



The 1970s – Membership Growth

The 1970s was an interesting and eventful time in the history of our country. During this decade, we witnessed the end of United States involvement in Vietnam, Watergate and Nixon's resignation, the Bicentennial, the oil embargo, and many other important events. Bowie itself was a growing, active community, and St. Matthew's followed Bowie's trend. During the 1970s, the Sanctuary was built, and the church was blessed with a growing and active membership. There was no real need for a membership committee now to find other Methodists once our Sanctuary was built. Methodists were flowing into membership because our location on Route 450 was a magnet for young parents and individuals seeking a familiar way to worship. Our pastors were well respected and received within the Bowie community.

During the 1970s, we welcomed three pastors and three assistant pastors. First, we were fortunate to still have Reverend (Rev.) Thomas Starnes as our pastor as the decade began. Then Reverend (Rev.) McCarl Roberts was assigned to us in 1974 with his wife, Betty, and children Kimberly and Keith, and quickly won us over with his charm and personality. After two short years, he left and Reverend (Rev.) Charles Harvey was assigned to us with his wife, Virginia, and children Carol and Andrew. Rev. Harvey was a quiet and reflective person who challenged St. Matthew's members to read their Bibles. We also had three assistant pastors, Reverend Ray Strawser, Reverend Edward Ferrell, and Reverend (Rev.) Linda Coveleskie.



**St. Matthew's
Methodist Church
Fellowship Hall**

Today it is difficult to picture the St. Matthew's of that time: many little children running up and down the hallways; classes being held in every available space including the kitchen; a large choir; and very few senior members. It was rare for St. Matthew's to hold a funeral or a wedding, but there were many baptisms! Once the Sanctuary was finally built in 1973, members had a beautiful place to worship. Sunday School for children was held during the two services, which were full of the faithful parents. On Sundays, after the 11 a.m. worship service, a group of the members (40-ish!), including the pastor and his wife, would drive to the Red Lion Inn (no longer there) on Route 301 South for lunch of roast beef. The 30-ish crowd would gather their young children from Sunday School and go home to feed them lunch.

New members' classes were frequently held resulting in large groups that joined, participated in the fellowship with their families, and attended the programs that were available to the young Methodist families. St. Matthew's fielded two softball teams for the Bowie Interfaith Recreation Council League and the young men of the church eagerly looked forward to each spring season of sore muscles and renewing friendships, some that have lasted a lifetime.

The United Methodist Women (UMW) and the United Methodist Men (UMM) were active also. The UMM usually held a Christmas party at the Tidewater Inn on the Eastern Shore. The UMW furnished babysitting for its members during Circle meeting times on the first Thursday of each month, while the mothers attended the meetings to study selected materials. Both the UMW and the UMM also gave scholarships to needy children to attend St. Matthew's nursery school, which furnished excellent pre-school education for the children of the church and the surrounding community. With St. Matthew's leading the way, there were 55 scholarships furnished to needy children at this time by St. Matthew's and four other churches¹.

¹History of St. Matthew's by Louise Haiflich



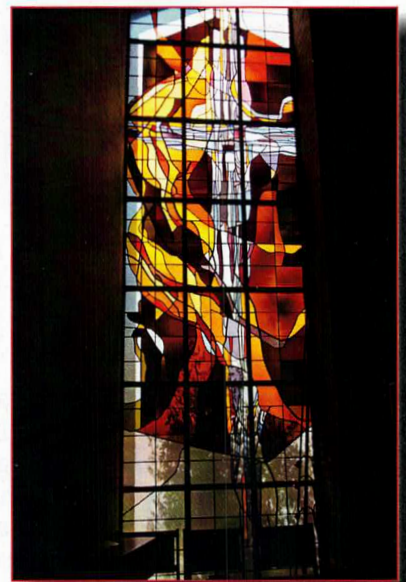
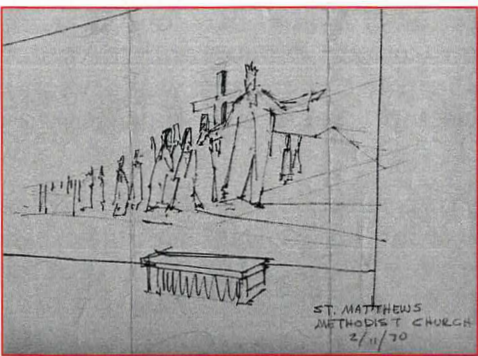
In the summer of 1970, Reverend Starnes exchanged pulpits for five weeks with the Steward Denyer family of Leeds, England. Also, five scholarships were given to the nursery school. One was given by the church, one by the United Methodist Men, and three by the Women's Society of Christian Service (United Methodist Women) this year. The Mormons requested the rental of church property for their use for the next three to four years. This request actually prompted a special meeting of the Board of Trustees (October 1970), who approved the request at \$5,200/year. The Chair of the Board of Trustees this year was Don Lane.

