



THE HISTORY OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS 1850 – 2021

The First United Methodist Church of Woodstock is more than a building and the people who presently occupy it. Its foundations are anchored in the bedrock of theological beliefs that can be traced back for centuries. The events and lives of those who have come before us are the brick and mortar from which the walls are built. It is important to take time and remember the history of our church.

Early History

Although the official history of the First United Methodist Church of Woodstock begins in 1850 with the organization of the Woodstock Methodist Episcopal Society, it is important to look at some of the events that preceded this event. In 1829, Jesse Walker was appointed by the Rock River Conference to be the circuit rider in the Fox River Mission Territory. He first served as a minister among the Native Americans in the Fox Valley and later to people from the East who chose to live in this area. Small settlements began to form and in 1835, McHenry County was organized.

The first religious organization was thought to have been formed at the home of Uriah Cottle, a Methodist leader and the first man to enter a claim in Dorr Township. His log cabin was located in Virginia Settlement, which is now Ridgefield. It was at this cabin that Reverend William Royal, an itinerant Methodist minister, preached the first sermon in McHenry County in the summer of 1835.

In 1838 the Rockford Circuit was formed. Two preachers, Leander Walker and Nathaniel Jewett, covered this territory, which stretched from Beloit to Rockford to Marengo and as far east as McHenry. These men were paid \$100 per year. The two preachers visited every settlement in this area, including Dufield, at the eastern edge of Woodstock, Deitz's, which is now Franklinville, and Virginia Settlement, where a church was being built. The Rockford Circuit

continued to grow and became so large that in 1839, it was divided and the Crystal Lake Circuit was formed. Leander Walker, along with Ora Walker, became preachers in this circuit, which now stretched from the Fox River to Round Prairie in Boone County. Among the communities they visited in this area were Deitz's, Virginia Settlement, and Queen Anne, located two miles north of Woodstock.

McHenry County continued to grow. In 1844, the county seat was moved from McHenry to a place named Centerville, which was renamed Woodstock the following year. Also in 1844, the McHenry Circuit was formed. More churches began to be built. A church was built at Belden (Franklinville) in 1848 and was served by circuit riders of the McHenry Circuit. In the 1848 Quarterly Conference Minutes of the Circuit, a committee was appointed to look into the costs of building a church in Woodstock, but nothing came of it at that time. Another church was built at Queen Anne in 1849 at a site near the Fairview Cemetery near present Route 120 and Fleming Road, at the west end of Thompson Road.

The Woodstock Church

The actual history of the first United Methodist Church of Woodstock dates back to 1850. It was in this year that Reverend Moorhouse organized the Woodstock Methodist Episcopal Society. Its charter members were Mr. and Mrs. L. Cutting, Mrs. C. Ramsay, Mrs. Rose, Mrs. Mary Sherwood, Mr. and Mrs. George Starr, Mr. and Mrs. Silas Wilson, and Mrs. William Montgomery. This group first met at a schoolhouse. Later, they moved to Excelsior Hall, located in the southeast corner of the Square and then to Phoenix Hall, on the south side of the Square, where they remained until 1862. Circuit pastors served the church until 1856, when Edwin Brown was appointed pastor at the 17th annual session of the Rock River Conference. He shared with the church at Belden.

The congregation of the Woodstock Methodist Episcopal Church expanded with the growth of the county seat. In 1863, \$1,500 was pledged toward the purchase of the former Baptist church located at Jefferson and East Jackson Streets. This served as the congregation's church home until 1870 when it became too small. The congregation then built a white frame church, known as the church with two spires, one short and one tall. It was built on the present site of West South Street and Throop for a total cost of \$8,000. The dedication of the church took place in June of 1871, by which time the church was totally paid for.

The present parsonage was built in 1898 for about \$3,000, during the pastorate of Reverend N. A. Sunderlin. Reverend Sunderlin served as pastor from 1895 to 1904, making him the longest serving pastor up to that time. During this time, he brought in 342 new members, performed 180 baptisms, and officiated at 294 weddings. The Woodstock Sentinel on December 19, 1901 described the Methodist Episcopal Church as having "a thriving Epworth League, a Baraca Bible Class, a Philathea Class, a Ladies' Aid Society and a large Sunday School."

