parsonage. We needed more room.

In 1965 the Tunxis Redevelopment Agency was planning on buying land nearby for redevelopment purposes. With this news, there were three possibilities for the church: 1. do nothing; 2. purchase adjacent land from the Agency; 3. relocate and sell the church property to the redevelopment agency.

Overwhelmingly, the church voted for the third option. Thus began a period of great work, soul searching, planning, more planning.

The church land and parish hall were sold to the Farmington Village Green and Library Association; the church and parsonage were sold to the Tunxis Redevelopment Agency, all combined for \$181,000. For the next three years, the congregation could use the church and the parsonage. The Library Association took possession of the parish hall.

After searching out properties in a three-mile radius from Unionville, the Trustees exercised the option to purchase five acres of open land with 450 feet of frontage on West Avon Road from George and Leon Smith for \$3,500.

Another committee chose Philip Ives Associate Architects of New York City to design our new building, keeping in mind our collective hopes and needs for the space. He wrote to the Planning council, "I was delighted with your beautiful property in its farmland environment. The neighboring farmhouse and particularly its barn and silo suggested a simple church of natural wood with sloping roofs."

Now our church has expanded down the steep hill toward the valley with the education wing. Beside us, the Smith family still operates its farm, recently expanding its orchards towards us. The barn and silo still sit on the farmland. Though quite modern in design, our church fits well in the older neighborhood and uses the land and slopes to help define its space. Our church has been on West Avon Road for 39 years, consecrated on Sunday, October 3, 1971. And if we find we are snug, very snug, again, we have room to expand.

## **Facts Building the Avon Church...**

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

... the stones for the church in Unionville were taken from our property on West Avon Road?

... in 1978, when we became a corporation, we needed to revise our name from Memorial Methodist Church of Unionville because we were relocating to Avon?

... our architect was Philip Ives Associated architects of 65 East 55th street, New York?

... Mr. Ives himself dealt with our Planning Council directly?

... member of the Planning Council included at times Leslie Farnum, Ray Cragin, Ted Chambers, Bruce Beckwith, Joe Booth, Gwyn Booth, Carl Hakewessell, Bill Newport, Jean Crompton, William Welch, Hank Owen, Dick Yerrington, Dick Cooper, Paul Petersen, Duane Young, Robert Welch, Mrs. Jenkins, and the architect Philip Ives and builder Fred Brunoli & Sons, Inc.?

... turning the original square floor plan into a diamond and cutting one of its corners directly into the slope of the land and changing walls and openings gave full daylight to all the rooms and avoided an obvious "basement" feel?

... 100 years previous to our association with Mr. Ives, our building site would have been unsuitable for a church?

... future expansions were actually anticipated long before actualized with the education wing?

... the church membership had a \$250,000 budget for the new building?

... the Reverend Richard Y. Yerrington was the pastor during this time?

... Fred Brunoli of Avon was the recommended and accepted contractor?

... Mr. Ives believed in the design of the building in relation to the land and that using "simple, rugged materials with structure and mechanical members exposed" would give the building "more power and perhaps a little glory"?

... the preliminary drawings were agreed to on June 2, 1969?

... the stone church in Unionville was sold to the Farmington Green and Library Association by May 1968?

... Mr. Ives said, "It is not difficult to design a church ... so as to function well... but the ultimate, in my view, is to create a church which will develop a content of the spiritual"?

... the sale of the church property in Unionville also included the parsonage?

... ground breaking was June 1970, placing the Corner stone was in June 1971, and dedication of the new building was September 5, 1971?

... Mr. Ives said our church as a "walled city on a hill" and Mr. Yerrington said, "and the Bible says, 'a city on a hill cannot be hid.' "?

... our new church was consecrated October 3, 1971?

And here we are now, in Our Church, on a hillside, in Avon.

## **The Courtyard Chapel**

In one of the intimate courtyards tucked under a protective overhang, dug into the hillside on which our church spreads, is our chapel. It is accessed through the Fellowship Hall or by an outside staircase that angles down from the hillside along the side of the church.