Meanwhile, progress on planning the new Sanctuary continued with the desired new classroom space remaining a part of the plans and the discussions. Also discussed at this time was the need for a reception-type room to be set aside for use at weddings, funerals and other events requiring privacy. A Memorial desk designed to house the flower dedication book and the permanent record of donated memorials to the church, as well as a bulletin board, were requested by the building committee. Interlocking chairs had also been discussed as possible seating in the Sanctuary, but the chairs did not meet with their approval.

Until January 1970, the pipe organ was still in consideration, but in a memorandum dated January 29, 1970, to M.P. Miller, Inc., the pipe organ installers, Mr. Benjamin Elliott, the architect, stated that the Building and Music Committees had decided to forgo the installation of a pipe organ in the Sanctuary due to problems obtaining funds. This decision resulted in the purchase of an electronic Hammond organ from memorial contributions.

In the original plans for St. Matthew's, the future Sanctuary was envisioned in typical Colonial Revival style, with columns out front and a tall steeple, like any number of churches all over the Baltimore-Washington area. That architectural style was expensive, so the decision was made to go with a more modern concept. The design of the interior included the idea of a plaster sculpture on the left wall of the Sanctuary, but in May of 1970 that idea came under fire. The cost of such a sculpture of St. Matthew directly carved into the plastered surface of the wall would require the sculptor to be present. This was in lieu of having a plaster sculpture cast from a mould or casting the figure in some kind of plastic. At this time, the idea persisted. Also, the artist Ms. McGuire, who had been chosen for the interior art work in the Sanctuary, had an idea for a very large banner that she wished to be specially woven to be hung behind the altar – another large expenditure.

In a letter to Ms. McGuire, Mr. Elliott, the architect, expressed the concerns of the Building Committee with regard to the art to be painted upon the Chancel wall. The Committee felt that her concept depicting Christ in more of a Crucifixion manner with other figures who appeared to be "weeping and wailing" was not appropriate. This message was conveyed to Ms. McGuire in a memorandum written by Mr. Elliott in which he stated that the Committee wanted to "see the figure of Christ heading toward the light coming from the window with one arm reaching back to invite the people to follow, and that the whole ensemble would be a representation of people moving towards the light with Christ."²



Unfortunately, no record of

²January 28, 1970.

Ms. McGuire's designs for the walls or the windows survives in our files. Due to cost reduction, this idea was later eliminated. She continued, though, to develop her stained glass designs as to color and a "flowing continuity." The Chancel window depicts a cross in golds, oranges and reds. The light that streams through the window forms a background to the crude wooden cross standing to the side of the altar, symbolizing the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In 1970, the money situation tightened even more, requiring the bank to reassess our ability to support the loan needed. Banks would not make long-term loans and building plans seemed too risky a venture. Insurance companies wanted exorbitant interest. As plans proceeded with the development of the Sanctuary design, architect's fees continued to accrue, and the projected cost to build mounted. Therefore, Mr. Elliott was asked to reduce the scope of the project to a budget of only \$350,000, saving as much of the seating capacity as possible. Linda Cooper has recalled that there was a huge controversy over the desire of the congregation to have a chapel included in the construction plans.³ Due to cost restraints, this idea was tabled and later evolved into the small chapel area to the right of the pews in the back of the Sanctuary.

By the end of the year, church property (building, parsonage, Wesley House, and Kirkside) was valued at over \$340,000, while church debt was slightly over \$250,000. In 1970, our membership was 906 persons, and our annual operating budget was \$117,332.

St. Matthew's hired two Wesley Theological Seminary students to help out at the church in the spring of 1971. One of the two students was Ken Mahan, who was hired to assist with services and visitations. The other was Pat Meyers, who worked with the church school and youth choirs. This year also saw both the Brownies and Girl Scouts begin to use church property (Wesley House) for their meetings, but the Mormon Church terminated their agreement to use church property for their services. Maintenance of church property was becoming an issue for the Trustees at the same time that they were trying to handle the details and costs of building the Sanctuary. Of particular concern was Kirkside, a four bedroom colonial adjacent to church property that was purchased in December of 1968. In November 1971, Pat Meyers, a Trustee, reported to the committee that Kirkside was looking "dowdy." It was less than 10 years old.

