



The 1990s - Expanding Our Mission Vision

As the 1990s began, the country was still immersed in a depression that began suddenly in 1988. Real estate values were continuing to decline and the country was praying for it to end. It was the decade that would end the millennium and many people predicted the end of the world would come magically overnight before the first day of the new 1,000 years began. This decade saw the Gulf War, the Oklahoma City Bombing, Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, the Columbine Shooting, an explosion at the World Trade Center, Princess Diana's death and the end of busing in Prince George's County after 26 years.

St. Matthew's, conversely, was still increasing in size and strength. Reverend Robert Paulen was our pastor entering his third year of service. He increased the staff in size and our membership increased to an all-time high of nearly 1,400 members on the rolls. But unfortunate circumstances that occurred in 1991 caused concern early in the decade just as fear of the end of the world caused concern to many persons in our country as the millennium ended.

The worship experience continued in the beginning of this decade as in the past with a service held at 8:30 a.m. and at 11 a.m. During the summer, only one service was held at 10 a.m. through 1995 when Rev. Paulen was reassigned. When Reverend Richard Stetler was assigned to our church in 1995, he continued the two morning services during the summer and added a garden service at 7:30 a.m. in 1997. Popular worship experiences featured during Lent were the soup and salad suppers before the services and the prayer vigils, which were held between Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services.



Children dressed for Christmas play

The Sunday School program during this decade was held during the hour between services, utilizing all the space available in our church with many children, youth and adult offerings. A new class of students was usually confirmed on Pentecost Sunday, professing their belief in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Every summer, there was a Vacation Bible School, always with a different theme. Many adults volunteered to staff this program and it was fun for students and adults alike. At Christmas, the children participated in a play about the story of the birth of Christ. This service was always well attended by parents, grandparents and others who loved to see the children act out the familiar story. Summer Sunday school was offered and appreciated by the parents who also staffed it.

The Christian Education program was well established with volunteers until 1991 when Jane Eagen (Dodd) was hired as the Director of Education. A former school principal, Jane was adept at organizing the programs. She was succeeded in 1994 by Shirley Bickel as Director of Education. Shirley was an astute teacher, instilling in the children Christian values. On a typical Sunday, there were up to 140 children under her care and guidance. She was with us for 17 years before retiring in 2011.

Disciple classes were usually taught by Reverend (Rev.) Patti Smith after she joined us in 1991 as our Assistant Minister. Everyone who participated in these classes came away with moving memories of their time spent with Rev. Smith. The children also filled cardboard stockings for Red Bird mission in Kentucky. The church counters just loved to remove the coins out of the stockings on collection day!

The United Methodist Women (UMW) held their Epiphany Brunch each January with installation of officers for the year and their Quiet Day Brunch each Good Friday before Easter.



The UMW continued to offer support to the pastors for events they held and to the congregation as a whole with their Circles and mission support.

The Trustees faithfully met almost every month to discuss the capital expenditures needed to keep the church in good repair. The Trustees have been and are responsible for the investment funds of the church. On many occasions, they have requested guidance from the Finance Committee. Jim Mott served as the Finance Committee chair for many years, charting our course for fiscal responsibility. In the latter part of the 1990s, Jim's ill health forced him to resign from this post. He was sorely missed.



Easter Altar

Other support organizations in the church worked very efficiently during this decade. The Concils On Ministries (COM) functioned as an important oversight committee with Worship, Missions, Ushers, Altar Guild, UMW, United Methodist Men, and Music, all bringing their plans and achievements up for possible presentation to the Administrative Board. This committee functioned until the late 1990s, when it ceased and many of the participants reported directly to the Administrative Board. Stewardship worked to successfully increase membership by taking loaves of bread, baked by volunteers, to visitors after their second visit.

The Altar Guild always presented beautiful altars and Joanne Haworth served as the Communion Steward after Joan Rickey moved. Before Joan, Martha Tall was our faithful Communion Steward. There have been many faithful Altar Guild chairs, but the duo of Nedra Evans and Joan Rickey was especially appreciated during this decade. One night near the end of this decade, Nedra had a dream just before Easter of an altar display that would incorporate a large cross of Easter lilies flowing down from the top of the altar surrounded by azaleas.¹ Her vision was accomplished by the Altar Guild and is still often used at Easter.

Many New Members classes were held in the 1990s. Both with Rev. Paulen and with Rev. Stetler, there were at least three or four classes per year. In the latter part of the decade, Rev. Stetler added a twist to his membership classes by asking participants to devise either a program or service to the congregation, or a mission project. In 1996, it was a Mardi Gras dinner which was well attended and fun. That same year, a picnic at White Marsh Park featuring ice cream, hotdogs, games and softball was well received. With one of the new members acting as the auctioneer in 1998, an auction was held resulting in a great deal of money being raised. One memorable class collected new or gently used shoes for Latvian orphans (1999). These activities created a lot of excitement in the congregation and were designed to integrate the new members into our church family.

Many different kinds of retreats were held during the 1990s. From the all-church retreats to the parents' retreats, these times were valued by the congregation. Retreats to Camp Harmison, picnics at Allen's Pond or West River, and many camping trips were held over Memorial Day weekend. In addition, the Christian Education Committee held retreats for church leadership at the New Windsor Retreat Center in 1991, an all-church retreat at Drayton Manor with the theme "Walk Through the Old Testament" in 1993, and a parenting retreat on the topic "Parents as Sex Educators of their Children" in 1998.

The music program at St. Matthew's has always been a full and varied one. We have been blessed by outstanding and dedicated music directors over the years, and the 1990s was no exception. Our adult choir has been fabulous and it has been a joy to hear them sing. There was also a youth choir and a children's choir, and a youth bell choir called the Jubilee

¹Dream as told to Kay League

Ringers, under volunteer leadership during this time. In addition, there has been a choral group named “SpiritMove”, comprised of individuals who choose their own music to present, led by Helen-Jean Talbott. In 1996, the Youth Choir presented the musical “Rescue in the Night” during services and the Chancel Choir presented a Good Friday performance of Sir John Stainer’s, “The Crucifixion”.