By 1910, the Methodist congregation was again outgrowing its building. Both remodeling and rebuilding were considered before plans for the construction of a more spacious church were submitted and adopted. However, with the onset of World War I and higher building costs, the plans were abandoned. It wasn't until thirteen years later that plans for construction were again considered. The Reverend John M. Schneider was assigned to the Woodstock Church in the fall of 1922. On January 8, 1923, he appointed a Building Committee, which was first considered constructing a new church, but finally decided to enlarge the old building and modernize it.

Plans abruptly changed on February 4, 1923. Late in the afternoon a fire started from an overheated chimney at the back of the church. Several people were in the church preparing for evening services. They reported hearing crackling and smelling smoke. They reported this to J.H. Moore, who vainly attempted to turn in the alarm at the firebox across the street. He finally contacted the fire department from a nearby house. The fire company arrived by 5:45 PM, but was unable to contain the fire. The fire was through the walls at the back of the church by 6:00 PM. By 6:20 PM the roof, back wall, and chimney fell in. The 108 foot steeple fell next, missing the parsonage by "the span of one's arms." The 1,050 pound church bell fell into the ashes in the basement of the tower at about 6:30 PM. According to the Woodstock Daily Sentinel dated February 5, 1923, very little was saved from the church.

"The piano downstairs, most of the chairs, the Boy Scout materials, and most of the goods left from the rummage sale, which had been conducted during the week were rescued. This morning it was ascertained that most of the dishes in the kitchen were intact and could be rescued as soon as the ruins had cooled off. "

The congregation was particularly upset about the loss of the pipe organ, as well as the pulpit, which had been bought for the church by V. S. Lumley in 1892. It was reportedly made of wood from the Garden of Gethsemane. Much of the loss was covered by insurance, though. The church bell, which was originally presented to the church in 1888 by Mrs. Betsey Stone, was recovered from the ashes and found to be unhurt except for a small crack on the edge. It was sold for \$88.

The Methodists found many sources of help in the community. The congregation was offered the use of the Baptist Church as well as the Congregational Church until they could rebuild. They also held services in the Opera House. Since the church had been considering remodeling before the fire, they had already raised \$15,000. But this was not nearly enough to cover the construction of a new church, which was estimated to cost \$80,000. As many as 325 pledges were made to the building fund, many of them coming from people outside the congregation. Mrs. F. A. Graham, the wife of a former pastor, donated \$799 received from the sale of her car. She had won the car in a subscription contest, but was feeling uneasy about her prize since the Methodists did not believe in lotteries, or drawings of chance for prizes. She then decided to sell the car and donate the proceeds to the church building fund. Another contribution of \$15,000 came from Maria J. Webb in honor of her parents, George W. and Eleanor Bentley. George had belonged to the committee appointed by the 1848 Quarterly Conference in Franklinville to look into the expense of building a church in Woodstock. Gifts were also made toward the new church and its furnishings in the form of memorials. The pulpit was made and presented by J. M. Matheny. The large front window was given in memory of Abraham Still by his children.

Construction began on the new brick building in May of 1923. The building was to be erected over the foundation of the old frame church. The cornerstone was laid on July 22, 1923. It reportedly contained a copy of the Woodstock Daily Sentinel, a copy of Conference minutes and Discipline, a copy of both the Northwestern Advocate and Epworth Herald, as well as the names of the building and finance committees, Sunday School, complete church history, a roll of membership and other important items of church history. A letter was written by the oldest member of the church at that time, Mrs. Elizabeth Sherman, was also included. The dedication of the new building was arranged by January 6, 1924. However, the dedication was postponed due to cold weather. It was finally held on March 9, 1924 with Bishop Nicholson presiding.

Later Years

The new church building served the congregation well. In 1957 a new pipe organ was added. It contained 807 pipes and cost \$16,677. On March 17th a dedicatory recital was held featuring Richard Vikstrom, the Director of Music at the University of Chicago, as guest organist. In 1960 plans were presented for more space for social activities and more Sunday School classrooms and lounges. Fundraising began in 1961. The ground breaking for the Education Wing took place on March 24, 1963, and the addition was completed in 1964 adding 5,400 square feet for a total cost of around \$100,000. Some redecorating and refurbishing of the old building was also accomplished at the same time. The dedication took place on April 24, 1966. Under the direction of Reverend E. Stanley Beck, the congregation raised the money and paid off the debt in less than three years.

Since that time other improvements have been made to the building, including making it more handicapped accessible. In addition, the parking lot has been enlarged several times with the purchase of adjacent property.