In May 1971, the plans to construct the Sanctuary stained glass windows came to fruition with the selection of the Willet Stained Glass Studios in Philadelphia. The mortgage money had not yet been secured, but the Building Fund account had been growing. In 1968-70, \$58,661 was raised; in 1971, \$32,402 was raised; and in 1972, \$14,671 would be raised, and this helped to pay some of the accruing bills. At the time, the projected total cost of the building was \$434,581.

A Memorial Committee was established this year to oversee funds raised to help reduce costs of furnishing the Sanctuary. The members of the congregation jumped onto the idea of dedicating items in the Sanctuary in memory or in honor of loved ones. Almost everything one could envision was memorialized: the stained glass windows, the pulpit, the cross, the altar, altar candlesticks, candelabra and other altar items, chairs, baptismal font, guestbook, and finally, the pews. One family, the Arthur Bingers, dedicated many of the pews and other items.

Mr. Elliott continued to plan the construction based on more money than the church could borrow. Mr. Elliott, the Building Committee, and Ms. McGuire were forced to reduce the scope of the project considerably. The educational space continued to be a priority—but alas, it was another pipe dream due to the cost to build it.

The troubling search for funds for building the proposed Sanctuary continued. According to Richard Mills, who served on the Finance Committee and the Building Committee, a number of financial institutions were contacted with no results. Finally, Richard Mills approached Rev. Starnes (our minister at the time) and John Hicks (our Lay Leader) to suggest that as a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), he might be able to help obtain

³Stated at a 60s and 70s gathering of senior members 1.8.2012



the necessary funds through his union. Through American Security & Trust Bank, which administered the union's funds, St. Matthew's was able to obtain the necessary funding to build the new Sanctuary for a grateful congregation. It was a loan of \$350,000 for 25 years at seven percent interest.

The Building Fund balance stood at approximately \$38,000 at this time. The reduction of costs had begun in order to construct a building that our congregation could afford to build. All sorts of savings were considered, such as omitting revisions to the Fellowship Hall windows, reducing the cost of paving for the entrance patio, changing exterior walls to cast stone, limestone or brick, changing the floor of the Sanctuary from slate to vinyl asbestos tile or carpet, less expensive hardware, and similar alterations to less expensive materials.

Some of the mothers of the children in the Children's Choir had been getting ready for the building of the Sanctuary by assembling and sewing choir robes for the children in Ruth Kluth's basement. The ladies set up an assembly line and sewed the garments as fast as they could. One would cut out sleeves, one the body of the smock top, one the bow, and one the skirt. By the time the Sanctuary was dedicated, all the children wore the beautiful white top and red bottom robes for the ceremony. These outfits were used for many years and were cared for by the mothers of the children.



Children's choir in their robes 1977

Our membership now totaled 1,019 members, and our annual operating budget was \$115,185.30.

The year 1972 began in an interesting fashion. First, the parsonage on Stonehaven Lane managed to get hit by a car. Second, a neighbor complained that the Kirkside property was draining onto their property and a rock group that had rented the house for rehearsals was disturbing the neighborhood. Insurance handled the damage to the parsonage. The Board of Trustees dealt with the issue of the rock group by granting them a reprieve to stay. However, the drainage issue at Kirkside would stay with the church for several decades. The Board of Trustees held a special meeting in November to deal with the maintenance issues at Kirkside and elsewhere.

Vandalism to the landscaping was reported by Jessie Smith in the Circuit Rider. Some shrubs were pruned without her authorization! The Administrative Board Chairman was Paul Schrock. The Treasurer's report for the first quarter, shown on a rare copy of the budget from that time donated by Jessie Smith, revealed that our minister was receiving a total salary of \$11,100 excluding a housing allowance because he lived in the Stonehaven parsonage. Our sexton James' salary was \$6,372 per year. The two organists received \$800 total and the two Choir Directors received \$1,200 total per year.

It is thought that Betty Cummings assumed the position of children's choir director around this time. The children absolutely adored Mrs. Cummings, who taught them how to read music and was exceptionally kind to each child.



Betty Cummings

Meanwhile, the Sanctuary Building Committee talked with Mr. Edward Crough, President of Edward M. Crough, Inc. of Washington. Mr. Crough's company entered into a contract with St. Matthew's to build the Sanctuary in early 1972.

It was absolutely necessary to refine a description of the details of the new Sanctuary to present to the congregation for approval at this time as the church was coming to the end of a three-step process required by the United Methodist Church for any building project. After

a building committee was established and preliminary sketches and approximate costs were drawn up by the architect, the last step is to present the drawings and costs to the congregation for final approval. This step is necessary to secure the mortgage.