Applachacia Service Project (ASP) was the summertime mission project of the youth each year since 1992– and still is. The youth held car washes and a t-shirt design contest in 1995; went on a mystery trip, held rock-a-thons, walked “Miracle Miles” for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, and held a book fair for missions and ASP in 1997; and presented “The Tale of Three Trees” narrated by Jen McClurg in 1999. As the decade progressed, the youth participation in United Methodist Youth Fellowship decreased as the kids grew up, went to college, and married.

Missions must be listed as an ongoing journey at St. Matthew’s. From the very beginning, even with little money and none to spare, our church has managed to donate money and time to some form of mission. So it was in the 1990s. At that time, we contributed to the Richard and Kimberly Brown-Wales ministry (our missionaries to Anguilla), FISH (Friendly Instant Sympathetic Help), participated in Volunteer In Mission (VIM) trips, Christmas in April, supported Kathy and Mark Masters (missionaries) in the Solomon Islands, and began totally new projects.

Warm Nights at our church was established in 1990 by Mary Mitchell. This program, administered by Community Ministries, housed homeless individuals traveling between participating churches during the winter months beginning in November. Because cots were set up in Fellowship Hall where the Early Education Center (EEC) children hold physical education classes, our church usually took the week over Christmas when the EEC was closed. Each night at 6 p.m., the van pulled up to the Fellowship Hall door and the participants came into Fellowship Hall. After we fed them dinner, we offered them a cot for the night. In the morning, after breakfast, we gave them a bag lunch. Occasionally, our church offered two weeks of housing to the residents before they rotated to another church for a week. It was not unusual for us to house families with small children, young people who had aged out of foster care because they had turned 18 years old, or a family that lost their home due to the economic conditions and just needed some time to rest and regroup.

Another program that began in 1991 was the St. Matthew’s Housing Corporation, a 401 3(c) non-profit corporation. It continued to operate throughout the 1990s after the purchase of “Alpha House” on Seventh Street in the Huntington section of Bowie. The first board of the Corporation was: Rev. Robert Paulen, President, Kay League, Vice President, Gordon Linder, Treasurer, and Linda Cooper, Secretary. It remained this way for four years until Rev. Paulen and Kay League resigned and others filled these posts. The Housing Corporation was formed to offer the working poor the opportunity to rent a room in a house at a modest price. The individual was allowed to stay for up to two years in this shared living arrangement with three other persons in the four bedroom house. Linda Cooper is now its President and the Board is presently comprised of St. Matthew’s members. The Corporation has received little funding from the church other than several Communion offerings a year. It has been operating on prayers for some time. At one time, a second house, Beta House, was made available by an individual owner to the Corporation for use as a rental property. After several years, the owner sold this house, and gave some of the proceeds to the Housing Corporation. The Board is always looking for new members to serve in this worthwhile project, and donations are always needed.



Alpha House

Another mission project that was begun in the late 1980s and which carried over to the 1990s was the in-house Shelter program. In the beginning, we housed homeless families in the space now occupied by the EEC offices. Even though this caused some consternation on the part of the congregation on Sunday mornings, it was felt that the program was worthwhile.



It became difficult with both the new Early Education Center and the hosted family using the kitchen and the bathrooms near Fellowship Hall at the same time. Because of these concerns, this program was discontinued in early 1990, but the thought developed into the idea of building an apartment under the Education Wing. This process began in 1991, but wasn't finished until June 30, 1995. The shelter program continues in operation today under the leadership of Jean Baker. Linda Cooper, Mary Mitchell and Kay League were instrumental in helping this dream to become a reality and Jeff Sandell was the builder.

1990-1999

In January 1990, Doris Lopez became President of the UMW. The UMM continued to hold monthly breakfasts with a guest speaker. In May, when the associate minister, Timothy Dissmeyer moved his family to their own home in Crofton, Maryland, the house on Marne Lane (Kirkside) was used for transitional housing for the homeless for several months. Then it became a rental property again. The Stewardship Committee ran a "Step up in Faith" financial campaign in the fall. The UMW Open Circle was disbanded with the members joining other circles. At a Trustee meeting, it was noted that the proposed pipe organ would now cost around \$200,000. Seven written proposals had been received for the installation and each had to be evaluated. At that time, the Pipe Organ Committee voted to dedicate the organ in memory of Margaret Sigafoose, one of St. Matthew's first organists.

In October, the church offered a Disciple program which met one hour per week and wrote a covenant incorporating the General Rules of the early Methodist Societies. The UMM held a Good News Prison Bible study at Prince George's Correctional Facility in Upper Marlboro and the UMW held an International Holiday Bazaar including booths featuring Christmas Treasures, Christmas Around the World, and a children's booth. Proceeds from the bazaar were \$3,166, of which \$1,350 was pledged for nursery school scholarships. In November, 25 children and nine adults prepared food and decorated napkins for residents of Prince George's House, a facility that housed homeless women and children. The Altar Guild presented a beautiful Thanksgiving altar. In December, the children presented a Christmas musical during the Sunday worship services.



Left to right: Elizabeth Zalewski, Nedra Evans, Joan Rickey, Unknown, Marty Bridgewater, 1990

The year 1991 began with a retreat held for church leadership at New Windsor Retreat Center. February brought the UMW Tea where the ladies honored Clara Sigafoose and made a donation to the Bell Choir in her memory. At a breakfast meeting, the UMM presented a dramatization of "The Last Supper". The youth counselors became Wayne and Carol Matthews, Kevin and Carrie Williams, and Pat and Pete Eagen.

Early this year, Rev. Paulen decided that because the St. Matthew's Nursery-Kindergarten School was offering child care opportunities to the community, the name of the school should be changed to the St. Matthew's Early Education Center. Jerry Horsewood became the first chair of the newly-established Early Education Board, created to oversee the school. The Early

Education Center has faithfully carried out its mission to ensure that every child enrolled at the school receives the best education possible while instilling good values.

Rev. Paulen began his three month sabbatical on April 29. Pastors are entitled to a sabbatical every seven years, but rarely take it. Rev. Paulen embarked on a bicycle trip across the southern portion of the United States from California to Maryland. He arrived back in our area on June 21 to a cheering crowd. He resumed his ministerial duties the first of August.