It was designed, built, and furnished by Kip Coonley, formerly of Burlington, now of North Carolina, as his Eagle Scout project in the 1990s. One of the requirements for an Eagle Scout award is to plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project helpful to any religious institution, any school, or the scout's community. This project must be completed and the award earned before the scout's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. All this work is in addition to earning merit badges, living by the principles of the Scout Oath and Law, and taking on positions of responsibility within the troop.

Our chapel is the culmination of a great deal of work by Kip and many others. There are many benches that Kip led others in building that fold flat for storage. The floor of the chapel is small stones. The stone altar is the one that originally served the sanctuary but was replaced because it was too heavy to allow for easy repositioning. Above this altar hangs a sizeable wooden cross. To the side of the altar is the Christian urn, there until needed for the Ash Wednesday service upstairs, receiving the burning scraps of papers on which we have written our personal transgressions or shortcomings.

The courtyard/chapel includes a garden and two mature trees. Sounds from the meadow stretching out from the courtyard filter into the enclosed space.

Fire Inspectors keeping our general safety in mind will not allow the benches to remain upright, gathered in front of the altar, because they could block egress from the Fellowship Hall. But they were especially set up for the Vacation Bible School in July and the kids obviously appreciated this special space for worship.

A plaque beside the Fellowship Hall entrance to the Chapel provides more information. Thanks, Kip, for this project which earned you an honorable position in Scouting and enriched the church with an outdoor worship area.

## The Sacristy

Webster's dictionary defines sacristy as a room in a church where sacred vessels and vestments are kept and where the clergy vests. Our sacristy is not quite that but, at the same time, much more.

From the sanctuary, through the door at the front right, through a pass-through room, beyond a locked door, down four steps, is our oddly shaped sacristy with a view-filled wall of windows. A good definition of this sacristy is a room for storage and preparation of things used in worship.

Vestments are not stored here but closer to the pastor's office, and that would be where our pastor vests.

Against one cement block wall to the right is a specially designed and built rack for the storage of our beautiful, hand sewn, huge and weighty banners. Did you ever wonder where they went when they weren't hanging above the altar? To the left of the windows is a tiny refrigerator cube storing the grape juice used in communion. To the left of that is a sink formerly used for preparation of the altar flowers. Now the flowers are arranged elsewhere, and the sink is used for simply a water source. By the way, any remaining grape juice after communion is not, repeat not, emptied down the sink, but rather poured into the earth outside.

To the left of the sink and small counter is the Historian's closet. Inside are stored communion wafers; chalices given by Jean Crompton to memorialize her parents; a chalice with rather ornate carving engraved "In memory of Charles Boardman Yerrington" presented by our former pastor, engraved pictorially with our four buildings, Burlington (1830), Unionville (1866) where now stands Friendly's, Unionville the stone church (1926), and our current home in Avon (1971). There is also a crystal wine holder engraved IHS, bowls for bread when we have two servers, and shells for baptisms. Deep in the closet are architectural drawings of the church and folders containing news clippings and meeting notes. A special container sits precariously in there holding ashes for the Ash Wednesday service.



A bank of drawers protects the seasonal collection of linens for the altar. Some of these were used in our former churches.

Around the crowded floor are lots of things used in the sanctuary seasonally. There stand, waiting, the Christ candle holder, several style trees, a lectern, and risers.

Everything used in our worship services has a place to rest. When worship enhancing items are not in the sanctuary, they are respectfully stored in our sacristy.

## Wall Art

Oodles of bulletin boards beautifully, sometimes copiously, display notices, quotations, information, and lovely and meaningful posters. Plaques list names, accomplishments, committees, directions to areas in the church, memorials. But we also have some beautiful wall art. These pieces hang permanently for our visual pleasure and education.