On April 30, 1972, a Congregational meeting was held. We do not know the author of the following details that were presented because the data is unsigned. Thankfully, the presentation has been saved for us. First, it was pointed out to the congregation that the plans had to be modified due to high mortgage rates and our inability to borrow funds. Second, the Building Committee decided to go ahead with the construction and to do as much as possible with the funds that we were able to borrow and raise. The following states some changes and savings that were made:

“The reduction of the depth of the Chancel area by about six feet, reduction of the length of the Nave by five feet, reduction of the width of the Narthex by six feet. Even with these modifications, it was projected that we could still seat a congregation of between 1,000 and 1,500 people given two-service seating and utilizing seating in the Narthex. Originally, an underground structure was planned. However, considerable savings were realized by eliminating this feature. The mechanical room proposed for the lower level was moved to the first floor.

The three classrooms in the original plans were eliminated, but the choir room and lavatories were saved. A suite of executive offices was eliminated and simple office space only was adopted. Air conditioning for the original building was eliminated; air conditioning for the Sanctuary was approved. The slate roof was eliminated as well as the slate floor for the main area of the Sanctuary (the Nave). A great cost savings was realized when church member Bruce Bernhardt compiled a team of ladies proficient in cutting glass. When the Narthex doors were hung, her group set up sawhorses in the Narthex and began to cut the tinted glass into the designs furnished by the artist and to glue the pieces onto the doors.”



Bruce Jones Bernhardt(r) and friend.

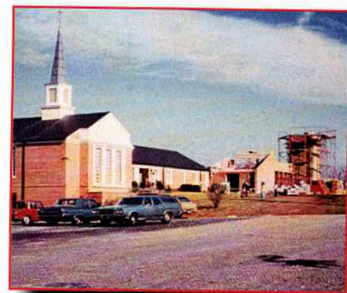


Rev Starnes and Norman Haiflich prepare for the groundbreaking ceremony.

they were adopted. On Sunday, July 23, 1972, ground was broken for the new Sanctuary. Construction began in early October and continued until its completion and consecration on September 9, 1973.

On June 9, 1972, Mr. Elliott, our architect, presented Col. Courtney Guerin with the signed results of his contract negotiations with Mr. Edward Crough’s construction company. This memorandum tallied the costs to build at \$392,581 at a “minimum contract cost.” This was good news considering the loan amount and the Building Fund account. On June 12, 1972, our indebtedness was stated at \$519,622, including the original loan on the Fellowship Hall building, several other loans to pay bills, and the note to American Security and Trust Bank of \$350,000 for the construction of the Sanctuary.

On June 25, 1972, the final construction and financial plans were presented to the congregation and

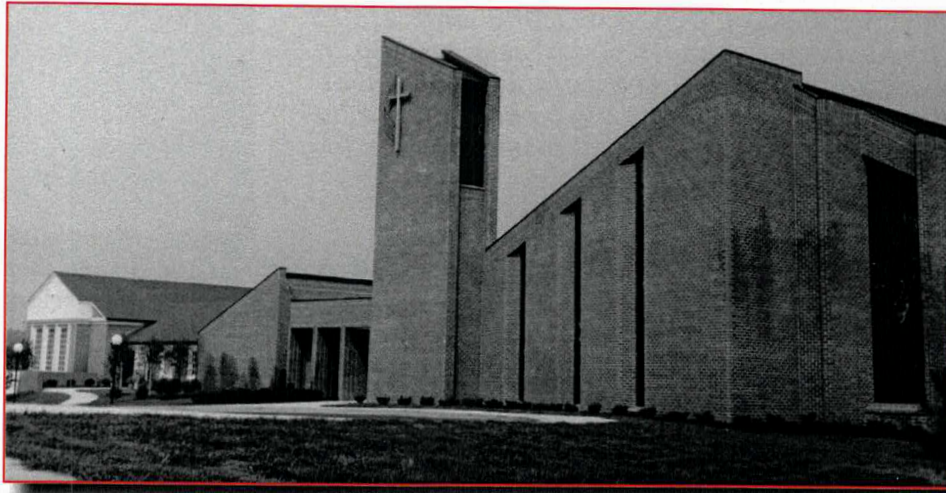


Building the Sanctuary, offices, and Bell Tower



Despite the difficulty in obtaining funds to build our Sanctuary, and the fact that many of the original design concepts had to be modified or eliminated, the final structure represented a place to worship God that was obtained through the faith of our members. It was a long, tedious process that defined the courage of the pastor, the Building Committee, and the church members. But finally, the beautiful Sanctuary stood tall. The Sanctuary is as it was meant to be: a quiet place to praise God. Our membership was 1077 persons, and our operating budget was \$128,362.