Just before Rev. Paulen left on his sabbatical, irreconcilable differences that had been brewing for months between the Director of Music and one of the organists reached the point of no return and the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) voted to discontinue their services immediately. In protest of this action, our other organist also resigned, leaving the church with no musical accompanists. Fortunately, several pianists in our congregation volunteered their services until we could hire someone else. Our church reacted strongly to the news of the dismissals and many members who dearly loved one or another of the ladies involved left our church.² Our congregation struggled forward until a new music director was hired in September. It was a sad and difficult time for our congregation.

However, the life of the church continued onward with a Strategic Planning Team beginning to form. This team, comprised of many dedicated members of the church, studied the various aspects of the operation of the church under the direction of a planned course of study approved by the Conference. The team transitioned through three leaders, finally summarizing its findings in 1994. The report stated that our current missions were the following: Support of Bowie Food Pantry, food baskets for needy at Thanksgiving and Christmas, food for Prince George's Shelter once a week, food for sheltered residents during Warm Nights, participation in CROP Walk, driving for Meals on Wheels, support for CCPC during their Warm Nights week, Maryland Food Committee, Housing Corporation and Alpha House, Family Camping weekends, and support of Boy and Girl Scouts. Unfortunately, these overall conclusions were never presented to the congregation and have not been listed here; however, the total report may be found in the church Archives.

The pipe organ fund had reached 50 percent of the funding it needed by April 1991. Pete Fauconnet was the Chair of the Organ Committee and led them successfully through the process with the recommendations of the pipe organ committee. The Organ Committee had raised a considerable portion of the cost of the organ through pledges. The Administrative Board voted to contract with Casavant Freres Limitee of the Province of Quebec to build a 14 stop, 17 rank pipe organ at a cost of \$184,000. In May, the UMW held a bake sale to help raise funds for the organ.



Rev. Stetler &
Rev. Patti Smith

In June 1991, the youth collected pennies to buy school supplies for the children in Red Bird, Kentucky. Vacation Bible School was held this summer in the mornings. The Masters Family, a missionary family our church supported, was on furlough from the Solomon Islands and visited St. Matthew's. The Trustees requested that the church office keep a record of all church-related documents. July found our Assistant Pastor, Rev. Timothy Dissmeyer reassigned to another parish.

Reverend (Rev.) Patti Smith was appointed a Diaconal Minister to St. Matthew's beginning July 1. Rev. Smith arrived to find the people of St. Matthew's in pain from the recent dismissal of the musical staff. She pitched in to stabilize our church until Rev. Paulen returned. Rev. Smith remained at St. Matthew's for 13 years, retiring at the mandatory age of 70 years. She brought a wealth of dedication and experience to her post, blessing us with her lovely singing voice.

In her early years with us, she worked with our youth, inspiring them in Christian values and leading the Confirmation classes. She also taught the Disciple classes and instituted the "blessing of the animals" service.

In September 1991, Jane Eagen (Dodd) became the paid Director of Christian Education amidst turmoil within the department. The Early Education Center had registered too many children for the fall session and it needed one more classroom. Rev. Paulen made the decision to use one classroom in the Education Wing for the overflow. Since this space was allocated

²Information based upon History Gathering 90s

³Conversation with Jane Dodd 2011



to the Youth of our church, it was quite a surprise, according to Jane. Somehow, this problem was resolved and the children flowed into the space.³

Also in September, Doris Lohr became our church Secretary, and former Benedictine monk Isaac Borocz was hired as our Music Director/organist. A progression of excellent volunteer pianists have assisted him when needed. Most notably, Dr. Charles Mock on many occasions performed this service. Today, Lori Robertson has assisted Isaac on the piano on many Sundays. In addition to directing the adult choir, Isaac also has led the Gloria Ringers, the adult bell choir.

In November, the United Methodist Women held a hoedown/supper, raising \$845 which was distributed to various missions.

Fortunately, even though this was a rather tumultuous year at St. Matthew's, the congregation that remained showed much support and love to the pastor. Things settled down with the new staff in place as the church celebrated the birth of our Savior.



Isaac Borocz

The year 1992 began quietly with the UMW installing Corinne Patt as President. The UMW also held the Quiet Day Brunch on Good Friday followed by a brilliant program by Rev. Patti Smith as she depicted Mary, the mother of Jesus, at the foot of the cross. They also held their annual tea in May.

The Gloria Ringers (the adult bell choir) attended the Anne Arundel Bell Choir Festival, the youth held the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, and the Chancel Choir performed Haydn's "The Seven Last Words of Christ" on Good Friday. The Girl Scouts presented St. Matthew's with an appreciation plaque. In April, a loan agreement was signed with Citizens' National Bank for the purpose of making timely organ contract payments.

In June, the youth sent three work teams to Kentucky for Appalachia Service Project (ASP). This was the first year our youth, at the encouragement of Rev. Patti Smith, participated in ASP instead of Camp Hope. Three bell choirs were now playing – the Gloria Ringers, Jubilee Ringers (beginner) and Hallelujah Ringers (intermediate). SpiritMove sang during the summer months.

In September, Fred Jackson was honored for serving several years as our unpaid Treasurer. Fred endeavored to bring some sense of order to the financial picture of the church. The UMW held a Fall Kickoff Luncheon and the Christian Education committee held a fall retreat. The UMW Bazaar was held with each Circle taking a theme. Many members noted the difficulty finding space for adults to hold a meeting or Sunday School class due to the little chairs and tables in many classrooms. Warm nights was held in December for one week to finish out the year.