The name of the church also changed in later years. In 1940, with the merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church-North and the Methodist Episcopal Church-South, the name was changed to the First Methodist Church of Woodstock. Later, in 1968, the Methodist denominations merged with the Evangelical United Brethren denomination. The church, as is known today, became the First United Methodist Church of Woodstock.

In 2013 the church was given a very generous gift from the Lenora Wright Fund. The church members gathered together to decide the best way this gift could be used. After much discussion it was agreed that it should be used to update the English Room with new design, furniture and flooring and to make it more appealing as it used both as a meeting room and also for a reception room for funerals and weddings. Part of the gift was used to purchase a digital sign that was placed between the church and the parsonage so that it could be seen by those both driving past the church on South Street and also coming down Throop Street. The digital sign and English Room update have received very positive feed- back from both the congregation and the community.

The church kitchen was also given an update. The United Methodist Women raised funds to purchase three stainless steel ranges and microwave. They replaced an old black cast iron stove and older model kitchen range.

All of these improvements have had a positive impact on our church building. The new kitchen appliances made the kitchen safe and convenient and the sign brings attention to those passing by what our church is doing while the newly remodeled English Room brings warmth.

We were also able to purchase new audio-visual aids from additional monies received. Three large screen TV's were placed in the Sanctuary – two in front and one up in the balcony. Four additional TV's were purchased for the English Room, Youth Room, Nursery and a portable one. These have helped enrich our learning, hearing and seeing.

In 2015 the church acquired the Preschool that has been associated with our church for over 20 years. We are fully licensed and DCFS approved. The transition has been very smooth and is running very well.

In 2015 we were able to purchase a house which is located between the parsonage and church owned duplex. At this time plans are to remove the structure.

2017 and 2018 attention was mainly focused on remodeling our 109 year old parsonage. This was made possible with the very generous gift from the Norma and Glenn Anderson Estate. New windows were installed and insulation was added in the attic. Both of these items made the home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. The upstairs bathroom was completely redone including new flooring, countertop, cabinets and shower, as well as the half bathroom on the main floor. The carpeting was removed from the downstairs and upstairs hallway and the beautiful hard wood floors were uncovered and refinished. A wall was removed between the kitchen and dining room opening up the area. Plumbing and electrical work was done and a new kitchen which included flooring, cabinets, countertops and all new appliances.

Supportive Groups

The Woodstock church has long supported Boy Scout Troop 159. They hold their weekly meetings here every Monday night.

We also host several Cub Scout Packs as well as Girl Scout and Brownie Troops.

Currently we also have four AA groups (Alcoholics Anonymous) that meet here weekly.

We also support our homeless and feed them every Wednesday evening as well as our PADS program (Public Action to Delivery Shelter). These are very important outreach programs our congregation is very supportive of. During the school year we have a program "Be Filled" which allows us to feed the children on the weekends at a school close to our church. These families live at or below the poverty level.

The Present

Our congregation currently numbers 336 adult members, many children, youth, and Constituent friends. It is served by a dedicated staff:

Pastor: Rev Hyujae "Jae" Lee
Administrative Assistant: Bev Limbaugh
Accompanist: Amanda Krzyzak
Custodial Ministry: Bonnie Becker
Nursery Care: Emily Pickering

We also have a dedicated team of AV folks who take care of our audio-visual needs every Sunday morning during worship and whenever else the need arises. Rebecca Goers, Phil Moore and Gareth Williams are taking care of this need. During COVID -19 Julie Heelein has been taking care of our online needs so that our services can be streamed via Facebook as well as uploaded to our YouTube channel and our website. She is also our Website Administrator.

We are pleased to support a Christian preschool in our building:
First United Methodist Preschool Director: Jessica Roth

Preschool Teaching Staff: Bonnie Becker, Renee Reuter, Jessica Roth and Aids Dee and Lori Schnulle

In addition to the staff, the following people currently serve as church officers:

Church Council Chairperson – Don Heelein
Board of Trustees Chairpersons – Rich Hodges
Finance Committee Chairperson – Bud Blackman
Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chairperson – Kathy McNeil
Mission Committee Chairperson – Renee Witt
Fellowship Committee Chairperson – Renee Witt
Worship & Music Committee Chairperson – Christine Blackman
United Methodist Men President – Marty Moran
United Methodist Women President – Arliss Zoelick
Church Treasurer – Bev Limbaugh
Financial Secretary - Bev Hodges
Recording Secretary – Bev Hodges
Members at Large - Devona Edinger
Lay Leader – John Becker
Youth Coordinator – Julie Heelein
Congregational Connection and Care Team – Pam Gish
Memorial & Special Gifts Co-Chairpersons – Shirley Peterson
Scout Liaison -Don Heelein
Lay Members of Annual Conference – Phil Moore
Sunday School Superintendent – Karen Hendrickson
Preschool Director – Jessica Roth
Pastor – Rev. Hyujae Lee

Our church has adopted the following statements to guide us into the 21st century:

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

To love and follow Jesus Christ, to build a Christian Community and to offer relevant worship in today's society.