Note: Early pictures of the Fellowship Hall wing show a steeple on the roof. On December 1, 1972, after running an article in the Conference newsletter regarding the removal of the steeple, Rev. Starnes wrote to Rumsey Unger in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, who had replied to the article, and offered his church our steeple for the cost of removal and repair of our roof. This cost was not to exceed \$1,500-\$2,000. The architect listed a comparable steeple cost of \$8-\$9,000.⁴ It is nice to know that our steeple is on another church in West Virginia and was not destroyed.



Our beautiful new Sanctuary and office addition.

The life of the church continued as the Choir presented “The Seven Last Words of Christ” for the special service of worship on Good Friday 1973. A Senior Citizens group began organizing in March. Betty Zalewski has reported that during 1972, the “Talent Treasury” of the United Methodist Women provided many services to a lot of “satisfied customers” in the congregation and hoped that others would try the talents offered in their book. A retreat for entire families and individuals was planned at Summit Lake Camp, Emmitsburg, Maryland, in May. Two overnights and six meals cost \$15 per person. Three Meadowbrook Brownie Girl Scout troops met at Wesley House.⁵

But by far, the brightest point of the year was the consecration of the Sanctuary. (See pictures at end of this chapter). The Service of Consecration was held on Sunday, September 9, 1973, at 4 p.m. After the introductory hymns, scriptures and anthems, Mr. Edward Crough, General Contractor, and Mr. Benjamin Elliott, Architect, presented Mr. Courtland V. Guerin, Jr., Chairman of the Building Committee, the key to the building which was handed over to Mr. Paul Schrock, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The Sanctuary was then consecrated by Bishop James K. Mathews to God and His church. Other participants in the service included: James Foy, District Superintendent, Rev. Starnes and Rev. Ray Strawser, our ministers, Margaret Sigafosse and Tavia Wyatt, organists, Harold E. Sweet, Robert L. Evans and Elizabeth Cummings, choir directors, and David Sneddon, soloist.

⁴Story as related by Rev. Starnes

⁵Information provided by Barbara Rooney

The Building Committee consisted of: Courtland V. Guerin, Jr., chairman, Helen Vaughn, vice chairman, John Boyd, treasurer, and members John Bain, Jack Callahan, Truman Cunningham, John DeLaGrange, Sterling Donahoe, Bernard Dyrland, William Earnshaw, Paul Evans, Norman Haiflich, Larry Heacock, Philip Heacock, John Hicks, Claude Hooker, Frank Lineberger, Kenneth Mallery, Donald Marsico, Paul Mellott, Richard Mills, Amaryllis Price, Margaret Sigafoose, David Sneddon, and James Thomas.

The stained glass windows and the narthex glass doors were designed by Maureen McGuire of Phoenix, Arizona. The windows were constructed and installed by the Willet Studios in Philadelphia, and the narthex glass doors were cut by Ms. McGuire and the following people at St. Matthew's: Bruce Bernhardt, Steve Cooper, Betty, Suzie and Patty Cummings, Betty and Debbie Daigle, Eukie Donahoe, Pat Gray, Louise Haiflich, Barbara Henry, Dorothy and Holly Hicks, Judy and Paul Krebs, Louisa Lamphier, Dawn, Cheryl and Marylena Schrock, Clara and Margaret Sigafoose, Jennifer Sizoo, and Floyd Starnes. See the Memorials section for pictures of the stained glass windows.

It is believed that the Altar Guild began around this time with Eukie Donahoe as its Chairman. Eukie seemed to know just how to set up the altar, decorate the new Sanctuary and any other buildings that St. Matthew's owned. She showed the fledging congregation the worshipful ways of a Methodist. The Altar Guild also sewed Bible markers that were placed into Bibles given at baptism.

Not surprisingly at this time, finances were a bit tight for the church. In a September meeting of the Administrative Board, it was noted that 1973 pledges paid were \$8,000 behind the same time in 1972. Also, the conference apportionment had been deferred for three months because of the church's inability to pay it, especially with the first sanctuary mortgage payment (\$2,513) due in October. To help with some of the various costs the church had incurred, Wesley House was sold in September for \$42,500. However, by November there was only \$36 in the checking account to pay bills (the Wesley House sale had not yet been completed).

By early 1974, our Wesley Theological Seminary students, Patricia Meyers and Ken Mahan, had left the St. Matthew's staff. Patricia Meyers took a full-time position in Baltimore, while Ken Mahan returned to Indiana to be a pastor there. To partially make up for the attrition, Chaplain Ray Strawser joined the church staff for the length of his stay in the Bowie area. He would be reassigned late in the year. The Sunday School programs did not stop during the summertime. Our church budget for this year, according to a stewardship brochure, was \$110,949 consisting of the following: Missions were \$23,073, Salaries and Related Expenses were \$43,504, Church Building expenses \$34,967 (mortgages utilities, repairs, etc.), and Church Programs \$8,405. The theme for that year's stewardship campaign was "Reaching Up, Out, and Down."