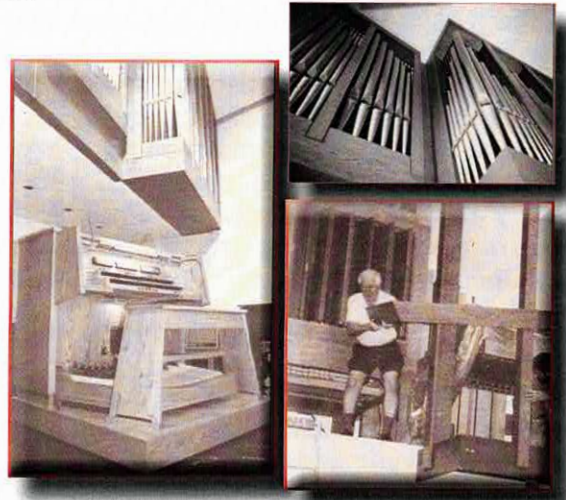
Denny Hulen became the Chair of the Administrative Board in January 1993. In February, the children joined with Ebenezer United Methodist Church for Valentine's Day fun. They made cards for the children in the Warm Nights program still running at other churches during the winter months. The word was out that the pipe organ would be installed this year and that the organ loft would support the configuration of pipes. A "Medieval Feast," "Gourmet Dinner," and "Night at the Opera" presented by the Music Director, Isaac Borocz, were fundraisers held this month to help pay for the organ. The staff learned that because of a monetary shortfall last year, there would be no raises for them during this year for the first time.

In March, the United Methodist Women began a new tradition of naming a "Woman of the Year." This woman was chosen by vote of the congregation as an outstanding participant in our church and the community. The first awards were given to Carol Matthews and Alice Weir.

The Worship Committee held soup and salad suppers before the Wednesday Lenten services. In May, St. Matthew's raised \$633 through the Communities Relief on Poverty (CROP) walk which went to "Help by Phone" to use to buy food.

On June 16, 1993, the installation of the pipe organ was completed and the pipe organ was played for the first time in a Sunday Service on July 11, 1993. The goal of completing the organ installation in time for our 30th Anniversary was reached. The Chairman of the Pipe Organ Committee, Pete Fauconnet, demonstrated that hard work and dedication can pay off. With the committee's help, St. Matthew's has a glorious instrument to play God's praises. The organ was dedicated on September 26, 1993.

July found Vacation Bible School being held at night instead of during the daytime for the first time. More than 80 children were enrolled. The summer worship program was in effect with one 10 a.m. service on Sundays and a 7:30 p.m. service on Wednesdays. In September, a new Disciple class was offered for 34 weeks, 2.5 hours each week. St. Matthew's responded to West Virginia flood victims with 145 boxes of donated items.



Pete Fauconnet helped install organ

On Friday, September 24, a 3-day celebration began for our 30th Anniversary. A hymn sing was held that night. A pot luck dinner and dancing in Fellowship Hall took place on Saturday night. On Sunday, September 26, our 30th Anniversary was celebrated at the regular services followed by the consecration of the organ and reception in Fellowship Hall at 3 p.m. In October, Christian Education held an all-church retreat at Drayton Manor with the theme "Walk Through the Old Testament," while the Committee On Ministries (COM) held a retreat at West River. Also in October, the UMW held its bazaar, which changed from once every two years to once a year, featuring crafters who rented a space to sell their crafts. They also held a hoedown for the congregation which was very well received. December found the Warm Nights program again housed in Fellowship Hall for the third year.

In 1994, the annual budget was \$384,300. Our apportionment (the amount of money our church pays to the Baltimore-Washington Conference yearly) was \$65,000. It was unusual for us Methodists at St. Matthew's that only 91 percent of pledged contributions were received this year. Mike League was elected Chair of the Board of Trustees. Martha Circle changed its meeting day to the second Friday of each month, instead of the first Thursday. The UMW also increased its contribution to the EEC scholarship fund to \$1,600 per year. Family ministry began planning after-school activities for kids one day a week.

In March, the Council On Ministries voted to limit church fundraising appeals to focus on our commitment as a faith community of the United Methodist Church, and the UMW named Carol Hulen as the "Woman of the Year." In June, St. Matthew's earned the "Golden Tennis Shoe" for having the most walkers (for a group that has not earned this award before) in the Communities Relief on Poverty (CROP) Walk supported by First United Methodist Church in Hyattsville. Our youth again participated in ASP, this time going to Virginia.

In July, Vacation Bible School in the Methodist Church celebrated its 100th Anniversary. Ninety-five students attended the classes at St. Matthew's. There were two bell choirs at this time -the Gloria Ringers and the Laudate Ringers (a beginning bell choir). In July, Shirley Bickel came on board as Director of Christian Education. Shirley would remain in this position for the next 17 years. In September, Dr. Jim Logan met with members in various host homes to discuss how to strengthen our church life and "Pass It On" as part of our stewardship drive. A disciple study for youth was proposed and the UMW held a fall kick-off potluck dinner and hymn sing.



A new and exciting program was begun in 1995 at St. Matthew's in January by Dan and Mary Jane Kenyon teaching sign language classes. They continued with this effort for quite a few years. Our church provided sign language interpreters for the 11 a.m. services and also for some designated church meetings that Dan wished to attend. Kay League was installed as President of the UMW, and March found Linda Cooper named by the congregation as the UMW's "Woman of the Year." In April, the children presented "Scenes of Passion" during the Palm Sunday services. Paul Perkowski reorganized the church library, which was now named the "Alice Weir Library." Recipes were sought for a new St. Matthew's cookbook.



Jesse Smith & Rev. Paulen plant a river birch tree in his honor.

At this time, the church membership was buzzing with the upcoming wedding of the pastor, Rev. Paulen, to Sandy Mattingly. A shower was held in May for Sandy, and a potluck dinner was held by the congregation to celebrate his seven-year service with us. Sandy and Bob were married in the Sanctuary on July 1, 1995, by Bishop Joseph Yeakel (Bishop of our Conference) and Father Brian Vaughn (Sandy is Roman Catholic). Rev. Paulen's last Sunday with us was celebrated with a gathering in Fellowship Hall which included many testimonies about his meaningful service to us and how dearly he would be missed. He was reassigned to a church in Waldorf, Maryland.



Rev. Richard Stetler

Reverend Richard Stetler was assigned to us from Capitol Hill United Methodist Church and slowly began to acclimate himself to our congregation with his charismatic charm and interesting sermons. Rev. Stetler and his wife, Lois, were introduced to the congregation by holding welcoming teas at various member's homes. They had two grown children, Sue and Steve. He built the bookshelves in the pastor's study to house his massive collection of books. He was to remain our pastor for the next 15 years. Our programs continued to run as usual with little change except for a gradual decline of the COM, which ceased to exist after about two years.