OUR VISION STATEMENT:

We will nurture disciples by providing renewal and growth through our VISION 2000 program, focusing our efforts in the

areas of Christian Education, Bible Study, and formation of Small Groups.

Let us fulfill Jesus' great commandment

³⁷ He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. " ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ",⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. ' (Matthew 22:37-40)

and dedicate ourselves to the great commission

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. ~ (Matthew 28:19-20)

to grow a great church for the coming generations of Christian families who in turn will give their commitment to Jesus Christ.

May our prayer be that the Holy Spirit will energize our church to grow:

- Warmer in fellowship
- Larger through outreach
- Deeper in discipleship
- Stronger through worship
- Broader through mission to all God's people

The First United Methodist Church of Woodstock is firmly anchored in the theological beliefs of the United Methodist Church. It has been fashioned by the lives and events of those who have come before us. It is the present congregation that provides the spirit to move the church boldly into the 21st century.

Ordained Pastors Who Have Served The First United Methodist Church of Woodstock

George Wallace	1847	Charles D. Wilson	1914
H. Morehouse	1850	J. A. Matlack	1917
Simpson Guyer	1855	Fred A. Graham	1918
AG. Burlingame	1856	John M. Schneider	1922
Edward Brown	1857	George T. E. Nesmith	1926
J. Hartwell	1858	Roderick Murray	1930
Daniel W. Lynn	1859	Joseph Burrows	1934
George C. Lyon	1860	Albert A. Bauman	1935
Edward Brown	1861	J. Richard Drees	1936
William H. Smith	1862	Merle N. English	1939
Martin B. Cleveland	1865	A. J. Tavenner	1945
George L. S. Stuff	1867	Jessie E. Firestone	1950
Calvin Brookings	1868	Steuart D. White	1957
Samuel T. Show	1871	A. Stanley Beck	1960
Matthew H. Triggs	1872	Ernest C. Carder (Interim)	1970
N.D. Fanning	1873	Kenneth C. Yeoman	1970
E.M. Boring	1874	Gordon R. Shafer	1975-1987
Jacob Hartma	1874	Dan Shaner (Associate)	1980-1984
Alonzo Newton	1875	Barbara Spangler (Associate)	1986-1987
Samuel Earngey	1877	David Page Kell	1987-1993
John Adams	1881	Barbara Page Kell	1987-1993
George K. Hoover	1883	John Gillham	1993-1996
Marcus H. Plumb	1885	Lana T. Sutton	1996-2004
Henry Lea	1887	Joy Bauer Bulla	
J.J. Walter	1889	Jim O. Young	2004-2009
Frank R. McNamer	1892	Duk K. Kwon	2009-2012
Newton A Sunderlin	1895	Kurt A. Gamlin	2012-2018
Thomas G. Cocks	1904	Hyujae Lee	2018
J.W. Hackley	1906		
Truman F. Greene	1909		

History and Significance

The history and significance of the Cross and Flame emblem are as rich and diverse as The United Methodist Church. The insignia's birth quickly followed the union of two denominations in 1968: The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Following more than two dozen conceptualizations, a traditional symbol—the cross—was linked with a single flame with dual tongues of fire. The resulting insignia is rich in meaning. It relates The United Methodist church to God through Christ (cross) and the Holy Spirit (flame). The flame is a reminder of Pentecost when witnesses were unified by the power of the Holy Spirit and saw "tongues, as of fire" (Acts 2:3).

The elements of the emblem also remind us of a transforming moment in the life of Methodism's founder, John Wesley, when he sensed God's presence and felt his heart "strangely warmed." The two tongues of a single flame may also be understood to represent the union of two denominations.

The insignia, one with lettering and one without, was formally adopted by the General Conference in 1968 and registered in 1971 with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Since 1996, the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) of The United Methodist church has supervised the emblem's use.