There was a Service of Dedication for Memorial Gifts in April. Most of the gifts to furnish the Sanctuary given in honor of or in memory of a loved one were honored at this time.

During the summer, St. Matthew's endured another staffing change when Reverend Starnes was transferred to the First United Methodist Church in Hyattsville. Under his tenure as church minister, church membership had grown from 436 to 1,250. His replacement was Reverend McCarl Roberts, who came from the Arnolia United Methodist Church in Baltimore County. Rev. Roberts had a hobby of performing magic tricks, much to the delight of the congregation and the youth. Barbara Haddock reported that Rev. Roberts was influential in her son learning "magic." Louise Mott became our new assistant secretary in 1974.

The year was not all about staffing changes. In September, Eunice Burdette donated money for a set of handbells to the church. The result was the creation of the first two bell choirs at St. Matthew's. One was the Carolleers, a youth bell choir, and the other was the Campanile Choir, an all-women's bell choir. These newly formed choirs were directed by Margaret Sigafoose, who continued in this role for the next 10 years. This year also saw the first Chrismon tree in the Sanctuary. The ornaments were lovingly constructed by the Altar Guild out of styrofoam, gold braid and pearls.



The year 1975 was quiet for St. Matthew's. Edward Ferrell was appointed Associate Pastor. He would stay until January of 1978, when he left to serve as counsel at the Potomac Electric Power Company. Ed and his wife, Lee, were young and full of vitality. Ed's sermons were enjoyed by all and Lee (who would go on to become a deacon herself), would occasionally present interpretive dancing routines to the congregation enlisting the participation of other female members of the congregation.

By the end of the year, church property was valued at slightly over one million dollars, while the church held a total of around \$420,000 in debt.

By 1976, the church had decided that it needed more classroom space after all. Additional classrooms were included in the plans for building the Sanctuary, but were eliminated due to cost reduction. Just three years later, the need for more space had become so pressing that another building committee was formed to build the Education Wing. The committee was chaired by Court Guerin.

The committee first met on May 21, 1976. Clifford Hines, Ben Elliott, and Peter Powell submitted bids for construction. At that time, there was \$15,000 in a church building fund. Interest rates were very high at the time, hovering between 13-14 percent. A congregational meeting was held and a motion was passed to build the addition. The proposed cost of the Education Wing was \$55,000 for a 48'x68' addition. Clifford Hines was selected as the architect.

St. Matthew's owed \$80,430 to the Board of Missions, \$3,000 to American Security Corporation, and \$350,104 for the Sanctuary, for a total of \$433,534 at this time.

At the Building Committee meeting on January 4, 1977, Sterling Donahoe discussed his research into the parking problems regarding the County's regulations that required one parking place for each four chairs in the entire building. The need for a special permit to build was determined because of this requirement as well as the absolute necessity of using Bowie High School's adjacent parking lot for additional parking. Architect's fees mounted to \$2,600 at this time and were paid. The Honorable David Gray Ross, a Prince George's County judge and a member of our church, was consulted as to the best course of action to take regarding the parking issue.

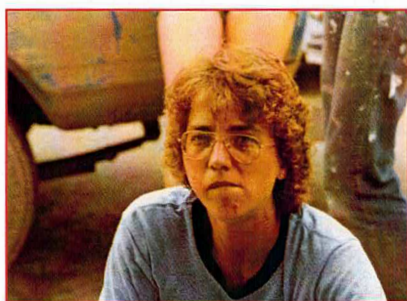
Kamber Engineering, Inc. was hired for Engineering Services on the Education Wing, including preparing the Special Exception Application and attending the required hearing before the Maryland Capital Park and Planning Commission (MCPPC) on November 18, 1977. On May 8, 1978, when the MCPPC did not pass the application for a variance for parking, the matter was referred to the Prince George's County Government District Council. We were still stymied and could not proceed with building. Finally, on January 26, 1979, after a long struggle regarding the parking issue, the Office of Zoning Hearing Examiner issued its decision for the variance on the parking spaces with some notable exceptions: "the driveway in front of the church must be one-way, the space in front of the church shall remain open, the seating of the buildings shall not exceed existing capacity, the new addition shall be used only for Sunday School classes, but only when the Sanctuary is not being used for services, and the waiver of spaces granted herein shall be only for as long as the 44 spaces are available on the adjoining school property on Sunday."