In July, the church held a potluck dinner to celebrate the Masters family whom we have supported for many years in a covenant relationship. The Trustees began a campaign to replace the church sign. Eventually, the sign was replaced in October at a cost of \$8,000, paid for entirely by donated funds.

Per congregation request, another Scripture reading was added to the worship services. The choirs at this time were: Schola Cantorum, Chancel Choir, SpiritMove, Children's Choir, Youth Choir, Gloria Ringers and Jubilee Ringers. Schola Cantorum, Chancel Choir and Gloria Ringers were under the able leadership of Isaac Borocz, our Choir Director. Youth Choir, Jubilee Ringers, and Children's Choir were under lay leadership, working under Isaac.

In September, the Trustees reported that the Prince George's Beautification Committee had awarded St. Matthew's the 1995 Hall of Horticultural Excellence Award, which is the statue "Doves of Peace" which is displayed in the Memory Garden. This award is given for five consecutive years of winning the beautification award. Jessie Smith, in charge of the care of our grounds, was responsible for St. Matthew's receiving this award.



Church sign in the Spring



Doves of Peace

In October, the Trustees minutes stated that the value of the church building was \$2,682,000, including the land and furnishings. In November, the congregation celebrated Alice Weir's 100th birthday; the Chancel Choir began fundraising efforts for new robes; and the New Century Singers presented a concert to raise money for the robes. One could underwrite a full robe for \$100 or one sleeve for \$10. In December, Eric Wolfe decided to underwrite the cost of the robes in memory of his parents. And in November, the UMW held its annual craft fair. Warm Nights was held for two weeks in December-January 1996. Nineteen persons joined St. Matthew's UMC in December and the average Sunday attendance was 410 persons. The Senior High group raised funds for ASP by selling t-shirts and sweatshirts with a St. Matthew's logo.

1996 began with the installation of Joe Lambert as Chair of the Administrative (Ad) Board. At the January Ad Board meeting, a motion carried that \$4,000 yearly be added to the budget to pay for interpreter services at worship and meetings. The Early Education Center's contribution was \$9,250 monthly as room rent to be applied as income against the 1996 budget. In February, the congregation was invited to a retreat at Camp Harmison and to a Mardi Gras Potluck Dinner in Fellowship Hall featuring a concert by Isaac Borocz and Chuck Mock. The children decided to hold a "Bring a Friend" Sunday for two consecutive Sundays. "Operacion Hogar" to Juarez, Mexico, was sponsored as a mission trip from March 30th to April 5. The UMW held a bus trip to the Reading outlets for a day of shopping and named Marcella Dove as its "Woman of the Year."

On March 31, Palm Sunday, the church school held a drama for the congregation entitled "The Anointing of Jesus." Children three years through grade 12 participated.



The Evangelism Committee sponsored a spaghetti dinner to raise funds for a sign language interpreter at worship with the deaf congregants participating and organizing this dinner. The Gloria Ringers attended a bell choir festival at Anne Arundel Community College. At this time, the Circuit Rider stated that the church owed \$75,000 on the organ and that the staff costs were 40.2 percent of the total budget. Nineteen persons joined St. Matthew's. In May, the UMW held a membership tea at a member's home and the congregation participated in the CROP walk. Average Sunday attendance was 402 persons.

In June, a hymn choir was organized for summer services. The youth took their ASP trip to Hancock County, Tennessee, and six youth were confirmed. The 10 members of the New Member Class held a picnic for the church at White Marsh Park featuring ice cream, hotdogs, games and softball. The Trustees reported that the Endowment Fund was valued at \$112,072. In July, a church picnic was held at West River and in August, 19 persons joined St. Matthew's UMC. September kicked off with the UMW brunch and craft workshop, a visit from the Brown-Wales, our missionaries, and a potluck dinner featuring a presentation of "The tangible gifts we can give to our children."

Also in 1996, Isaac Bocorz and Jackie Gerard founded the Theatre Troupe, a merry band of thespians which performed a play twice a year. Our congregation, as well as the general community, has loved the performances. In October, the new musical Theatre Troop presented their first production - "Ruddigore." The UMW jumped in with their hoedown held in conjunction with the new member class in October. A camping trip to Camp Harmison and the annual blessing of the animals' ceremony was also held. In November, the deaf ministry held a retreat at West River and the UMW held its annual craft show. December found the children filling cardboard "red stockings" with quarters for the Board of Child Care. The Youth Choir



presented "Eve of Miracles" with choir, soloists, and dancer/actors. It was the fifth year for Warm Nights in Fellowship Hall.

Our budget for 1996 showed a surplus: actual offerings - \$423,411; budgeted - \$418,711; over budget by \$4,700! It was a very good year at St. Matthew's with a strong educational program, youth program and adult offerings. Our total church value was \$2,682,000 .

1997 began quietly with the UMW still collecting recipes for its upcoming new cookbook. In February, an intermediate level sign language class was offered to the congregation. Our church added the delivery of a meal to the men's shelter on Addison Road on the third Sunday of each month as well as the fourth Tuesday. These meals were generally for up to 40 homeless men who were offered shelter and a warm meal. Groups from our church provided the meals, plus milk and dessert and shared time with the men. The homeless men were truly grateful for perhaps their only meal of the day. They left the shelter each morning at 7 a.m. and returned around 5 p.m. for dinner at 6 p.m.

February also brought the installation of the handrails to the altar, paid for with Memorial funds, and a Blind Auction was held to raise funds to finish/assemble the kneelers for around the altar rail. The Trustees sold Faith Notes to raise funds for the boiler repair/replacement at an interest rate of 7 to 7.5 percent. These Faith Notes are always repaid by our church.

In March, a new group was formed in the church. It was called the "Angel Gang." Comprised of persons with health issues, it was soon going strong under the leadership of Rev. Stetler and Frank and Donna Lane. The group soon turned its attention outward in a mission to send cards and gift bags to persons who are ill. They have become an integral part of St. Matthew's congregational life. Mary Neilson became Director of the EEC and there was a VIM trip to build houses in Juarez, Mexico. A concert was held in March and a freewill offering was taken for the pipe organ. Beverly Burnett was named the UMW's "Woman of the Year."