Each classroom has such posters and bulletin boards. The Churchery School on the first floor corridor especially has a visual abundance of colors, shapes, pictures, bulletin boards. Even two

bright tiny tee shirts printed with "I have some friends at Churchery School" hang on a bulletin board. At the school's entrance airlock, a colorful UNICEF banner celebrating children, the earth, the universe welcomes the children. A cross of distressed wood decorated with silvery shapes hangs on a Churchery School door. It was given to Mari by a fellow retreat participant especially for the School.

The fellowship hall wall at the far end is filled with art. Centered is a brown wooden cross in front of red flames. A few years ago John Fillian designed and built it especially for that spot. He said it was there as a visual reminder to other groups that use our facility about where they are.

To each side of this central symbol are four banners, three of which say they are Confirmation Class banners ('01,'03, '04) and the fourth looks as if it also is such a remembrance. The far left is blue felt with nine different symbols, for example, fish, star, dove, heart, jeweled crown. The other three are white canvas, also with religious symbols such as dogwood flowers, loaves and chalices, church spire, advent wreath, butterflies.

Hanging in the lower entrance air lock window is a blue, white, and black Stephen Ministry banner.

Up the stairs just outside the office is a framed article and picture of our newly built church from the Architectural Record July 1977.

An entire wall of pictures of our glorious banners taken by our previous pastor Jim Hoffman wows the office. Beside the door hangs a metal sculpture of crosses, chalices and bread, powerful in its simplicity. In the Pastor's Office is a collection of peaceful pictures, a few created by very young artists.

Up the stairs further, opposite the entrance to the sanctuary, is an intriguing stretched linen picture of an old tapestry. It seems to be a celebration from the Bible but interpreted in Renaissance style. A princely Jesus with a halo, riding a horse, is welcomed into the city by well dressed citizens and a man in a tree. Across the top are words in a language not English. A date 1818 and initials EAS follow. Hopefully more information will surface with deeper research. Can any readers provide more information about this?

In the sanctuary, wall art, other than our seasonal banners and stained glass hangings from our other churches, adorns the back wall. Under the coat rack, a green UM Army 2009 banner asks Feel It? First Love. The Last Supper painting by Laidlow dated 1980 has always hung horizontally. But on the back is a vertical painting of Jesus hanging on the cross. Perhaps we prefer to see Our Lord with his faithful, mostly, followers sharing a meal rather than Our Lord alone, obviously in pain, being crucified.

Two pictures join the art on the back wall. One is the Memorial Garden, probably at its consecration in 2000, and the other is a pen and ink drawing by Ray Cragin of the stone church in Unionville, whose stones came from the fields where Our Church is built.

Outside the sanctuary at the bottom of the stairs to the balcony, a picture taken from the parking lot shows the church in all its springtime glory.

Along the upper classroom hall on the right are three large photographs. One captures a glorious release of colorful balloons with the street-side view of the church. Lots and lots of children and adults crowd the lawn, patio, ramp. This 1980s celebration began another church year. In the second, the bell tower with the red chi rho and historic bell partially hide behind a screen of

blooming dogwood flowers. The third, an aerial view of the church before the classroom extension, proves Our Church has a square footprint set diagonally to the road.

In the Parlor a tapestry hangs sedately over the piano and an old organ. Titled "Ireland Countryside", it pictures a small village, stream, bridge, lots of green fields. The verse from Deut. 8:7 proclaims, "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good Land, a Land with Streams flowing in the valleys and hills."

Besides our glorious banners and carefully restored stained glass window pieces, Our Church is richly adorned with wall art, old and new.

## Communion



Communion is a sacrament received at every 8:30 service and at the 10:30 service on the first Sunday of the month. It is the partaking of the Lord's body and blood. It is a re-enactment of Jesus sharing the last meal, the Passover meal, with his disciples.

The plate holding the pieces of bread is collectively called a paten. The decanter/pitcher holds the wine, but in the Methodist church this is juice of unfermented grapes. We use Welch's Grape Juice because Dr. T.B. Welch (b. 1825), a Methodist and prominent and wealthy NJ dentist, developed "unfermented sacramental wine" using pasteurization, a process by which unfermented grape juice could be produced and stored. Welch then lobbied the General Conference of Methodists for his product to be used. He was very generous to the Methodist church.