After several more hearings, the Prince George's County Government District Council granted a special exception to reduce the required parking regulations for our church with the above exceptions noted on April 9, 1979. Then on May 18, 1979, the Special Exception was granted by Prince George's County to construct the Education Wing. The parking issue was finally resolved and the church could proceed with the construction of the Education Wing after three years of hassle.

Unfortunately, our records do not show what happened at this point because the church did not proceed with the construction. Gordon Harvey stated in a telephone conversation with Kay League that he felt that the political climate within our church at that time was not conducive to proceeding, and the project fell dormant until it was picked up again in 1983.

During the summer of 1976, Reverend Roberts left to be the Assistant Executive Secretary for the Maryland Bible Society. This move was very upsetting to our congregation which had come to greatly admire him and his family. He was a warm and engaging man and this was reflected in his sermons. He was replaced by Reverend Charles E. Harvey, who arrived from the Epworth United Methodist Church in Gaithersburg. Kirkside, which no longer looked dowdy or had drainage issues, was converted into a parsonage for the associate pastor, Edward Ferrell and his wife, Lee.

The church appeared to have another quiet year in 1977. While copies of the Circuit Rider from the 1970s are virtually non-existent, a few pages from the 1977 Circuit Riders have surfaced. From them, we can glean samples of a very active church, particularly during the Christmas season. For example, we know that the United Methodist Men had their annual Christmas party at the Tidewater Inn held jointly with the Couples Club. Also during the holiday season, the United Methodist Women's Evening Circle held a caroling event. Lynn DuBrul joined the staff as director of the Youth, Carol, Celeste, Caroleer, Junior Bell and Belle Ringers (adult) choirs. By the end of the year, church property was valued at slightly under one million dollars, and the total debt was just over \$400,000.



Rev. Coveleskie

Linda Coveleskie was appointed to the church as Associate Pastor in 1978. Her previous position was that of pastor at the Trinity United Methodist Church in Cumberland, Maryland. Rev. Coveleskie was extremely well liked within our congregation. She was in charge of our youth program. Under her direction and inspiration, our youth program exploded with upward of 200 children enrolled.

From the few pages of Circuit Riders that exist for this year, we get a view of very active United Methodist Men (UMM) and United Methodist Women (UMW) groups. The United Methodist Women had several active circles (Morning Circle, Circle of Friendship, Christian Service Circle, and Evening Circle). The UMW held their Fall Bazaar. The United Methodist Men held potluck dinners in both February and March, and were undoubtedly active in a number of other activities. St. Matthew's also hosted a World Day of Prayer. There was an Adult Awareness Discussion Group that delved into how our health dollars are spent, what is wrong with our national/group health plans, and what is new or innovative in medicine. This group also sent out a plea to the seniors of the congregation to become "surrogate grandparents".

Rev. Charles Harvey appointed a special Memorials Committee to study the question of purchasing a bell system for the bell tower on May 19, 1978. The committee consisted of Paul Mellott, Memorials Chairman, Emil Charles, Laity, Paul Shelby, Legal Counsel, John Clinton, Lay Leader, Billy Johnson, Chairman of the Worship Committee, David Sneddon, Chairman of the Music Committee, Barbara Nestle, President of the Methodist Women, Pete Fauconnet, President of the Methodist Men, and Guernie Hobbs, Chair of Administrative Board. The committee quickly went to work hearing proposals from Schulmerich Carillons, Inc., and Maas Rowe Carillons. Mass Rowe Carillons system was selected by the Committee.

The purchase and installation of the Mass-Rowe Carillons system occurred in 1979. It was installed in the bell tower and dedicated on May 20, 1979, "in honor and remembrance of the members of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church." The cost was approximately \$5,820 and was paid for by memorials and honorariums. The "bells" that rang out on Sunday mornings and at noon on weekdays created a warm feeling for most of us, but some of our neighbors had issues with the lovely hymns played. Birds and squirrels regularly attacked the wiring, according to Trustees records. Mechanical problems caused continual expense for repairs on the part of the church. Eventually, around 1994, the system was quietly allowed to cease functioning.