On Good Friday, an original work by Isaac Borocz was presented. It contained music for bells, organ, and participation by the congregation. The junior high UMYF went on a Mystery Trip and the congregation participated in a potluck dinner/dance with the proceeds going to ASP.

April brought a rising interest in building a Columbarium on our church grounds. This interest would continue over the next few years until a Columbarium was built in 2002 in the Memory Garden. Niches that house two boxes each were sold for \$1,500. Former Maj. General William Eicher (ret) led the Committee in building this addition to our grounds.

The congregation participated in a potluck dinner/dance "Rock of the Ages", with proceeds going to ASP. The Deaf Ministry held a spaghetti dinner to raise funds for the sign language interpreters at worship and a team was provided to "Christmas in April" to repair a house. In May, 11 youth were confirmed and 10 persons joined St. Matthew's. May also found new hymnal holders fastened to the backs of the pews. Sunday School was still offered for the children during the summer months.



Garden Service

June continued with a special event - the ordination of Associate Pastor Patti Smith as a Deacon at Constitution Hall. A bus was chartered to attend the ceremony and many persons participated in a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It was a moving time for all who attended even though the majority sat high up in the stands of Constitution Hall. This month also found the UMW cookbook was offered for sale.

July found Rev. Stetler adding the Garden Service for the first time. Over the years, this service has grown in popularity and attendance. It was (and is) an informal service at 7:30 a.m. that continues to this day and featured casual dress, a sermon, and coffee and tea while attendees sat on folding chairs in the Memory Garden. Also in July, Vacation Bible School's theme was "Celebrate Jesus".

In August, the Finance Committee reported that the budget for 1998 would be \$421,662. September 22 featured a one-day retreat for parents at Wabanna Conference Center with the topic "God as a parent: A role model for us." Small discussion groups as well as fun while boating made the day complete.



Parenting Retreat

The membership committee was reestablished to encourage visitors to our church to join us. Pictures for the membership directory were begun and the second annual Blessing of the Animals was held in the Memory Garden and. October showcased the Musical Theatre Troupe which presented a production of "Two by Two," and the UMW sold Christmas ornaments stenciled with a picture of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church. The Trustees reported to the Charge Conference that the church and its properties including furnishings was valued at \$2,782,000.

November opened with the UMW Craft Fair, and the Youth Book Fair was held to benefit the Missions Fund and ASP. Rev. Stetler brought in 32 new members to St. Matthew's. Our average attendance on Sunday was 444 people.



In December, as their project, the New Member class began the first Christmas Stocking Project for children of detainees at the county jail. This splendid program is still going strong today led by one of those new members,

Sharon Heidenrich. The Sunday School presented the familiar Christmas story on Christmas eve to a packed audience. Warm Nights capped off the year with two weeks of hosting homeless individuals and families along with some help from St. Pius Catholic Church. The Administrative Board held a covered dish potluck for their members to end the year.



1998 began with flames as we burned the Sanctuary mortgage on January 11. In attendance were Rev.

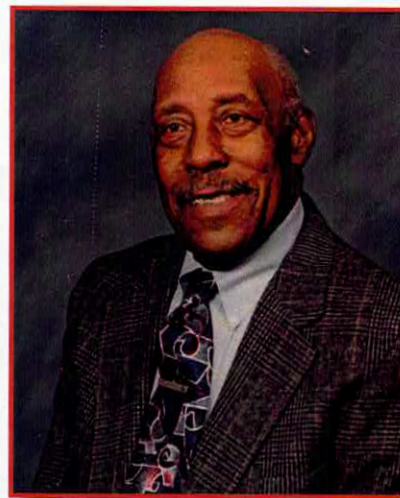


Rev. Patti Smith with Rev. Rodeffer, the District Superintendent

Starnes and his wife, Waveline, and Rev. Robert Rodeffer, the District Superintendent. It signified that our church was finally completely debt free. There was a big celebration of joy and relief.



James Young, our sexton, celebrated his 80th birthday in January. This fine man took loving care of our church for 40 years. James was a native of Prince George's County, but had been working and living in the South with his wife and children. Upon his return to Prince George's County, he lived in Upper Marlboro with his family and worked part-time for St. Matthew's and full time with another company. When we could offer him a full time position, James came to work for St. Matthew's with a glad heart and willing hands. From that time on, around 1967, he made sure that our church shone brightly. St. Matthew's was blessed to have had this wonderful man with us for so long.



James Young

The UMW's speaker for the Epiphany Brunch was a representative from Suzanna Wesley House in Baltimore. A free will offering was taken in support of this worthy project of housing homeless women and children while helping them to find jobs and schooling. The conference UMW has owned two townhouses in Baltimore for this purpose. The Musical Theatre Troupe was the recipient of the 1998 Arts Promotion Grant from Bowie City Council, and Krist Salmi was installed as President of the Administrative Board.

Also this month, the congregation sadly held a memorial service for Jim and Belle Bush who suddenly died. Jim was our beloved bookkeeper who also sang in a barbershop quartet. His loving wife, Belle, could not continue without him and died soon thereafter. In February, our Music Director, Isaac Borocz founded a new choral group in 1998 named the "Schola Cantorum", a group that has performed ecclesiastical chants. The Youth Choir presented "The Tale of the Three Trees" in March and St. Matthew's hosted the Washington East District's Choir Festival. The United Methodist Men, which had been inactive for awhile, was reactivated with an organizational breakfast meeting. For Lent in March, midday Wednesday drop-in services were held in addition to the evening services. The Musical Theatre Troupe presents "Anything Goes". Lorri Meadows was chosen "Woman of the Year" by the congregation.

April found our church participating in the annual Bowie CROP walk organized by St. Matthew's. St. Matthew's Housing Corporation housed two Bosnian refugee families and "Operacion Hogar" took off to build houses in Juarez, Mexico. Jerry Gann became the President of the UMM when the group was reactivated. The Trustees announced that it was the 10th anniversary of the Endowment Fund. Approximately \$4,000 per year in earnings had been withdrawn annually for organ debt retirement and missions. The Finance Committee reported to the Administrative Board that the Endowment Fund was worth \$163,000. The Youth went to a confirmation retreat at Camp Wright on the Bay. Thirty persons joined our church this month. In May, the Scouts held their annual yard sale, the Youth held a "rock-a-thon" to raise funds for ASP, and 21 young people were confirmed.