Our silver chalice was given to our church by Pastor Dick Yerrington to memorialize his father, Charles Beardmen Yerrington (1884-1970). On it are pictured our four church buildings through history: Burlington in 1830, Unionville 1865, again 1926, and Avon 1971.

Now two people may serve the table, thanks to Jean Crompton who gave additional patens memorializing her parents. We also have pottery chalices and wooden bowls, patens, given by Loretta Disney and importantly used during our special Maundy Thursday supper services. Communion Stewards prepare the elements and care for our patens for the communion table.

Sometimes preparation for Communion involves fasting, an individual choice. Sometimes preparation includes a ritual washing of the hands. Psalm 51 is a request for cleansing. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me."

When it is time, the elements are consecrated at the altar. Our pastor prays over the elements, reminding us that at the Last Supper Jesus broke the bread and said to his disciples, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Then after the supper, he took the cup, shared it, and said, "Drink. This is my blood of the new covenant. Do this in remembrance of me." Now the elements are ready to be shared. They become a living sacrifice for Jesus Christ. They can become for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is called the Transformation.

Before the invitation to the table, there is always a prayer of confession and then the pardon of our sins.

In the Methodist Church, communion is open to all "who love Him, who earnestly repent of their



sins and seek to live in peace with one another.” The bread is served first and then is dipped into the chalice containing the juice. This is called intinction. Both elements are received at the same time.

After the Communion service, there is always a bit of bread and juice remaining. The juice is returned to the soil; at our church this is the gardens. The bread pieces are shared with the birds.

The pastor has additional preparations for Communion - going into deep prayer to remember what it is all about. Will God’s people be fed? That is, the body, but so important also is the soul.

Come to the table remembering its symbolism. Leave the table having confessed to iniquities and receiving forgiveness. “Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God’s love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.”

## Bible Translations

This year marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bible translation commissioned by King James of England. Though not the only translation but perhaps the favorite, this version was not the first. About 100 years earlier in 1525, William Tyndale translated the Bible into English, from which most of the KJV had been written. Ultimately, Tyndale was burned at the stake for his accomplishment, it being contrary to the interpretation of the reigning king. Other translations also were published.

Here are some facts about the Bible translations through the years.

The first five books of the Bible (also called the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch, the Torah) have been translated into the language of the people since the first exile in Babylonia. Then it was translated into Aramaic from Hebrew. Then it was written into Greek by 132 BC and commonly known as the Septuagint.

Through the many years, there have been many translations, usually from the ancient Hebrew. Some were accepted and others were actually banned by the church.



After the Protestant Reformation (early 16<sup>th</sup> century European religious and political development led by Martin Luther), churches translated the Greek into the vernacular so ordinary people could read and understand.

All these translations and revisions are simply human attempts to understand ancient manuscripts.

According to Wikipedia, the Bible continues to be the most translated book in the world. 98% of the world’s population is able to read it in their primary language.

There are concerns about translations. Because language changes, older words may not convey the meaning they used to. Translations can be quite literal or perhaps written in parallel idioms. Or perhaps the translation could be culturally sensitive. Some translations, especially by single churches or groups, may contain their own bias.

Over time, the KJV became *the* Bible for the Protestant World. There were no plans for another translation for 270 years.

But 270 years after the Authorized Version (KJV), the Elizabethan expressions were long obsolete and meaningless. Archaisms needed to be substituted with the vocabulary of modern times. Even the grammar needed modernization. By 1885, the Revised Version was completed. Its critics claimed it was too literal and had lost much of the beautiful language of the KJV. This was in England. American English differs. So in 1901 an American Standard Version was published.