The youth at Camp Hope



The group at Camp Hope

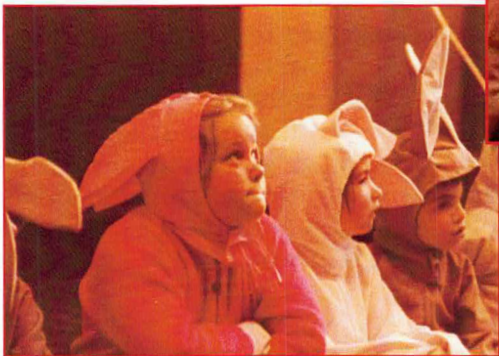
In the summer of 1979, members of the Senior High United Methodist Youth Fellowship of St. Matthew's spent the week at a work camp (Camp Hope) in the Appalachian area of Western Maryland. It was the third summer for the camp. The youth stayed at Frostburg State College and raised almost \$1,000 to attend the camp for the week. They contributed to the materials used on the homes as well as paying for their own room and board.

Also, during this year, the youth put on a play entitled "Rainbow Express." It featured many of our youth of that time in the roles of Noah, his three sons, an angel chorus, rabbits, doves and bugs. In the pictures below, one can see as children an architect, an attorney and many others that spent their formative years at St. Matthew's. These youth are middle-aged now with children of their own, some attending our church.

Helen Sneddon retired as our full-time secretary because of ill health and Louise Mott became our full-time secretary. By the end of the year, church property was valued at over \$1.2 million dollars, while church debt continued to hover at just over \$400,000.



Rainbow Express Pictures



Rabbits



Wes Fitzkee, David Rogers, Matt Cooper



Angel Chorus



Rainbow Express Pictures



Angel Chorus – Mary Painter (Adams) top right.



Noah, Sonja Harvey and Susan Winchester as “bugs”



Beth Cooper as a “Dove”



Review/Overview

This was a decade of both growth and change for the church. There was growth because of the building of the Sanctuary and the increase in church membership. There was change through the different pastors and assistant pastors. Rev. Starnes began the 1970s with the purpose of building the new Sanctuary, and through much trial and effort, our Sanctuary became a testament to the faith of its members and their desire to praise God in a worshipful place. Rev. McCarl Roberts stayed with us for two fabulous years spreading his magical (literally) abilities and charm to everyone and began the process of construction of the Education Wing. Then Rev. Charles Harvey arrived with his quiet presence, insightful and inspiring sermons. Our associate pastors were well-liked and worked with our youth, guiding them during their teen-age years. Our committees functioned well, steering our church through the many changes that occurred. Our church was very active with full Sunday School classes, adult classes, two worship services, and many choirs from cherub to adult singing God's praises. The UMW and UMM conducted monthly meetings and sponsored nursery school scholarships. After the initial beginning in the 1960s, St. Matthew's was steaming forward with well over 1,000 members strong.

Tom Eisinger

Kay League

Sources: Trustee records, Col. Guerin's personal files donated to the Trustees

Richard Mills, Circuit Riders, Testimony of senior members 1.8.2012

Gordon Harvey

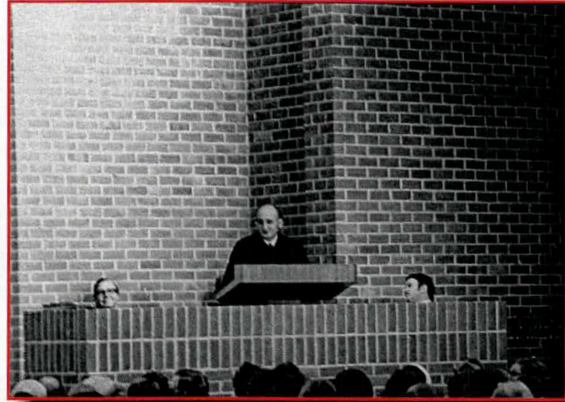




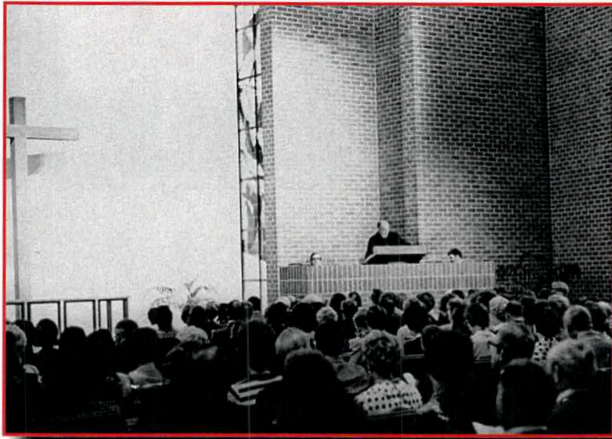
Sanctuary Dedication Pictures



Children filing in for the consecration service



Rev. Starnes delivers the dedication sermon



Rev. Starnes delivering the sermon



Bishop James Mathews, Rev. Tom Starnes, D.S. James Foy & Assoc. Min. Ray Strawser



Carol & Celeste Choirs 1973



Youth Choir 1973