Bill and David Eicher with Rev. Stetler participate in the CROP walk.

June began with an unusual event. Gurnie Hobbs, one of our most loved and treasured bass choir members, was honored for 51 years of continual service teaching Sunday School at various churches, including St. Matthew's. What a blessing this man was in our lives. His voice rang out on so many Sundays, and when he sang gospel music, everyone was moved to tears. He recorded gospel songs with Tavia Wyatt playing the piano for him. Age dimmed his famous bass voice, but not our love for Gurnie. June also found Dust and Ashes, a husband-wife team and friends with Rev. Stetler, singing at a service.

In July, our new website debuted with Lorri Meadows as the web master. The Youth went to Kentucky for the seventh year of participation in ASP. The Bible School theme was "Come to the Storytelling Tree." See pictures at the end of this chapter.

Since our remaining mortgage had been paid off 1997, people began to think of expanding St. Matthew's with the last building program. Space was tight due to the expansion of the EEC into the Education Wing and a lack of rooms with adult-sized furnishings. People were standing in line with folding chairs waiting for their time to hold a meeting in a room. On the original plans, St. Matthew's had originally been designed to have four separate building phases: Fellowship Hall, classrooms and offices; the Sanctuary; the Education Wing; and a building connecting the Education Wing to the side doors leading to the kitchen and Fellowship Hall. But the establishment of the Memory Garden in the late 1980s caused concern with this plan because no one wanted to destroy it or the children's playground. A new plan was needed if St. Matthew's was to expand again. A Building Committee was formed July 8, 1998, at the direction of the Administrative Board. It consisted of Carl Pekala, Pete Saderholm, Mary Margaret King, Ed Prosser, Gordon Harvey, Ray Denmark, and Jim Mott. Gordon convened the first meeting and Bill Doggett presented a total cost projection of \$1,724,185.00. Subsequently, Mary Margaret King and Lorri Meadows were made Co-Chairs of the committee, and Bill Doggett was chosen as the architect.



People gather for the auction



A sample of the goods offered for auction

In September, the UMW held its fall kick-off Tea. The UMM planned a full year of programs; there was a parenting retreat; and the New Members Class held a pork bar-b-que and auction with the senior high UMYF.

This auction was a huge success, but required a huge amount of time and effort on the part of the new class. The proceeds went to missions.

Our attendance was averaging 399 persons per Sunday. We were running a yearly deficit of

\$1,706, slightly behind in the yearly budget of \$445,000. In October, the church participated in a gleaning project (nearby farmers offered the opportunity to churches to come to their harvested fields for produce left from the harvesting process), and James Young was featured as the staff member of the month. The Theatre Troupe presented "A Grand Night for Singing." The summer new members' class hosted a Giving Tree/Birthday Social requesting the congregation to bring school items for needy children. The Youth walked in support of St. Jude hospital and the annual blessing of the animals was held in the Memory Garden. In November, 11 persons joined St. Matthew's. The UMM held its Christmas party at the Naval Academy officer's club.





Some Christmas Scenes at St. Matthew's 1998



Children act the Christmas pageant



Children's choir



Little children gather to sing



Youth accompany the pageant

For 1999, the annual budget was listed at \$480,000 with the staff representing 45 percent of the cost and the physical plant 21 percent. Warm Nights was held through January 3, 1999.

1999 – the last year of the millennium. One would have to have their head in the sand not to recognize the importance of this year to the world. What would happen this year? Would it be the end of the world? Would all communications fail? Would there be a nuclear war? A stock market crash? Otherwise sane persons stockpiled stores of canned goods and many gallons of water in anticipation of something happening this year. Surely, something auspicious would! People wrote their last will and testaments or just wrote down their thoughts as the year drew to a close. It was the end of 1,000 years and 2,000 years since the birth of Christ. Would this be the year that the Temple Mount would be returned to the Christians signaling the second coming of Christ?

The UMW Epiphany Brunch and International Sunday opened the year. The Chair of the SPRC became Jerry Horsewood. At the Administrative Board meeting, Rev. Stetler reported that the EEC was generating \$15,000 monthly in income. Lorri Meadows moved that St. Matthew's proceed with the building of an addition to the church, and the motion passed. Then Lorri also moved that the EEC be allowed to occupy either Room 19 or 21 to expand their program and the motion passed.

The New Member Class collected new or gently used shoes for Latvian orphans. In February, the New Century Singers presented "A Bouquet of Roses," and Scribbler cards made their debut in the hymnal holders on the backs of pews. March found the Deaf Ministry holding its spaghetti dinner to raise funds to pay the sign language interpreters, and the "Woman of the Year" was Jessie Smith, our landscaper extraordinaire. Our grounds have been a testimonial to her genius and St. Matthew's has received many awards from the City. Some of these awards are hung on the Memorial Wall located in the breezeway between the Education Wing and the Wesley Wing.

Brainstorming sessions were scheduled for members to express their ideas on the new building on April 13, 1999. A compilation of rooms' purposes was presented at the Building Committee meeting on April 20, 1999, to include: a parlor, a columbarium, storage, Sunday School rooms, bathrooms, computer accessibility in all rooms, a quiet, private area for mothers to nurse babies, sinks in classrooms, upgraded office space for church staff, coat storage, place to store usher items, altar guild storage and work area. The wish list was quickly amended to include kitchenettes, a library, security system, music room with lots of storage, public address system and more. Ways to finance the new construction were being considered, but no decision as far as a bank had been reached.