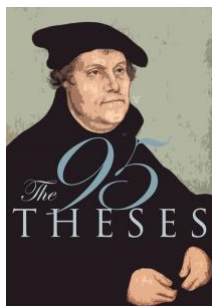
So much advanced in that following half-century in Biblical research and archaeology (Dead Sea Scrolls, for example) that another more thorough revision was needed. This became the Revised Standard Version of 1946-1952.

To date this version is felt to be quite accurate, readable, with a smooth, natural flow of language.

Since the 1966 Good News Bible, there have been no fewer than 48 English translations published in the U.S.

In our MUMC sanctuary, the pew Bibles are the revered Revised Standard Version.

## Martin Luther



Our House of Worship, indeed the way we worship, has been built and modified by three people. We are first Christian, then Protestant, and more recently Methodist. The first and most important person in our church is Jesus Christ, about whom we are constantly learning. Martin Luther's 95 Theses led to the Protestant Reformation, which is why we respect the Pope, though do not follow his lead. The third important person in our very being is John Wesley, a man who followed his heart, preached a significantly different way, and was called a Methodist.

Born November 10, 1483, Martin Luther was a German priest, professor of theology, and revolutionary within the church who believed pardons could not be sold for money. He confronted the church and declared that saving one's soul could not be purchased. Furthermore, he claimed that God alone could grant salvation, not the pope. He made these claims against indulgence salesman Johann Tetzel with his 95 Theses in 1517. By 1521 he was excommunicated by Pope Leo X and condemned as an outlaw by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

Basically Luther taught that salvation was freely given to those who had faith in Jesus Christ. He challenged the authority of the pope and taught that the Bible was the only source of divinely revealed knowledge.

He translated the Bible into German, thus making it more accessible. This translation led to a translation into English - the King James Version. He wrote hymns that encouraged singing. And then this revolutionary married Katharina von Bora, a nun, breaking the chastity vow and setting a standard for married Protestant clergy.

We still sing some of Luther's hymns. A Mighty Fortress is Our God was based on Psalm 46. Because of Luther, we read the Bible in our own language, not Latin; we sing hymns aplenty; we celebrate communion with everyone receiving the wine as well as the bread; we do not believe in the infallibility of the Pope; we believe our salvation is a gift of God's grace, attainable through faith in Jesus Christ; our clergy can marry and have a family.

Luther devised a catechism in 1529 to teach the basics of Christianity to the churchgoers. He incorporated a question and answer format so that there would be a better understanding of the

Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

Luther continued as a priest and scholar long into his old age. He died at age 62 in 1546.

## John Wesley



About two hundred years after the changes brought by Luther, John Wesley developed a radical way of worship and way of Christian living: Methodism.

Born in 1703 in England, John Wesley was the son of a church rector, a Non-conformist, a dissenter from the Church of England. While studying at Christ Church, Oxford University, John joined his younger brother Charles in a study group that was given a derogatory name, "Methodists." This religious group was known for its methodical way of study. Importantly, it believed in social service for the needy.

John was ordained in 1725. Ten years later, both he and brother Charles became missionaries to English settlers in Georgia in America. He became an ardent abolitionist.

Back in England, after three years, John soon expanded his ministry with George Whitefield and built a chapel so he could be assured of a pulpit. John had become unpopular with clergy who formerly had hosted this passionate sermonizer. He and Whitefield also preached in open air. To reach even more people, Wesley traveled by horseback to visit poor neighborhoods. He promoted the welfare of those less fortunate.

Wesley's main message was God's love. He wrote: "Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment. It is not only the first and great command, but all the commandments in one." Wesley also preached of personal morality, encouraging hard work and saving for the future. He warned strongly against gambling and drinking.

A very busy traveling preacher (he is said to have traveled more than 250,000 miles and to have preached about 40,000 sermons), Wesley also wrote many books including psalms, hymns, sermons, and translations. He received a great deal of money in royalties for his written work and gave his wealth to charity.

Wesley died in poverty in 1791. By then, the Methodists numbered over 76,000. Our hymnal today includes many Wesley hymns, from the 1700s. Only five are attributed to John Wesley. His younger brother Charles was a prolific hymn writer and we have 51 of his, also written over 200 years ago, in our hymnal.

There is no evidence that John Wesley wrote "John Wesley's Rule," but it seems to sum up his belief in God's love and our Christian reciprocity:

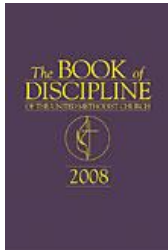
*Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as you ever can.*

## Elders in the United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church is very organized. For over 200 years the United Methodists have written and edited the laws, plans, politics, and processes by which the United Methodists govern themselves. This document is the Book of Discipline. It remains a constant, though through the years each General Conference can add to the Discipline as time and society changes. "We do not see the Discipline as sacrosanct or infallible, but we do consider it a document suitable to our heritage. It is the most current statement of how United Methodists agree to live their lives together." (Discipline, 2008, p. v).

It is a current declaration of the mission of the UMC: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. In simpler words, this Discipline explains what it means to be a United Methodist.

Chapter 2 of the Discipline explains the Ministry of the Ordained (pp. 203-367). Our pastor is an ordained minister, an Elder in Full Connection. The pastor is top grade - next step, Bishop. As Elder in Full Connection, he can perform the sacraments (baptism and communion) anywhere in the U.S. geography and any time on the clock or calendar. This is not permitted to any minister of a lower level. Others may be limited to the conference or even the specific church that has been assigned.



The Book of Discipline (the rules and regs) explains that the Methodist Church guarantees employment to its ordained ministers. This is within each Annual Conference, of which there are many in the USA. But the Elder in Full Connection may seek assignment in a difference Annual Conference. Our pastor is not a member of our MUMC, but is a member of the New York Annual Conference. As an Elder in Full Connection, the pastor can vote at the Annual Conference in the Clergy Session, where clergy issues are discussed and resolved.

The New York Annual Conference includes all of New York, basically south of Albany, and Connecticut west of a north-south line going through Hartford. Preparing to become an ordained minister is truly a commitment. There are 57 rigorous steps explained in the Discipline. The first step is to declare to the aspiring minister's current minister the desire to indeed become a minister. Then a candidacy mentor is found. The whole process takes a minimum of seven years and goes far beyond the requirements established by John and Charles Wesley over 200 years ago.

The Elders' Orders, what an ordained minister must do, are simply four: preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, administer the sacraments of Jesus Christ, be a servant of Jesus Christ, order the church to continue the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. Simply? The Elder must be responsible for directing the "haves" to care for the "have nots". This is the mission of Jesus Christ in the world: Matthew 25: 31-46. Read it in its entirety. *Just as you do for the least of men, you do for Jesus.*

## Crosses and Pictures in the Classrooms

Kay Hunter and Diane Hornaday have recently enriched our classrooms using a donation made by the Dakers family, in honor of Al Dakers. They have hung a cross and a picture of Jesus in each room. The crosses in the infant room, built with alphabet blocks spelling out "I ♥ Jesus" and "Jesus ♥ Me," were hung a few years ago to honor Alma Dotson, as was a loving picture of Jesus.

In all the other classrooms, the plain, Latin, wooden crosses were built by Kay of oak or birch and stained a rich brown. The pictures of Jesus, interestingly, were selected from a file of posters collected over the years from the Cokesbury Company.

Walk down the classroom wing, both floors, to visit the classrooms to see where our youth spend time to learn about Jesus and how to be a good Christian.

The use of the cross shape predates Christianity as a religious symbol. Even into the second century it was used as a talisman to ward off powers of evil. Rarely was it used as a sign of Christianity, even into the second century. The stylized fish was one symbol often used. Perhaps it suggested the loaves and fishes multiplied and consumed on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was also a famous acrostic of fish in Greek (ichthys) - Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter, meaning Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. Another early symbol was displayed by Constantine I in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, a Chi Rho, not so different from the Chi Rho on our bell tower.