April saw "Operacion Hogar" traveling to Juarez, Mexico April 5-10. Parents of our youth approached the Administrative Board this month to add a position of a salaried person to work with our youth and the motion was made and approved. Clare Carhart was hired shortly thereafter as Youth Director. The church participated in the annual CROP walk. The Theatre Troupe presented "Dames at Sea." In May, the New Members' Class held a Fellowship Hall meal to raise funds to help Jessie Smith realize her landscaping goals. Fourteen youth were confirmed this month. Family Ministry sponsored a potluck dinner with a program celebrating Christian values as well as a camping trip to Camp Harrison, West Virginia, on Memorial Day weekend.

June found the UMW purchasing and assembling 50 United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Education and Health kits to send to Kosovar and the United Methodist Youth Fellowship held a kite flying picnic at Sandy Point State Park. At the Administrative Board meeting, a motion was passed to use Marne Lane for meeting space and to set up Room 19 for the EEC. There was a church wide picnic at West River. July featured Vacation Bible School with the theme "Good News at Gospel Rock." See pictures at end of this chapter. The United Methodist Men had a great time this month with a baseball outing to Camden Yards seeing the Orioles play the Minnesota Twins, and they took a trip to the White House with lunch at the Old Ebbitt Grill. The youth took an ASP mission trip to Ferrellsburg, West Virginia.

In September, the UMM was at it again with a fishing trip on the Chesapeake Bay. Not to be outdone, the United Methodist Women held its membership tea in the Memory Garden. The Trustees reported that three banks stood ready to loan our church \$2.3 million dollars for our addition.

At the Administrative Board meeting on July 14, 1999, the idea was presented for a three-story building instead of a two-story. A motion was made and passed to construct a three-story addition. Rev. Stetler proposed an elevator at this meeting and stated that Guy and Maggie LeVee would volunteer their services to design the elevator at a cost savings of between \$15,000-20,000. The projected cost of the elevator was \$100,000-200,000.

Parents in our congregation could sign up for a parents' day retreat on Spiritual Techniques for Managing Stress and Improving Time Management at Wabanna Camp and Conference Center.

In October, the Theatre Troupe presented "The Pajama Game" to rave reviews and the congregation was invited to a camping trip to Camp Harmison featuring the Apple Butter Festival. Eighteen persons joined our church. It was reported that 239 estimate of giving cards were received for a total of \$380,534 against the budgeted amount of \$408,320 for the year 2000. Average attendance was 435 persons and year to date offerings were \$420,289 for 1999. The stocking project was going full steam ahead with 200 stockings filled for the children of inmates at the Prince George's County Detention Center. Krist Salami was selected



to assume the position of Administrative Board Chair in 2000.

At the October 13, 1999, Administrative Board meeting, a motion was passed to accept the plans for the Wesley Wing (now so named after a selection committee evaluated submitted names). Architect's fees were about \$9,000 to date. At this time, Mary Margaret King presented to the Ad Board the architect's rendering of a three-story addition to include 17 classrooms, music facilities, two showers, library, and a meeting room for a projected cost of \$2,393 million. It was mentioned that there was now a statutory law of one parking space to every four seats in the Sanctuary and that we would have "no problem with that." By this time, three banks were being considered for financing. Upfront costs were being absorbed by moving some funds around. Changes and improvement to the plans continued to be made during the ensuing months.

In October, Rev. Patti Smith (Fenske) officiated at a Service of Marriage Renewal vows. This service had never before been offered to our congregation and never has been since. Any couple in our congregation could participate in this unique ceremony of renewal of their marriage vows. The couples pictured below took advantage of this opportunity. Note: Not all couples could be identified in the picture.



Debbie & Ed Prosser Jessie & Bob Matthews Patti Smith(Fenske) Maggie & Guy LeVee
Donna & Frank Lane Jessie & Bob Smith Kay & Bob Fuller
Back Row: Krist & Debbie Salmi John & Diane Gorman

In November, the UMW held its annual craft fair and the youth walked "Miracle Miles" for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis. The Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets were readied for distribution to the needy. In December, the UMM held its Christmas dance at the Naval Academy; the Youth held a Christmas party; and the congregation donated sweatshirts, teddy bears, stockings and food for the needy. Warm Nights was held for one week this year. The average weekly attendance in Sunday School was 162 children.



Review/Overview

We are now at the end of an interesting and busy decade in the life of our church. At the beginning, we were challenged to continue through the discord that occurred regarding our musical staff and to grow and learn from it. The Early Education Center was established and expanded into the Education Wing; we paid off old debts and began to plan for expansion; a Housing Corporation was established to house the working poor; a shelter was built in the basement of the Education Wing; the stocking project at Christmas was established; the CROP walk was continued; Warm Nights at Christmas time was begun; and the UMW began awarding a “Woman of the Year” honor. Many camping trips were held and hoedowns and dances were experienced with joy. Two brilliant ministers guided us through this decade of change and growth, established our direction in mission, and set our course for the future.

So, what happened on the last day of the millennium? The sun set, the moon rose, and the sun came up the following day on a new 1,000 years –as usual. A lot of prayers were recited. And our church began another decade in a new century. All was just the same as the day before. Praise God.

Kay League

Kay League and Lorri Meadows – research

Resources:

Circuit Riders

Bulletins

Trustee Reports

Administrative Board reports

Interviews with Jane Dodd, Jerry Horsewood, Rev. Robert Paulen, Gordon Harvey





VBS 1997 Celebrate Jesus



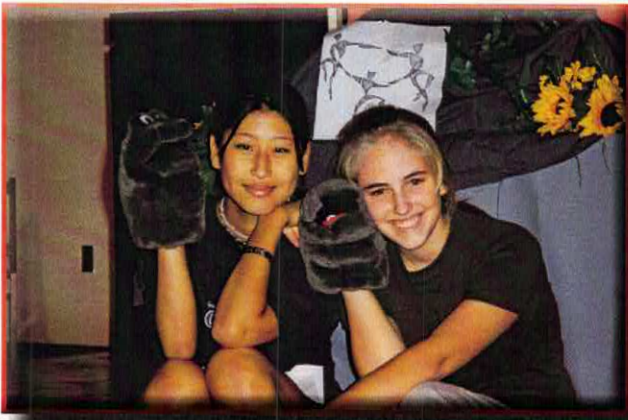
VBS 1998 Come to the Storytelling Tree





VBS 1999 Good News at Gospel Rock





VIM Juarez 1996