A cross with a mounted Jesus is called a crucifix. This cross is prominent in some churches, but most Protestant churches display the cross without the body. That makes the cross a symbol of Christ's resurrection.

There are many styles of crosses throughout these 2000 years. It is a plain Latin cross that hangs behind our banners above our altar. We also have several stepped crosses, basically Latin in design, atop a base of three steps.

Today the cross reminds Christians of the sacrifice of Christ by God at Calvary, his victory over sin and death. This cross is not a reminder of death that was just cruel and painful, though his death was, but the tool of Christ's triumph, God's saving love.

## **A Poster**

On the first floor of the classroom wing, on the door of a storage closet, beneath a silver cross, hangs a poster. Have you seen it? Have you read it? It lists 19 wonderful results from...well, read the list and then guess what these values are. Is it the value of being a Christian? Of loving your neighbor? Of reading the Bible? Of coming to church? All the above? (See below for the answer!)

Cooperating  
Sharing of Ideas  
Communicating  
Listening  
Problem Solving  
Developing  
Representing Knowledge  
Risk Taking  
Concentrating  
Perseverance  
Succeeding  
Learning  
Thinking Flexibly  
Questioning  
Gathering Information  
Creating  
Imagining

Innovating  
Being Independent  
Answer: The Value of Play

## Churchery School

You've seen the fenced playground outside the lower lever, with riding toys, slides and climbing structures, enclosures to encourage play, benches. It is part of the Churchery School. This is a nursery school servicing our community following all state guidelines established by the State Department of Public Health, from child-to-teacher ratio, snack nutrition, numbers of children, fire drills, sanitary and fire inspections, nurse consultations, to proper diaper changing and disposal.

Established in the mid 1970s, the school's name is unique to our church. When the education wing was built, accommodations for the tiny people of the planned nursery were made. Many nursery schools rent their space in a church. But the nursery in our church is unique in that it is an affiliated program and is run by a board of both church members and parents.



The purpose of the nursery school is twofold: childcare and academic preparation. This is not a daycare center. These tiny, developing people spend several hours a day at the school a few days a week. They learn to socialize.

They learn to maneuver in new experiences and use words to get what they need. They work in groups, and all this play will make them happy to come to school, a fun place.

Snacks are an important part of the session. But, of course, special needs must be addressed, such as allergies and diabetes. Low carbohydrates are encouraged.

Play is important (Reread "A Poster," March 2012) and encouraged. Around the classrooms are learning centers. They are sensory or manipulative by design, or both. The sand table has shovels and sieves, a few shells, not unlike a beach experience. The kitchen has everything to create make-believe meals and snacks. A playdough table has ... Play Doh! There are blocks and cars, trucks, books, rugs, bean bag chairs, a rocker. A teacher may begin singing and storytelling, encouraging others to join that group when they are through with their individual play. A creative art project used a stalk of broccoli to paint a shamrock. What was learned? Food, colors green, textures, multi-use tools, shapes, imagination.

There are costumes to don – an apron, a small-sized ball gown, a fireman's hat and coat, and more.

At each learning center a sign hangs at the students' eye level with a number for maximum participants at one time and the skills practiced there. Thus each different center encourages math, cooperation, spatial awareness, measuring, creativity, science, cooperation, or physics. Play, or study?

There are a lot of words on the walls. The 4-year-olds have a kindness pledge:

I pledge to myself on this day to be kind in every way.  
To every person, big and small, I will help them, one and all.  
When I love myself and others too, that is the best that I can do!



Here are the classroom rules for the 3- and 4-year-olds:

Gentle Hands. Gentle Feet. Gentle Words.  
Another: We care, we share, we help, we laugh,  
we hug, we love. We get along.

Who we are and how we live is an important aspect of socializing. Each classroom does have a cross and a picture of Jesus. They talk about Jesus, Christmas Easter. Non-Christian parents realize this from the start. Diversity is taught with crafts, food, songs, stories, games.

This Churchery School is a vibrant, daily activity in our church and a loving and valuable part of MUMC and our community outreach.